

MEETING MINUTES
Morris County Board of Transportation Meeting
 Tuesday, January 19, 2021
 Web-Ex Virtual Meeting

In Attendance:

Board Members	Additional Attendees	Staff
Commissioner DeFillippo	Christine Hellyer	Christopher Vitz
Milverne Cooke	Ted Ritter, NJTPA	John Hayes
Ronald Francioli		Dede Murray
Scott Harris		Benjamin Peacock
Jack Holland		
Darren Large		
Ilene Dorf Manahan		
Frank Reilly		
Len Resto		
Manuela Schuster		
Jigar Shah		
Joe Wells, Chairperson		

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. Twelve voting members were present during roll call.

III. Welcome and Introductions: Chairperson Wells welcomed all in attendance. Special welcomes were made to the Board’s newly-appointed members Darren Large from Morristown Airport, Ronald Francioli from Hanover Township, Jack Holland from Holland Manufacturing, and Scott Harris, Dover & Rockaway River Railroad, the County’s Railroad operator.

IV. Approval of Minutes from October 27, 2020 Meeting: Approval of the minutes was moved by Ilene Dorf Manahan, seconded by Melverne Cooke, and unanimously approved.

V. Report from the Election Committee Chairperson & Election of Officers: Ms. Cooke reported on the officer nominees for election. Mr. Wells was nominated as Chairperson, Frank Reilly as Vice-Chairperson, and Manuela Schuster as Secretary. Ms.

Cooke asked the Board if they had any additional suggestions for nominees, including self-nominations. No additional nominations were made. Ms. Cooke made a motion to approve the slate of officers for the 2021 Board of Transportation, which was seconded by Ms. Manahan. Chairperson Wells asked for confirmation that the nominees agree to serve in those positions for 2021. The nominees confirmed their interest. The Board unanimously approved the three officers.

VI. Adoption of Updated Bylaws: The Morris County Board of County Commissioners increased the size of the Board of Transportation in late 2020. The Bylaws were updated to reflect the increased membership and to make a few other additional edits. Chairperson Wells requested a motion from one of the Board Members to adopt the updated Board of Transportation Bylaws. The motion was made by Mr. Reilly and seconded by Mr. Resto, and the Bylaws was unanimously approved.

VII. Reports:

A. Road & Bridge Projects: Christopher Vitz, County Engineer, reported that Morris County has continued to advance numerous infrastructure projects through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Eight bridge projects started in 2020; three of those bridge projects were completed in the last three weeks. A total of 32 miles of roads were paved in 2020. The low traffic volume helped the paving work get completed quickly. Plans for 2021 include about 20 bridge projects, either reconstruction or rehabilitation, and 28.5 miles of paving, making 2021 another robust year for road and bridge projects. In addition, there are a few large individual projects that the County is advancing, such as the NYS&W trail project in Pequannock and Wayne, and Landing Road Bridge in Roxbury; right-of way acquisition for Landing Road Bridge should begin this year and construction should start next year. Mr. Vitz reported that the County is continuing with projects as normal. The Board of County Commissioners just announced the Draft Capital Budget program for next year, which is available online.

Chairperson Wells asked if COVID affected the contractors or any County personnel. Mr. Vitz responded that a construction crew of about five people had some delays due to one of its members contracting COVID, however larger contractors have not had any issues, and the Division of Engineering and Transportation has not had any COVID diagnosis. He indicated that precautions are being maintained in the office and on job sites.

B. NYS&W Updates: Dede Murray gave a summary of the NYS&W project. 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. Morris County purchased the abandoned railroad right of way in August 2020 from the New York Susquehanna & Western Railway Corporation to construct the path. The path will serve as a transportation and recreational facility that will connect residents, commuters, and visitors with area parks, businesses, schools, libraries, and transit.

Ms. Murray reported that the design phase for the project was completed in the fall. It was discovered that overlapping easements were granted by the North Jersey District Water Supply Commission to the NYS&W railroad and Stahl Plaza. Morris County decided to realign the southern terminus of the trail through a vacant parcel owned by Wayne Township. Ms. Murray reported that the County hired a consultant firm to survey the parcel. Division staff and County Counsel met virtually with Wayne Township in November to discuss securing an easement through the municipality's property. Wayne officials have indicated that they are supportive of the proposed easement, and the easement will need to be approved by the Township's Council.

Morris County has been preparing for the path's construction. The Request for Proposals was completed and advertised on January 5, 2021. The Pre-bid walkthrough was held on January 12. Morris County staff met with several contractors and toured four different sites along the project extent at the walkthrough. The County anticipates that construction will begin in the spring and last 18 months, and the path should be open to the public in 2023.

Chairperson Wells described the origin of the trail's concept and summarized the many challenges that were faced over the years during the design of the trail. He expressed that he was happy to see that construction was starting this year. Chairperson Wells reported that he provided several recommendations for additional access points along the path to Pequannock and the County. He asked if his recommendations would be addressed by the County. Ms. Murray replied that she had assisted Pequannock in their review of his recommendations, and the County is now waiting for an official response from Pequannock Township's Council. Consideration of the access point recommendations is on the Pequannock Township Council's January 26 meeting agenda. Chairperson Wells confirmed that he would be attending the Township Council meeting to discuss and seek Township approval of the recommendations. Mr. Vitz confirmed that upon approval from the Township, they could implement the modifications during construction.

Freight Activities: Benjamin Peacock provided updates on several County railroad projects.

Construction work on Route 10 Rail Seals Replacement Project in Roxbury along the Chester Branch was completed in one day. On Saturday, November 14, six rubber seals in the crossing were replaced, two of which were missing and four that had been damaged.

