

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

In Attendance:

Board Members	Additional Attendees	Staff
Melverne E. Cooke	Jakub Rowinski, NJTPA	Christopher Vitz
Ronald Francioli	Scott Parker, Jacobs Engineering	John Hayes
Scott Harris	Adrienne Kanter, Stokes Creative Group	Dede Murray
Jack Holland		Benjamin Peacock
Frank Reilly		
Len Resto		
Manuela Schuster		
Jigar Shah		
Joe Wells, Chairperson		

I. Call to Order: Chairperson Joe Wells called the meeting to order at 2:02 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 20, 2021 Meeting: Approval of the minutes was moved by Len Resto, seconded by Melverne Cooke, and unanimously approved.

V. Presentation: Berkshire Valley Road Truck Circulation Project

Jakub Rowinski of the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA) and Scott Parker of Jacobs Engineering gave a presentation on the Berkshire Valley Road Truck Circulation Project in Roxbury Township. The project is being conducted through NJTPA's Freight Concept Development Program. It will investigate options to eliminate the height restriction that the Chester Branch rail bridge creates on Berkshire Valley Road and to explore potential improvements to better accommodate truck movements at the intersection of Berkshire Valley Road and North Dell Avenue. The intent of the study is to address the challenges in both places and find alternatives to increase safety for the traveling public and better accommodate the potential future development of land parcels neighboring the corridor.

The project will evaluate existing conditions, develop a Purpose and Need Statement, perform an Alternatives Analysis, and ultimately select a Preliminary Preferred Alternative.

Community participation and stakeholder coordination will be integral throughout all stages of the study. Throughout the process, local officials, community stakeholders, and the public will have an opportunity to provide comments and ask questions for consideration. The project is expected to be completed in the winter of 2022. The study overview and documents can be reviewed on the project's website, <https://www.berkshirevalleyroadstudy.com>.

Mr. Resto asked if the Chester Branch was at one time part of the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western (DL&W) Railroad. Frank Reilly stated that this line was constructed by DL&W Railroad in the 1920's. Several years ago, Mr. Reilly led a group to preserve many of the records of the DL&W. The group was able to retrieve large quantities of records out of Hoboken. The records were donated a few years ago to Steam Town in Scranton, PA for cataloging. Mr. Resto mentioned that Patrick McKnight is a good contact from Steam Town. Mr. Parker requested that contact information on Mr. McKnight be sent to him, which was obliged by Mr. Resto. Mr. Resto inquired over car length, frequency, and speed of the that trains travel through the project area. Mr. Parker responded that the trains typically carry a maximum of 10 cars. Scott Parker responded that the frequency varies depending on the season and demand from customers; but typically, a couple times a week. Mr. Parker also stated that the trains currently have a 10 mph slow order, but Scott Harris reported that the Railroad is looking into modifying that order so that the trains operate at 25 mph in that area. Chairperson Wells inquired if there are weight constraints on the bridge. Mr. Harris responded that the bridge is 286k lbs rail car compatible and added that all Morris County rail bridges are graded for 286k lbs rail cars.

VI Reports:

- A. Road & Bridge Projects:** Christopher Vitz, County Engineer, reported on several County road and bridge projects.

Bridges

- The replacement of the West Central Avenue Bridge in Wharton was completed and the bridge was opened to traffic.
- The repairs to the Chester Branch Railroad Bridge that cross over Berkshire Valley Road is complete and the road will be reopened to two lanes of traffic by the end of the day.
- A meeting will be held with local business owners regarding the Landing Road Bridge reconstruction project in Roxbury to provide them with information and progress updates about the project. Morris County has acquired five out of the eight properties needed to accommodate the reconstructed bridge. The final design for this project is currently underway.

Roads

- The paving of Boonton Avenue in Kinnelon has been completed and the paving of Boonton Avenue in Montville is forthcoming. Other paving projects that are expected to be completed this year include Espanong Road and Edison Road in Jefferson Township.
- Design of the projects in the 2022 Paving Program is underway.

- B. NYS&W Updates:** Dede Murray provided a status update of the NYS&W Bicycle and Pedestrian Path Project. An upcoming rebid for construction will be advertised sometime this quarter. The targeted commencement period for construction is early next year. A contract has been awarded to Merje to design wayfinding and interpretive signage for the path. The kick-off meeting for the Wayfinding and Signage Design project will occur in late October or early November.

