

MEETING MINUTES
Morris County Board of Transportation Meeting
 Tuesday, January 17, 2023
 Web-Ex Virtual Meeting

In Attendance:

Board Members	Additional Attendees	Staff
Melverne Cooke	Laura Cerutti, Avenues in Motion	Christopher Vitz
Ronald Francioli	Corey Hanlon, MMU	John Hayes
Jack Holland	Ted Ritter, NJTPA	Dede Murray
Darren Large		
Frank T. Reilly		
Len Resto		
Manuela Schuster		
Jigar Shah		
Commissioner Shaw		
Joe Wells, Chairperson		
John Wetzel		

I. Call to Order: Chairperson Joe Wells called the meeting to order at 2:03 pm.

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

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

IV. Approval of Minutes from October 18, 2022 Meeting: Manuela Schuster provided several edits to the minutes, and the Board reviewed the changes. Approval of the minutes was moved by Melverne Cooke, seconded by Ms. Schuster, and unanimously approved.

V. Report from Election Committee Chairperson & Election of Officers: Ms. Cooke announced the 2023 officer nominees for election. Mr. Wells was nominated as Chairperson, Frank Reilly as Vice-Chairperson, and Ms. 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 ask for a motion to approve the slate of officers for the 2023 Board of Transportation. Approval of the officers was moved by Mr. Resto, seconded by Ms. Cooke, and unanimously approved.

VI. Reports:

A. Road & Bridge Projects:

Christopher Vitz, County Engineer, reported that the County is in the process of developing the 2023 Capital Budget. The Commissioners presented the preliminary budget on November 9, 2022. The draft budget includes \$15.5 million for paving 26 miles of roads in 14 municipalities, about \$7.8 million of this total is provided by the State of New Jersey. The budget also includes \$7.4 million for bridges (six construction and five design projects), and \$2.6 million for intersection projects. The funding usually becomes live in March or April when the budget is adopted.

Mr. Vitz announced that federal funding for the Route 24 and Columbia Turnpike Interchange Project has been secured. The NJTPA Board of Trustees voted to add the project into the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) on January 9, 2023. Funding for preliminary engineering will be available in FY 2024 and construction is estimated to start in FY 2028.

Chairperson Wells asked if material cost increases will limit the number of road miles that can be paved. Mr. Vitz said cost increase have limited it somewhat. The County still expects to get 26 miles paved, but there is a chance prices will have escalated further when the season starts. Mr. Vitz noted that labor costs have increased by a greater percentage than material costs, and it is having a greater impact on overall project costs.

Commissioner Shaw announced that he has joined the NJTPA Board of Trustees, filling the seat Commissioner DeFillippo vacated when she retired. He said that one of his first votes was to authorize the addition of the Route 24 and Columbia Turnpike Interchange Project to the TIP, and he was happy to see it advance.

B. Pompton Valley Rail Trail Updates:

Dede Murray provided a status update of the Pompton Valley Rail Trail Project, formerly named the NYS&W Bicycle and Pedestrian Path. She reported that the construction project is moving along on schedule.

Sanding and blasting of the Pompton River rail bridge were completed. Steel and concrete repairs on the bridge will continue as weather permits. Pile driving for the Packanack Bridge and the boardwalk section of trail is in progress. Most of the trail grade crossings have been completed. There are a few at the southern end of the trail that are not yet done. Slope stability work started last Friday along an area north of Woodland Avenue; the County hired a separate contractor to do this additional task. Curb and sidewalk improvements started along Mountain View Boulevard in Wayne, however that work had to be suspended until the spring.

Chairperson Wells asked when the section between Newark Pompton Tpke and the Pompton River Bridge will be completed. He noted there is a lot of usage already in the northern section of the trail in Pompton Plains and Pequannock.

Ms. Murray responded that the section will be completed at the end of the project when the benches and kiosks are installed. The County is looking forward to officially opening the trail once the contractor has completed the entire trail project and the ribbon cutting ceremony is held.

C. Freight Activities:

Mr. Hayes announced that Ben Peacock left Morris County to join NJ Transit and Dede Murray will be taking on the County's rail freight projects.

Berkshire Valley Road Truck Circulation Project: Mr. Hayes reported that the Berkshire Valley Road Truck Circulation Project is getting closer to completion. The study investigated options to eliminate the height restriction that the Chester Branch rail bridge creates on Berkshire Valley Road (CR 642) and to better accommodate trucks at the intersection of Berkshire Valley Road and North Dell Avenue in Roxbury. The project is funded through NJTPA's freight concept development program. The NJTPA, the consultant team, and Morris County will meet with Roxbury officials this week to discuss the alternatives and determine if the municipality would support them. There will be a public meeting to present the preferred alternative, the goal is to have the meeting in March. The meeting details will be shared with the Board of Transportation.

Dover & Rockaway Railroad Runaround Track: Ms. Murray provided an update on the Dover & Rockaway Railroad Runaround Track project that is funded through NJDOT's Rail Freight Assistance Program. A runaround track is being designed to improve railroad operations along the D&R Railroad in Rockaway Township. The project team is discussing permitting with NJDEP. The County will go out to bid for construction once the permits are approved. Construction is expected to be completed July 2023.

