

MEETING MINUTES
Morris County Board of Transportation Meeting
 Tuesday, January 18, 2022
 Web-Ex Virtual Meeting

In Attendance:

Board Members	Additional Attendees	Staff
Melverne E. Cooke	Denise Chaplick, Morris County Park Commission	Christopher Vitz
Ronald Francioli	Trista Kuna, Morris County Park Commission	John Hayes
Darren Large		Dede Murray
Ilene Dorf Manahan		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 October 19, 2021 Meeting: Approval of the minutes was moved by Len Resto, seconded by Melverne Cooke, and unanimously approved.

V. Report from 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 2022 Board of Transportation, which was seconded by Mr. Resto. The Board unanimously approved the three officers.

VI. Reports:

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

Bridges

- The Landing Road Bridge project is one of the largest bridge projects that the County has undertaken. The project involves property acquisitions that are ongoing. The bridge crosses over NJ Transit and the Morris Canal right of way. The project includes seven total and seven partial property acquisitions. All the total takings have been completed, while the partial takings are still progressing. Construction is expected to begin in the third quarter of this year. The bridge construction will cost about \$12 million.

Roads

- The County has completed the 2021 paving season. The County Commissioners approved funding for the design of the projects in 2022 Paving Program in the Fall of 2021, and the designs are advancing. The resolution to fund the construction of the 2022 paving projects will be introduced at the next County Commissioners meeting. The County seeks to get the paving projects out to bid as early in the year as possible.

Frank Reilly inquired about the age of the Landing Road Bridge that is being replaced. Mr. Vitz answered that the bridge was built in 1913 and was originally part of the Lackawanna Railroad.

Chairperson Wells requested updates on federal funding from the recently passed Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Mr. Vitz responded that legislation provides more funding than past federal transportation authorizations. Rules for the various new grant programs have not yet been completed. The County will monitor the grant opportunities that emerge from the Law.

Ronald Francioli requested updates on two road projects: the Route 24 / Columbia Turnpike / Park Avenue interchange project, and the Route 202 / Hanover Avenue project. Mr. Vitz replied that the County continues to discuss the Route 24 / Columbia Turnpike / Park Avenue project with the municipalities in the study area, however a consensus among the municipalities on the preferred alternative has not been reached. The County has discussed the Route 202 / Hanover Avenue intersection with NJDOT, Morris Plains, and Morris Township. The County has limited options as the intersection is under NJDOT's jurisdiction.

- B. NYS&W Updates:** Dede Murray provided a status update of the NYS&W Bicycle and Pedestrian Path Project. Bids for construction were opened in late October. Currently, bids are being reviewed by the NJDOT Division of Local Aid. Construction of the Path is expected to begin this year.

The Wayfinding and Signage Design project for the path has started. The Morris County Division of Engineering and Transportation is working in close cooperation with the Morris County Park Commission and the consultant to design a variety of interpretive and wayfinding signs for the path. The project kick-off meeting was held in November. Ms. Murray took the consultant team out to the path for a guided on-site review after the kick-off meeting. Earlier in January, the consultant gave a presentation to the project team showcasing

basic panel content and design examples. Currently, the Park Commission is performing a review of the presentation.

Ms. Cooke inquired about NJDOT's review schedule. Ms. Murray responded that NJDOT's Division of Local Aid is reviewing the low bids and the County is awaiting the response. NJDOT Local Aid reviews all bids for state and federal funded projects to confirm that the bidders meet grant requirements.

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

NJTPA Freight Concept Development

- The Berkshire Valley Road Truck Circulation Project is part of NJTPA's Freight Concept Development Program. The study is investigating options to eliminate the height restriction that the Chester Branch rail bridge creates on Berkshire Valley Road (642). It will also explore options to better accommodate truck movements at the intersection of Berkshire Valley Road and N. Dell Avenue. The project team has worked on developing alternatives for the past few months. A meeting with NJTPA, Morris County, and the consultant team is scheduled next week to begin evaluating and scoring the alternatives. A meeting was recently held with the County's railroad operator to discuss and receive feedback on the alternatives.

Freight Design Projects

- The Dover & Rockaway Runaround Track Design project is nearing completion. The consultant will submit the draft final design next week. A Request for Proposals (RFP) for the design of Dover & Rockaway Realignment Project is being assembled.
- The Berkshire Valley Road and High Bridge Branch Crossing Design project is underway. The kick-off meeting was held in December.

