

MEETING MINUTES
Morris County Board of Transportation Meeting
 Tuesday, October 27, 2020
 Web-Ex Virtual Meeting

In Attendance:

Board Members	Additional Attendees	Staff
Freeholder DeFillippo	Scott Harris VP, DRRV	Christopher Vitz
Freeholder Shaw	Jakub Rowinski, NJTPA	John Hayes
Melverne Cooke	Ted Ritter, NJTPA	Dede Murray
Ilene Dorf Manahan		Benjamin Peacock
Frank Reilly		
Manuela Schuster		
Jigar Shah		
Joe Wells, Chairperson		
John Wetzel		

I. Call to Order: Chairperson Joe Wells called the meeting to order at 2:01 pm.

II. Roll Call: John Hayes read the roll call. Nine voting members were present during roll call.

III. Welcome and Introductions: Chairperson Wells welcomed all in attendance.

IV. Approval of Minutes from July 21, 2020 Meeting: Approval of the minutes was moved by Ilene Dorf Manahan, seconded by Manuela Schuster, and unanimously approved.

V. Reports:

A. Road & Bridge Projects: Christopher Vitz, County Engineer, reported on numerous infrastructure improvement projects that Morris County advanced through the COVID-19 outbreak. Weather issues have prevented some progress, but overall, projects have not slowed down during the pandemic. Road resurfacing projects under the 2020 Capital Budget are nearing completion. The County has paved approximately 30.5 miles in 2020. The County has already initiated efforts for next year's paving projects and will continue preparation throughout the winter.

Morris County is progressing on a series of bridge infrastructure projects. The East Blackwell Street Bridge in Dover has been closed for several months for a bridge deck replacement. The deck replacement will be finished at the end of October and is expecting to open the bridge to traffic in early November. Another current bridge project is the Valley Road Bridge replacement in Rockaway Township that is expected to be finished within the next two weeks. The proposed work also consists of the widening and paving the roadway and installing a new guiderail and pedestrian fencing. There are several other ongoing bridge projects, including Waterloo Road Bridge in Netcong, which will be finished at the end of November.

- B. NYS&W Updates:** The NYS&W Bicycle and Pedestrian Path will be a 4.8-mile shared-use facility starting at River Drive in Pequannock and ending at Mountain View Boulevard, a short distance from the Mountain View Train Station in Wayne. Dede Murray reported on right of way acquisition, path design, and expectations for construction.

Since the last Board meeting, the County has been very active finishing design and property acquisition efforts for the Path. The final Public Information Center was held virtually in August and was well-attended with over 95 people registered for the event. Morris County and the design consultant NV5 presented project details and design, with a portion of the meeting dedicated to a question and answer session with the public. The County received right-of-way authorization from NJDOT and purchased the right-of-way from the railroad in August. The application for construction authorization was submitted to NJDOT in September. The County also closed out of the design contract with NV5 and obtained the final plan sets of the path design.

The County is working on one remaining issue regarding the Path's alignment. It was discovered that there are overlapping access easements granted by the North Jersey District Water Supply Commission to the NYS&W railroad and Stahl Plaza at the southern terminus of the planned Path. The County spent months negotiating with the owner of the Plaza and their attorneys, but was unsuccessful in obtaining the right to use the Plaza's easement for the path's originally intended alignment. A new alignment has been identified where the trail would cross over two sections of the North Jersey District Water Supply Commission's line and traverse through a vacant parcel owned by Wayne Township. The Water Commission reviewed the proposal and has no objection to the new alignment. The Morris Canal society also supports the realignment, as the historic canal alignment runs through that vacant parcel. Currently, the County is waiting for a response from Wayne Township on using this parcel for the Path.

Morris County expects to break ground in the Spring of 2021. It is anticipated the Path will be open to the public in 2023.

Chairperson Wells inquired if the changes to the alignment would affect the location of the trail terminus. Ms. Murray confirmed that the site of the trail terminus would remain beneath the Route 23 overpass. Mr. Reilly commended the County on its work and accomplishments with advancing the NYS&W Path this year.

