

**MEETING MINUTES**  
**Morris County Board of Transportation Meeting**  
**Tuesday, October 24, 2017**

**Morris County Department of Planning**  
**30 Schuyler Place, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room**  
**Morristown, New Jersey**

**In Attendance:**

Board Members	Additional Attendees	Staff
Melverne E. Cooke, Chairperson	Jack Holland, FRAC	Christopher Vitz
Kathryn A. DeFillippo, Freeholder	Brian Kincaid, FRAC	Gerald Rohsler
Frank T. Reilly	Kean Burenga, C&D	Joseph Russo
Manuela Schuster	Scott Harris, C&D	
John Wetzel	Cathrin O'Donnell, C&D	
Leonard Resto (Alternate #1)	Jakub Rowinski, NJTPA	
	Ophelia Cruse, MAPS	
	Lance Tkacs, Randolph Twp.	

**I. Call to Order:** Chairperson Melverne E. Cooke called the meeting to order at 2:05 pm.

**II. Open Public Meeting Statement:** Chairperson Cooke read the Open Public Meetings Act compliance statement.

**III. Roll Call:** Mr. Gerald Rohsler read the roll call. Six voting members were present during roll call.

**IV. Welcome and Introductions:** Chairperson Cooke welcomed all attendees, including members of Morris County's Freight Railroad Advisory Committee, and began introductions.

**V. Approval of Minutes from January 17, 2017 Meeting:** Approval of the January 17, 2017 meeting minutes was moved by Freeholder Kathryn DeFillippo and seconded by Mr. Frank Reilly. Board Member Leonard Resto abstained. All other board members approved the minutes.

**VI. Presentation-Dover & Rockaway River Railroad:** Mr. Kean Burenga introduced himself as the President of the Chesapeake and Delaware Railroad (C&D), a group comprised of The Black River & Western Railroad, The Maryland & Delaware Railroad, and the Dover & Rockaway River Railroad, and as the successful bidder for the

operations of the County-owned railroad branches. Mr. Burenga also introduced Ms. Cathrin O'Donnell, Vice President and General Counsel, and Mr. Scott Harris, Vice President and General Manager. Mr. Burenga provided a background on the formation of the C&D, mentioning that Norfolk Southern Railway approached Mr. Burenga and requested that he provide a means to operate NSC's Washington Secondary. Mr. Burenga added that at the time of C&D's formation, the County had advertised its 5-year operating agreement for the County's railroad branches. The C&D decided that it made sense to operate both the Norfolk Southern's Washington Secondary and the County's railroad branches as a single system given the direct connection at Norfolk Southern's Lake Junction Yard in Roxbury and the County's Dover & Rockaway Junction in Wharton. The C&D promises to provide a great service plan, with fresh ideas, in order to grow the businesses on the County's railroad branches.

Chairperson Cooke asked when the C&D took over operations of Morris County's freight railroads. Mr. Burenga responded that they took over operation on July 1, 2017, and officially began providing service on July 3, 2017.

Freeholder DeFillippo inquired to the railroads customer outreach and the potential of new customers located on the county's railroads. Mr. Burenga responded that the C&D, in addition to representatives of Morris County, have been in regular contact with the current nine customers located on the railroads. With regard to the customer potential of the County's railroad, Mr. Burenga noted that the C&D is currently developing a prototype site locator that will help the railroad identify properties that may benefit from rail freight services.

Mr. Brian Kincaid mentioned that he had met the C&D crews and noted their professionalism. Mr. Kincaid asked if the C&D is currently operating Norfolk Southern's Washington Secondary. Mr. Burenga responded that contracts are in place with Norfolk Southern to operate the Washington Secondary, but mentioned that operations cannot commence until agreements are finalized with NJ Transit.

