

MEETING MINUTES
Morris County Board of Transportation Meeting
Tuesday, April 19, 2022
Web-Ex Virtual Meeting

In Attendance:

Board Members	Additional Attendees	Staff
Melverne Cooke	Daniel Murray, Roxbury Township Police Department	Christopher Vitz
Ronald Francioli		John Hayes
Ilene Dorf Manahan		Dede Murray
Manuela Schuster		Benjamin Peacock
Jigar Shah		
Commissioner Shaw		
Joe Wells, Chairperson		
John Wetzel		

I. Call to Order: Chairperson Joe Wells called the meeting to order at 2:05 pm.

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

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

IV. Approval of Minutes from January 18, 2022 Meeting: Approval of the minutes was moved by Ilene Dorf Manahan, seconded by John Wetzel. Commissioner Shaw abstained from approval of the meeting minutes.

V. Reports:

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

Roads

- The 2022 Road Paving Program is underway. Thirty miles of roadway will be milled and paved as part of this program. Several paving contracts have already been put out to bid. In the next two weeks, preconstruction meetings will be held for the repaving of Windemere Avenue (616) in Mount Arlington and Kiel Avenue (618) in Butler.

Bridges

- Roughly twelve bridge projects will occur this year. In addition, the County is finishing the property acquisition and right of way work required for the Landing Road Bridge project. This bridge project is predicted to go out to construction next year. The Landing Road Bridge project is one of the largest bridge projects that the County has undertaken.

Columbia Turnpike and Park Avenue Interchange

- Ronald Francioli requested updates the Route 24 and Columbia Turnpike Interchange Improvements Concept Development project. An aerial of the preferred alternate was shared on WebEx. Mr. Vitz described the status of the project. NJDOT hired a consultant to develop several alternatives through the concept development process. The project team worked with Morris County and municipal officials throughout the study to vet many design alternatives. A preferred alternative was identified, and the study was completed in 2021. However, not all municipalities support the preferred alternative, therefore advancement of the project is uncertain.

Mr. Vitz described the preferred alternative. A new ramp would connect Route 24 eastbound to Park Avenue south of Columbia Turnpike. The intersection of the ramp and Park Avenue would be signalized. Mr. Vitz described the proposed changes for entering and exiting Route 24 eastbound, and the improvements at the Columbia Turnpike/Park Avenue intersection. The alternative will improve safety while reducing overall delay and pollution.

Mr. Vitz reported that a meeting was recently held with the mayors of Hanover Township, Morris Township, and Madison Borough. Florham Park Borough officials were unable to attend. At the meeting, Morris Township asked the County to hold an additional public meeting for residents in the project area to provide more detail on the project, answer questions, and solicit further input.

The public had submitted many comments during concept development that the County would consider should the project advance to preliminary engineering. Mr. Vitz shared some examples of the comments that were received. One resident recommended installing a concrete barrier on the corner of Prescott Road to prevent left hand turns from Park Avenue northbound into the Prescott Road to help enforce the “right turn in, right turn out” movement rules that are in place. Another person recommended installing a second left turn lane on Park Avenue northbound approaching Columbia Turnpike to help alleviate delays that occur at this area of the intersection. Residents of an area consisting of about thirty homes near and on Delaware Avenue are concerned about traffic backups on Park Avenue near their homes.

Mr. Vitz reported that the County will be attending a meeting in Morris Township next month to discuss and hopefully receive support for the preliminary preferred alternative. If the alternative is supported, the County would then explore funding opportunities through the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority and other sources. The phases for this project are as follows: preliminary preferred alternative, preliminary engineering, final

engineering/right of way acquisition, and then construction. Should funding be in place, it would take at least five to six years to complete the phases.

Commissioner Shaw added that it will be necessary to receive resolutions of support from each of the towns in order to secure funding for the project. He expressed hope that all municipalities in the project area would decide to support the project.

Mr Francioli stated that this intersection is very dangerous with over forty accidents per year. Each of the towns involved in this project are partnering to get this project fully supported. Mr. Francioli complimented County Engineering on their contributions to this project and stated that this alternative can improve the intersection while taking as little land as possible.

Commissioner Shaw noted that a [project page](#) is available for more information on the Route 24 and Columbia Turnpike Interchange Improvements Concept Development project. The webpage includes a narrated video from NJDOT providing an overview of the project. A link to this webpage will be emailed to the Board of Transportation members after the meeting.

B. NYS&W Updates: Dede Murray provided a status update of the NYS&W Bicycle and Pedestrian Path Project.

The Wayfinding and Signage Design project is running smoothly. The County has had several meetings with the consultant team. At this point, project stakeholders have worked together to nail down some design schemes. The next phase of the project involves sign content development and identification of sign placement locations.