C. Freight Activities: Benjamin Peacock reported on the following County railroad projects:

- a. **Main Street and North Road (619) Railroad Crossings Upgrade Project:** The crossing upgrades in Mount Olive began in late summer. Installation of new crossings and paving were completed in October. The crossings are open to traffic. Upon completion of the power line connections and tree work to improve sight lines, this project will be closed out.
- b. **NJ 10 Rail Seal Project:** The County has obtained permit approvals from NJDOT to replace several rubber seals at the Chester Branch / NJ 10 crossing in Roxbury, and held a pre-construction meeting in September. The project will begin following Morris County Purchasing Department's approval of the contractor's final cost estimates.
- c. **Chester Culvert:** The County received and reviewed preliminary design plans from the consultant for the installation of a pipe under the Chester Branch in Roxbury and a second pipe under an abandoned rail adjacent to the County rail, to alleviate flooding of a resident's property near Berkshire Valley Road. The County requested a number of changes and revisions and is awaiting pre-final plans. The consultant is working to secure access agreements and required permits.
- d. **Berkshire Valley Road Bridge Repairs:** The County hired a consultant to examine the existing conditions of the Berkshire Valley Road Bridge to identify required repairs. The bridge has a history of trucks hitting the low bridge, and has been hit three additional times in the last two months. The County received pre-final plans in September, and provided final comments in late October.
- e. **Dover & Rockaway Runaround Track:** Morris County was awarded a NJDOT Rail Freight Assistance Program grant of \$737,000 to design and construct the Dover & Rockaway Runaround track, to be situated near Tripak and Endot. Morris County will begin preparation of an RFP for this project in the next few months.
- f. **Dover & Rockway Realignment Project:** Morris County applied to the FY 2021 Rail Freight Assistance Program for funding to design the D&R Realignment, which was studied in NJTPA's Pilot Freight Concept Development Program. Morris County met on October 22nd with NJDOT officials and Jacobs Engineering to have a walkthrough and discuss the project. The group walked a few of the crossings in downtown Dover and then went to McWilliams Forge.

Mr. Reilly inquired about what will happen as part of the Berkshire Valley Road Bridge Project. Mr. Peacock responded that this is just a maintenance repair project to ensure the track stays aligned and the bridge is structurally sound. The next NJTPA Freight Concept Development Program will determine a permanent solution to address the bridge's low clearance. Ms. Manahan inquired as to whether the owner of McWilliams Forge is a customer on our line. Scott Harris replied that the type of product McWilliams Forge produces is more favorable to

truck freight. Mr. Harris met with McWilliams in 2018 and 2019 to discuss the potential of adding their business to the line, but it was decided that the business is not currently conducive to rail.

- D. Traffic Counts:** Mr. Hayes provided a report on Morris County's traffic count program. Due to COVID, the County did not run the normal Traffic Counts program this year. Typically, 30 counts are completed in the Spring and Fall seasons (60 counts annually) when schools are in session. Several requests were received this summer and fall. The division has radar traffic count devices that can be set up on-demand. Staff took counts and prepared reports for the Butler Police Department, Harding Township, and internally for some of the County's bridge and road projects. The decision to resume the normal traffic counts schedule will be dependent on the status of the COVID pandemic.

VI. Old Business:

- A. Board of Transportation Merger:** Board members were provided the draft resolution and letter to the Morris County Board of Chosen Freeholders that recommends expanding the Board of Transportation and dissolving both the Freight Railroad Advisory Committee and the Airport Advisory Committee. Mr. Hayes provided some background information on this topic. The Division of Engineering and Transportation Division currently has three boards: The Board of Transportation, the Freight Rail Advisory Committee, and the Airport Advisory Committee. While the Board of Transportation meets consistently every quarter, the Airport Advisory has not met regularly in over a decade and the Freight Rail Advisory Committee has not had a quorum in many years. The Division feels that there is no longer a need to maintain the two advisory committees. The topics at their meetings have been discussed at the Board of Transportation meetings, the Division would like to recommend the Freeholder Board dissolve these two committees, and expand the Board of Transportation by four members. The new members would be the County's railroad operator, a member from the Morris County freight community, a member from the Morris County aviation community, and an additional member pending selection. Back on January 21, 2020 the Board of Transportation voted in support of recommending the merger. A voice vote was performed, but the County is requesting a formal resolution to better document this recommendation.

Ms. Manahan gave her support of the Resolution. Ms. Manahan recommended that the word "preferably" should be deleted in all three documents (the letter, the by-laws, and the resolution). Ms. Cooke stated her approval of this change. Ms. Manahan also identified an unnecessary word in one of the paragraphs of the draft letter to be removed. Chairperson Wells echoed his approval of these edits and requested Mr. Hayes send him a revised version of the resolution and letter.

Chairperson Wells inquired if the Board can recommend potential future members. Ms. Manahan responded that members of the Board are ultimately decided by the Morris County Freeholders. Freeholder DeFillippo stated that the Freeholder Board does take recommendations into account in their decision when adding new members. Chairperson Wells inquired as to whether or not Morris County currently has any contacts in the aviation field. Mr. Hayes

responded that the Division has an aviation contact to recommend for appointment.