Mr. Jack Holland reported that this is the first year that truck freight rates were more competitive than rail freight in the shipping of paper product to his facility. He noted that that cheaper fuel costs may be a determining factor. Mr. Burenga noted that NJ Transit's current weight restriction to 263,000-pound railcars is another determining factor that is making rail freight uncompetitive to truck freight in the region. He added that addressing the vertical constraint at the South Main Street Bridge in Phillipsburg and increasing the weight limitations to the national standard of 286,000-pound railcars may allow rail freight to be more competitive than truck freight for certain commodities, including paper product. Freeholder DeFillippo asked that if the vertical constraint was addressed and weight limitations on NJ Transit increased to the national standard, would operations move to a daily schedule. Mr. Burenga responded that such a schedule would be determined by customer needs and volume, but does not anticipate increasing their current three-day, weekly schedule.

Ms. Manuela Schuster asked how many customers the C&D expects to serve once they begin operations of the Washington Secondary. Mr. Burenga said they would serve six additional customers once the Washington Secondary is incorporated in their operations. Mr. Burenga added that they would like to do 500 annual carloads on the County railroads and 1,500 annual carloads once they take over operations of Norfolk Southern's Washington Secondary.

Following the discussion regarding the Chesapeake & Delaware Railroad and operations of Morris County's railroad, Mr. Burenga thanked the Board for giving him and his railroad an opportunity to introduce themselves and asked that the Board submit any suggestions they may have regarding the railroad and its operations at any time that is convenient for them.

## **VII. Staff Reports:**

**A. Circulation Element Update:** Gerald Rohsler reported that the Division of Engineering & Transportation continues to work with the Division of Planning & Preservation to advance the Element. Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 5 have been revised and Chapter 4 is currently undergoing revisions. Chairperson Cooke inquired as to the timeline of the Circulation Element. Mr. Rohsler said he expects the Freeholders will have a chance to review the final draft of the Circulation Element in early 2018. Mr. Leonard Resto requested a draft of the Circulation Element to prepare questions for the next meeting.

**B. Freight Activities:** Mr. Joseph Russo reported on the railroad improvement projects along the Morris County-owned railroads. He reported that the County selected JMT to design the surface improvements for the Route 46 and High Bridge Branch crossing located in Roxbury, NJ. Mr. Russo added that Railroad Construction Company of South Jersey was awarded the Dover & Rockaway Railroad Repair project, which will install 3,000 new rail ties and 4,000 tons of clean ballast along the County's Dover & Rockaway Railroad. Mr. Russo noted that the County submitted to NJDOT's Rail Freight Assistance Program FY2018 to resurface the County's High Bridge Branch. This project will install 7,000 new rail ties, 9,000 tons of clean ballast, in addition to installing new rail between Route 46 and Hillside Avenue in Roxbury and clear brush along the line.

Mr. Jakub Rowinski, Special Projects Manager of NJTPA's Freight Planning Division, provided an update on NJTPA Pilot Freight Concept Development Program. The three-year program will establish a process for advancing regional and local freight initiatives that have been identified through planning studies conducted by NJTPA subregions, planning partners and NJTPA Central Staff. Mr. Rowinski added that two pilot programs were selected for the initial Program Development and Pilot Study Phase. The first being The Dover and Rockaway Rail Realignment Project identified in the Morris County Freight Infrastructure and Land Use Analysis Subregional Study. The second being the Phillipsburg South Main Street Bridge Rail Clearance Project identified in the NJTPA Morris/Warren County Rail Corridor Study. The consultant is currently collecting data and conducting a public outreach effort to inform stakeholders, local businesses, and residents of the two pilot programs. Mr. Rowinski noted the program will be completed by June 2020.

Mr. Frank Reilly added that the Phillipsburg South Main Street Bridge Rail Clearance Project should be a top priority for NJTPA. Mr. Leonard Resto and Mr. Kincaid echoed Mr. Reilly's comments, adding that the County would benefit immediately from improvements at the South Main Street Bridge in Phillipsburg.