Morris County anticipates NJDOT will fund the replacement the Berkshire Valley Road Crossing in Roxbury along the High Bridge Branch. The County's freight railroad operator was frequently receiving complaints about the crossing's condition; the crossing was filled with potholes and had some loose seals. The crossing replacement is anticipated to be completed in April. Due to the crossing's condition, Morris County hired a contractor in December to make temporary repairs, and the work took place on the December 23. The temporary repairs included resetting the seals and repaving between the rails and five feet outside of the rails. The repairs have made a huge difference already, but the County is looking forward to the full replacement later this year. Mr. Harris

reported that the railroad operator has not received any complaints about the crossing since the December repairs.

The Main & North Street Crossings project in Mount Olive along the High Bridge Branch is near completion. There are a few final items to complete before the project is closed out.

The County rail bridge inspection reports are complete, and the consultant is now working on the Bridge Management Program. The County received a first draft of the Bridge Management Program on December 30 and the document is undergoing internal review. The County anticipates completing its review and edits of the Bridge Management Program in March.

The County hired a consultant to prepare design improvements for a culvert located on the Chester Branch near Berkshire Valley Road in Roxbury to alleviate regular flooding of a resident's property. The Chester design plans are 90% complete. Two pipes will be installed, one under the County's Chester Branch railroad and one under an abandoned railroad siding on property owned by Ashland. The County will need to secure an access agreement from Ashland. The consultant is currently preparing documents to meet NJDEP permit requirements.

The County received a Rail Freight Assistance Program grant from the NJDOT for design and construction of the Dover & Rockaway Runaround Track. The runaround track will improve rail operations and service to customers along that line. The County advertised the Request For Proposals for the design phase on in early January and proposals are due on February 2. The design phase is estimated to last seven months, and construction might start this year.

Chairperson Wells commended the extent and effort placed on the freight projects this past quarter and throughout the pandemic.

VIII. Old Business:

None.

IX. New Business:

- A.** Christine Hellyer reported that the Morris Area Paratransit System (MAPS) has continued serving clients throughout the COVID pandemic. MAPS have been operating five days a week since June. Due to the reduced demand over the holidays, MAPS had lowered capacity to 50% on buses and 75% on minivans. The current demand is being met but they can increase capacity if needed. MAPS has started providing transportation to and from grocery stores between the times of 10:00 AM and 1:00 PM, Monday through Friday. Providing trips for COVID vaccinations will be a priority. The Office of Aging is also available to provide transportation to vaccination appointments if MAPS is unable to schedule a trip. MAPS will continue to prioritize getting clients to doctor appointments.
- B.** 2021 Board of Transportation Meeting Dates
 - a. April 20, 2021

- b. July 20, 2021
- c. October 19, 2021
- d. January 18, 2022

The proposed 2021 meeting dates for the Board of Transportation were moved by Ms. Schuster, seconded by Mr. Resto, and unanimously approved by the Board.

X. Public Comments:

Ted Ritter from NJTPA provided updates on the development of NJTPA's new Long Range Transportation Plan called Plan 2050, which he introduced at the previous Board of Transportation meeting. Mr. Ritter discussed some of the responses to the public survey questions and feedback that they have received. The public was asked how they envisioned themselves getting around in the future. Despite the pandemic, the majority of people think public transit will come back stronger than ever. Many people responded that they will be biking and walking in the future. Mr. Ritter stated that this raises the question as to whether the Long Range Plan would need to take long range strategic investments in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure into account. Additional feedback indicates that public transportation seems to be too oriented towards getting people from North Jersey to NYC and the Port Authority; and, not enough attention is being placed on intercounty and intermunicipal travel. Public responses identified issues with train schedules, such as the difficulty to coordinate them with appointments such as social services, job training, medical, etc.

Mr. Ritter announced a final round of public outreach is starting late January and finishing in the first two weeks of February. The project website www.NJTPA.org/Plan2050 shows the schedule of upcoming events for the project. The next event will be part of the TPA Tuesday symposium series. The theme of this next event is "Realizing Opportunity Through Transportation" which will look at some of the challenges in the region and discuss turning them into opportunities. Registration for NJTPA Plan 2050 events are available at the Plan 2050 website. The remainder of the outreach involves three virtual open houses and four "Topic Talks." The Topic Talk themes will be business, bicycle and pedestrian safety, equity, and transit. Mr. Ritter encouraged Board members to visit the website, participate in upcoming events, to complete a survey for the Long Range Plan, and to share information about the Plan 2050 project. Mr. Reilly inquired about the time of the virtual TPA Tuesday, Mr. Ritter replied that it is scheduled for Tuesday, January 26 from 9:00 am to 11:00 am.

Ronald Francioli shared concerns about the impact of fair share housing on existing infrastructure in particular transportation, storm water management, etc. Mr. Francioli expressed concerns mainly in regard to transportation infrastructure. He hopes for an opportunity in future meetings to discuss accommodating the housing growth. Chairperson Wells recommended having members suggest topics to staff that they would like to review or bring before the Board, in particular specific interests or things happening in their community that they would like to discuss with the Board.

Commissioner DeFillippo commended Mr. Ritter for his report on the Long Range Plan 2050 and encouraged board members to attend the TPA Tuesday event and complete the Long Range Plan 2050 survey. The Commissioner also commended Mr. Francioli's recommendation to discuss the impacts of fair share housing on transportation.

XI. The Next Regular Meeting: Virtual Meeting on Tuesday, April 20, 2021 at 2:00 pm.

XII. Adjournment: Adjournment of the meeting was moved by Mr. Resto, seconded by Mr. Francioli, and unanimously approved. The meeting was adjourned at 2:45 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Dede Murray, Division of Engineering & Transportation