Ms. Schuster recommended the inclusion of language in the Board of Transportation by-laws that cites the ability to convene virtually. The current language in the By-Laws states that meetings will be held at 30 Schuyler Place in Morristown. Chairperson Wells, Ms. Manahan, and Mr. Reilly echoed their support of this modification. Mr. Hayes responded that the By-Laws will be updated and ready for review and approval by the Board at the next January meeting, and will include modifications to the Board membership section if the Freeholders approve the membership changes.

Freeholder Shaw voiced his support of the merger and asked whether the language in the resolution can be broadly interpreted as a member of the Morris County aviation community, or whether the new member could be a representative from Hanover or Madison. Mr. Hayes reported that in earlier discussions, it was recommended that the new member would be a representative from the Morristown Airport. Mr. Hayes mentioned that there is a fourth new person on the Board to account for a position for either Hanover or Madison. The decision of these new members will ultimately be up to the Morris County Freeholders. The resolution was moved by Mr. Reilly, seconded by Ms. Manahan, and unanimously approved by a roll-call vote.

During the roll-call vote, Ms. Cooke made note of a typo in the resolution to be corrected by staff.

VII. New Business:

- A. New Jersey TransAction Conference:** Mr. Reilly reported that the New Jersey TransAction Conference 2020 began last Tuesday, October 20. Tuesday was the live day of the conference with numerous presentations, including remarks from the Transportation Commissioner and NJ Transit Executive Director. The majority of the conference sessions are pre-recorded, and all presentations are recorded and can be accessed on the conference website until November 19. Mr. Reilly explained to the Board how to access the recorded sessions online. Currently, there are 849 people registered to attend the conference. The virtual exhibit hall has 70 exhibitors. Chris Vitz presented the NYS&W Path in a session on trail development, and Freeholder DeFilippo moderated a session on public engagement.

- B. NJTPA Long Range Transportation Plan:** Ted Ritter of the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA) reported to the Board on the NJTPA Long Range Transportation Plan. Mr. Ritter gave an overview of the NJTPA. The NJTPA Board of Trustees is comprised representatives from each of the thirteen counties in the NJTPA region, plus the cities of Newark and Jersey City, and representatives of the Governor's office, NJDOT, NJ Transit, Port Authority of NY and NJ, and an at-large citizens' representative. Freeholder DeFillippo is the current Chair of the Board of Trustees. One of the primary responsibilities of the NJTPA is to prioritize more than two billion dollars in annual Federal surface transportation funding.

One of the NJTPA's most important products is its Long-Range Transportation Plan (RTP), which is required by federal law to be updated every four years. NJTPA is working on the new RTP, called "Plan 2050: Transportation, People, and Opportunity." Mr. Ritter stated that there are ample opportunities for the public to provide input on the region's transportation priorities. NJTPA just finished the first round of public engagement for the RTP. Two more rounds of public engagement will take place between now and January. The Plan is a vision for the region's transportation future and how it can capitalize on both pre-pandemic and post-pandemic opportunities to make the region a better place to live, work, and play. Resources and information on how to get involved in the Plan are available on their website at www.NJTPA.org/Plan2050. A three-question survey is available on their website. Mr. Ritter expanded on the focus of the survey, stating that the questions prompt the public to give their input on what has changed about transportation in the last 20 years, what they would like to see change in the coming years, and is there anything working well now that the region should expand or strengthen. Updates on the Plan are available on NJTPA's website and social media pages. Virtual Public Workshops are being held in December and January. In addition to the workshops, NJTPA is hosting "TPA Tuesdays" which are transportation focused symposiums. There are moderated panel discussions, featured speakers, subject matter experts, and thought leaders to discuss moving towards a better transportation future. Mr. Ritter offered his availability to answer additional questions from the Board in the future.

Ms. Manahan and Chairperson Wells requested that the email addresses of the Board of Transportation be included in the NJTPA RTP's email list.

- C. NJTPA Freight Updates: Jakub Rowinski provided updates on NJTPA's Freight Concept Development Program. The two studies that were a part of this pilot phase of the Program, the upgrade of the Hackettstown Culvert to handle 286k rail and the Dover and Rockaway Railroad realignment in Dover, are nearing completion. The next two studies that will be in the Program are the Berkshire Valley Road Truck Circulation Project which will study and address the clearance issue with the railroad bridge in Roxbury, and the Port Reading Secondary South Main Street Grade Crossing Elimination Project in Bound Brook, Somerset County.

VIII. Public Comments: There were no public comments.

IX. The Next Regular Meeting: Virtual Meeting on Tuesday, January 19, 2021 at 2:00 pm.

X. Adjournment: Adjournment of the meeting was moved by Ms. Cooke, seconded by Ms. Manahan, and unanimously approved. The meeting was adjourned at 2:45 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Dede Murray, Division of Engineering & Transportation