In February, a contract was awarded to New Prince Concrete Construction for construction of the trail. The preconstruction meeting will be held on April 20th. However, Morris County cannot issue a notice to proceed for construction until an NJDOT report and inventory on bat populations is completed. The report is expected to be finished in late May and its findings will play a major role in determining the start date for construction.

Chairperson Wells inquired what the first point of construction will be once the bat report is complete. Ms. Murray replied that the contractor will determine construction staging. Most likely, the first construction item will be tree removal to make room for the 20-foot clearance for the trail. Chairperson Wells noted that the progress is encouraging, and the award of construction contract is a substantial step forward for the project. Chairperson Wells inquired as to an expected date of completion for the trail. Ms. Murray responded that the construction phase is roughly 18 months.

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

NJTPA Freight Concept Development Program

- Alternatives for the Berkshire Valley Road Truck Circulation Project are being developed and scored to determine a preliminary preferred alternative. The study is examining the low clearance issue created by the Chester Branch bridge over Berkshire Valley Road, and the geometry of the Dell Avenue and Berkshire Valley Road intersection in Roxbury.

Rail Freight Assistance Program

- Dover & Rockaway Railroad Runaround Design: A runaround track is being designed to improve railroad operations along the D&R Railroad in Rockaway Township. The County received draft plans, cost estimates, and specifications in early February. The County reviewed the drafts and provided feedback to the consultant in mid-February.
- Dover & Rockaway Railroad Realignment Design: This project's RFP was completed and is currently out to bid.

Various

- The Berkshire Valley Road Railroad Crossing design project started at the end of 2021 and is advancing.
- The County Railroad Operator Agreement will be awarded this year. The contract term is five years.
- The rail bridge inspections contract is on schedule. Over half of the bridge inspections have been completed.

Chairperson Wells inquired if a preferred solution for the Berkshire Valley Road Bridge has been identified. Mr. Peacock answered that one leading alternative is raising the bridge, while another proposal that is being evaluated is a full bridge replacement.

VI. Old Business:

None.

VII. New Business:

Mr. Francioli inquired about access issues regarding the Fifteen Fifteen Project on Route 10. Mr. Vitz responded that the development application took credit for existing site generated traffic. The volumes do not significantly vary from previous development at the site. The change in land use will result in an alternate direction traveled during peak hours. The County Land Development Review Committee provided recommendations for the development. Input is limited to recommendations as this project does not involve County roads. The comments that the County provided were in relation to impervious surface coverage for stormwater runoff and transportation recommendations such as including sidewalks in the site plan.

Ms. Schuster inquired about any updates on the Human Services Transportation Plan. Mr. Hayes responded that the most recent updates were provided at the Technical Advisory Committee meeting. A draft of the plan should be available at the end of the year.

Daniel Murray, Lieutenant at the Roxbury Township Police Department had some questions regarding the Landing Road Bridge project. He inquired about the status of the land acquisitions. Mr. Vitz responded that there are a few remaining acquisitions to complete. There is a home with one tenant who the County is trying to relocate. A real estate office is very close to being acquired. Lastly, acquisition of a commercial building is advancing. The County is hoping to settle all acquisitions and are working diligently to get the bridge to construction by the end of this year.

John Wetzel inquired about what breaking ground would involve. Mr. Vitz responded that construction would include raising buildings, road work, and bridge work. Mr. Vitz confirmed that there will be no road work until a development and sewer project occurring on Shippenport Road are completed. It is expected that building demolition will be the first phase of the project. Demolition is predicted to begin at the end of this year. Lieutenant Murray inquired if the bridge will be shut down entirely or if one lane will remain open during construction. Mr. Vitz replied that there will not be any shut down. Two bi-directional lanes will remain open throughout construction. A new bridge will be built adjacent to the old structure. Once the new bridge is complete, the old structure will be torn down.

Chairperson Wells inquired about the impact of the new state regulation requiring four-foot buffers between bicycles and motorists. Mr. Vitz responded that the County may find instances with roadways that may have adequate width to provide bicycle facilities. The County is not looking to widen any roads at this time. Currently, the County is exploring feasibility for bicycle facilities on Boulevard in Pequannock Township.

VIII. Public Comments: None.

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

X. Adjournment: Adjournment of the meeting was moved by Ms. Schuster, seconded by Ms. Manahan, and unanimously approved. The meeting was adjourned at 2:40 pm.

Minutes prepared by Dede Murray, Division of Engineering & Transportation