**C. NYS&W Update:** Mr. Rohsler updated the Board on the status of the NYS&W Bicycle and Pedestrian Path project. He noted that the project is currently under a final review by NJDEP. Mr. Rohsler added that the County has secured an easement with North Jersey District Water Supply and is currently working to secure an easement with Wayne Township and the Hoffman Grove Association. Mr. Rohsler explained that upon final review by NJDEP, design will be finalized and plans will be submitted to NJDOT for right-of-way acquisition. Chairperson Cooke inquired about the project's timeline and expected completion. Mr. Rohsler responded that construction would begin in summer 2018. Mr. Kincaid asked for the limits of the project. Mr. Christopher Vitz responded that the bike path begins at River Drive in Pompton Plains and terminates at the NJ Transit Mountain View train station in Wayne.

**D. NJ 24/Columbia Turnpike/Park Avenue Proposed Improvements:** Mr. Vitz reported on the Intersection Improvements at NJ Route 24 Columbia Turnpike/Park Avenue Intersection. Mr. Vitz provided a general overview of the intersection, surrounding businesses, and associated traffic patterns. Mr. Vitz noted that the intersection is overly congested and prone to vehicular collisions. Mr. Vitz reinforced this point by adding that accidents occurred most frequently when motorists attempted to connect to Park Avenue from NJ Route 24, a maneuver that resulted in 45 accidents over a two-year period. Mr. Vitz reminded everyone that the County had developed a plan to alleviate the congestion and improve safety at the intersection with the inclusion of a flyover ramp, however with a lack of funding at the County-level, the project was adopted at the State where it entered into a concept development phase. During this phase, the State developed four alternatives. Mr. Vitz noted that all alternatives developed by the State were more costly and less effective than the County's flyover ramp. Mr. Vitz described the flyover ramp. Mr. Vitz added that construction cost would be approximately 6 million with another 2 million in right-of-way acquisition. Mr. John R. Wetzel asked how well the timing would be improved at the intersection, to which Mr. Vitz responded that timing would be reduced from 400 seconds to 180 seconds. Next steps include applying for funding through NJTPA. However, since the Concept Development was completed by the State, there may be an issue in securing federal funds through NJTPA. NJTPA will mitigate this by coordinating directly with the Federal Highway Administration.

**VIII. Information Item: Crossroads Report:** Chairperson Cooke provided an article detailing a new project from The Fund for New Jersey, *Crossroads NJ*. Ms. Cooke noted that the project offers creative ways to secure funds in the State of New Jersey. She added that Crossroads NJ serves as a starting point for people to discuss transportation issues and invited the Board to The Fund for New Jersey's webpage to join in the conversation. The webpage is <http://www.fundfornj.org/crossroadsnj/reports/transportation>.

**IX. New Business:** Mr. Vitz informed the Board that funding for infrastructure improvements increased to 8 million from 4 million due to the increase in the State's Gas Tax. Ms. Manuela Schuster asked if this increase in funding could be used for Public Transportation. Mr. Rowinski responded that the specific fund reference by Mr. Vitz was for roadway improvements only. Mr. Resto added that the State increased funding to New Jersey Transit. Mr. Rohsler noted that the State's Rail Freight Assistance Program increased their funding to 25 million from 10 million as well.

**X. Old Business:** The Board extended their thanks to the staff of Morris County for providing weekly press releases on local transportation matters to the Board. Mr. Frank Reilly extended his thanks to the County for the Valley Road and Meyersville Road surface improvements in the Township of Long Hill completed earlier this year.

**XI. Next Regular Meeting:** January 23, 2018 at 2:00 pm in the 4<sup>th</sup> floor conference room of the Morris County Department of Planning at 30 Schuyler Place, Morristown, NJ.

**XII. Adjournment:** Adjournment of the meeting was moved by Mr. Resto and seconded by Mr. Reilly, and the meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

*Minutes prepared by Joseph Russo, Division of Engineering & Transportation*