Railroad Management Agreement

- The Railroad Management Agreement with the Dover & Rockaway Railroad expires this June. A Request for Proposals for a new Agreement to operate the County-owned freight railroads is currently being prepared.

Chairperson Wells questioned if there is a particular alternative for the Berkshire Valley Road Truck Circulation Project that is favored by the railroad operator or the County. Mr. Peacock responded that a closer analysis of the alternatives is required before a preferred alternative can be chosen. Mr. Reilly asked about the term of the Operating Agreement. Mr. Peacock responded that the Agreement is for five years. Mr. Reilly inquired about the impact on freight customers when Chester Branch is closed for the Berkshire Valley Road Rail Bridge improvements. Mr. Peacock answered that minimizing disruptions to customers along the line is critical for determining which is the preferred alternative.

VII. Old Business:

None.

VIII. New Business:

The proposed 2022 Morris County Board of Transportation meeting dates were unanimously approved.

- April 19, 2022
- July 19, 2022
- October 18, 2022
- January 17, 2023

Mr. Francioli requested that a contact list of Morris County Board of Transportation Members is compiled and shared amongst its members. Board members that were present at the meeting gave their consent to share their contact information. Staff will reach out to members that were not in attendance for their consent and will prepare and distribute a contact list to Board members.

Mr. Hayes reported that the annual Traffic Count program has resumed after being suspended in 2020 due to the pandemic. 60 counts were completed on County routes in 2021, and volumes at most locations were lower than before 2020. Only six out of the 30 counts recorded in the Fall were above pre-COVID numbers.

Mr. Francioli reported that Morris Township, Hanover Township, and Parsippany have been concerned about the impacts on Johnson Road, Malapardis Road, and Route 10 from the "Fifteen-Fifteen" development project on Route 10. Mr. Francioli inquired if the traffic impacts and circulation from this development are being looked at on the County level. Mr. Vitz responded that since reviewing the initial site plan application, the County has had minimal involvement. Mr. Vitz elaborated on changes to the design of the building. Previously, there was a large retail component that has been changed to predominantly residential. Mr. Vitz responded that he will look to see if the developer has reapplied with an updated site plan.

Ilene Dorf Manahan asked if a traffic impact analysis was performed for the redevelopment of the property on East Hanover Avenue and Martin Luther King Avenue in Morris Township. Mr. Vitz stated that the site plan application for this site was received several years ago and a traffic impact study was performed. The developer also provided a small contribution to perform a minor traffic study at the Route 202 and Hanover Avenue intersection. One of the outcomes of the Lowe's Home Improvement development was the traffic signal installation on East Hanover Avenue at the Mennen Arena and Lowes entrances. Ms. Manahan inquired if the development would include an ingress and egress point onto Martin Luther King Avenue. Mr. Vitz responded that the residential properties have a connection to Martin Luther King Avenue. There will be no access to Martin Luther King Avenue from the new commercial component of the site.

Ms. Cooke reported that there was a recent Star Ledger article comparing the Access to the Region's Core (ARC) Tunnel with the current rail tunnel proposal. Ms. Cooke mentioned that Mr. Resto had been quoted in the article. Mr. Resto summarized some highlights of the ARC Tunnel's design and eventual cancellation.

Manuela Schuster announced that the County will be working on the Morris County Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan. The Rutgers Voorhees Transportation Center (VTC) will be assisting with this project. Mr. Vitz and Mr. Hayes are part of the TAC for the Plan. Ms. Schuster requested that staff acquire NJ Transit ridership numbers for the Plan. Mr. Hayes responded that he would confirm if the VTC has this information available yet. Mr. Hayes stated that the project team is currently collecting various data, and Morris County has provided transportation GIS layers and information from the Planning Department.

IX. Public Comments: None.

X. The Next Regular Meeting: Virtual Meeting on Tuesday, April 19, 2022 at 2:00 pm.

XI. Adjournment: Adjournment of the meeting was moved by Ms. Schuster, seconded by Mr. Resto, and unanimously approved. The meeting was adjourned at 2:50 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Dede Murray, Division of Engineering & Transportation