Chairperson Wells inquired about what changes were made to the plans and specifications since the initial bid. Ms. Murray reported that bid documents were updated to incorporate the information and clarifications that the bidders requested during the original bidding period. This information was included to streamline the advertising and proposal review process.

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

- The repair of the Chester Branch Railroad Bridge that crosses over Berkshire Valley Road Railroad Bridge in Roxbury was completed, and the road will be fully reopened.
- The County awarded a contract to Van Cleef Engineering for a new round of bridge inspections as part of the County's Railroad Bridge Management Program. The kickoff meeting for the bridge inspection project is forthcoming.
- Morris County received bid documents and plans from JMT for the Main Street Drainage Project along the High Bridge Branch in Mount Olive. The project will be put out to bid upon approval from Morris County Commissioners.

Rail Freight Assistance Program

- The survey of the County railroad right-of-way in the project area was completed for the Dover & Rockaway Railroad Runaround Track Design project. The runaround track will be built in Rockaway Township. Morris County met with the design consultant several times in the past quarter to discuss track design opportunities and constraints. A future meeting is planned to discuss design alternatives.
- A Request for Proposals is being prepared for the Dover & Rockaway Railroad Realignment Design project.

State Crossing Reconstruction Program

- The design contract has been awarded to JMT for the Berkshire Valley Road Crossing Improvements. The crossing along the Chester Branch Railroad in Roxbury will be upgraded. The kickoff meeting will be held after the contract is fully executed.

- D. NJ 24 and Columbia Turnpike Interchange:** Mr. Vitz reported on the status of the concept development study for the NJ 24 and Columbia Turnpike Interchange that NJDOT managed and funded. NJDOT is working on finalizing the report and completing the answers to public comments. This quarter, NJDOT turned over the

project to Morris County for managing the next phases. Mr. Resto inquired if NJDOT would continue funding the project. Mr. Vitz answered that no funding has been committed. The County Commissioners and Administration will meet on October 27 to discuss the transfer of the project and what the next steps will be. The County will consider holding an additional meeting with the municipalities to provide a project update and discuss the preferred alternative. The County will try to move forward with the preferred alternative if supported by all the municipalities in the impacted area. A funding source for design and construction has not been determined.

VIII. Old Business:

None.

IX. New Business:

Mr. Resto, who serves as Council Liaison to the Chatham Borough Senior Citizens Advisory Committee, inquired if consideration can be given to increasing the frequency of bus service along the 873 Route that comes through Chatham to a fifteen-minute headway. Mr. Hayes responded that NJ Transit has indicated that their budget is limited in increasing bus service in our region. There is a current redesign of bus routes in Newark, which would impact some Morris County routes. To increase headways, NJ Transit would need a demonstration of demand.

Ron Francioli discussed the new construction occurring at the old Mennen site and on Route 202 and West Hanover Avenue. A combination of condominiums and retail in the area are being constructed. Hanover Township Mayor Ferramosca has concerns regarding bottle necks at the intersection of Route 202 and Hanover Avenue. Mr. Francioli mentioned that Mayor Karr of Morris Plains has concerns about widening the road on the Morris Plains side of the intersection, as it will impact private properties, parking, and traffic activity. Chairperson Wells asked if any traffic studies have been conducted in that area. Mr. Vitz mentioned that an impact fee was charged for additional traffic caused by the Mennen redevelopment. It was about \$10k-\$15k fee to offset the new growth. The impacts were determined based off traffic volumes from the period that Mennen had been in business. Alternatives to the current road design and lane numbers have been in discussion for roughly twenty years, but a solution has not been agreed upon between the two municipalities. The County is continuing to charge impact fees on new development so the County can conduct a traffic study of the intersection. A traffic study would help determine what solutions would need to be implemented.

Chairperson Wells mentioned that there is a Complete Streets webinar in November for any interested parties. Chairperson Wells inquired if Mr. Vitz is involved in any of the Complete Streets programs. Mr. Vitz stated that he attended an NJDOT Complete Streets event recently, and he is currently involved with state-led research on bicycle accommodations.

X. Public Comments: None.

XI. The Next Regular Meeting: Virtual Meeting on Tuesday, January 18, 2022 at 2:00 pm.

XII. Adjournment: Adjournment of the meeting was moved by Mr. Resto, seconded by Mr. Reilly, and unanimously approved. The meeting was adjourned at 3:17 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Dede Murray, Division of Engineering & Transportation