Dover & Rockaway Railroad Realignment: The Dover & Rockaway Railroad Realignment project was the first County railroad project to advance through NJTPA's Freight Concept Development Program. Ms. Murray reported that the County is now advancing to the design phase of this project, which is funded through NJDOT's Rail Freight Assistance Program. The consultant team was selected for this design project and the kick-off meeting was held on October 21. Currently, survey work is being conducted.

Berkshire Valley Road Railroad Crossing Replacement: Ms. Murray reported that the County will be upgrading the crossing of the High Bridge Branch and Berkshire Valley Road (642) with precast concrete panels. The contract was awarded and the preconstruction meeting will be held in the spring.

D. Airport Activities

Darren Large gave a presentation on recent activities at Morristown Municipal Airport. The airport is currently advancing projects identified in their 2013 Airport Master Plan. He provided an overview of their 20-year plan that identifies future needs and improvements at the airport. Two of the projects that the master plan identified will begin construction this year.

Western Area Redevelopment: The current Taxiway Kilo and airport apron do not meet current standards for aircraft. The redevelopment will improve the flow of aircraft into and out of the apron. Taxiway Kilo will be relocated to improve access to the Western Area for larger aircraft. The project will install two new hangers, a general aviation terminal, and a parking area for light general aviation aircraft. The airport does not expect a major increase in air traffic due to these improvements.

Runway 5-23 Rehabilitation Project: The goal of the Runway 5-23 Rehabilitation Project is to bring the runway up to current standards and beyond. They are phase 9 of the rehabilitation project. In this phase, the airport is replacing a 36-inch drainage culvert that crosses under a taxiway and Runway 5-23. The culvert was installed in 1942 and is undersized to handle the amount of water that moves across the airport. The new culvert will be 72-inch diameter and will mitigate the flooding on the west side of the airport. The work is expected to be completed in the summer of 2023. Runway 5-23 will be closed for 30 days, and the intersection of Taxiways Alpha and Bravo will be closed for 22 days.

Recently completed Runway 5-23 rehabilitation includes a new access road on the east side of the runway (2020), culvert replacements at the approach end of the runway (2021), and installation of new Medium Intensity Approach Lighting System with Runway End Identifier Lights and glide slope shack (2022). Future planned projects include redoing the extended runway safety area at Runway 5 (2024), repaving runway 5-23 (2025-2028), and installing Engineered Material Arresting System (2027).

Ronald Francioli said it was an excellent presentation and thanked the airport for meeting with Hanover Township to discuss these improvements. He noted that during the runway shutdown, Hanover will experience additional flights as traffic is diverted to another runway. The town has notified residents of the upcoming work.

Mr. Resto asked if flooding is a concern at the airport. Mr. Large said it has been a problem as the existing culverts do not have the capacity to move the water.

Commissioner Shaw asked about the capacity in the western area for small general aviation planes. Mr. Large replied that the original tie down area was able to handle about 110 aircraft. Currently, there are 43 planes in the tiedown area. They will maintain 57 spaces on the airfield for those tiedown aircraft, as there is no longer the demand to maintain the capacity for 110 aircraft.

Mr. Francioli inquired if the traffic will be shifted to another airport during construction. Mr. Large reported that the majority of the jets will relocate to other airports because Runway 13-31 is only 4,000 feet long. Only the smaller aircraft will operate out of the airport during that time.

Chairperson Wells asked if the tie down area is also for transient aircraft, and what wingspan width the improved taxiways need to accommodate. Mr. Large said the transient aircraft are at the Atlantic facility. They design taxiways to accommodate the aircraft with the most operations in and out of the airport. The current design aircraft is a Gulfstream 650 which has about a 101-foot wingspan.

Mr. Large added that the industry is trying to gain more fuel efficiency with aircraft design, and the aircraft are getting quieter. Mr. Francioli noted that aircraft noise is less of an issue in the area than many years ago. Mr. Large also reported that flight school training is in high demand due to the pilot shortage in the airline industry. The airport is trying to keep training flights as close to airport as possible. While training flights have increased, the number of overall operations was about 110k last year, which is less than in the early 2000's when they reached almost 200k operations a year.

VII. Old Business:

Mr. Francioli said he was happy to hear that the Route 24 interchange project will get funding and the towns will feel the same.

VIII. New Business:

Mr. Francioli reported that several corporations and Hanover are exploring creating a connection between NJ 10 and Columbia Turnpike. Hanover is talking with state representatives about the feasibility, cost, and environmental issues, and would like to include the County in the discussions. Ms. Cooke said that the proposal was discussed 10 years ago but wetlands was an issue. Mr. Francioli confirmed that there is interest to look at it again. Commissioner Shaw recommended that the town reaches out to him.

Chairperson Wells asked Mr. Large if the airport would be able to host one of the next Board of Transportation meetings. Mr. Large said that the July 18 Board meeting could be held at the airport. Staff will coordinate preparations with Mr. Large.

2023 Board of Transportation Meeting Dates: Chairperson Wells asked the Board if the proposed meeting dates were acceptable. The Board accepted the following dates: April 25, 2023; July 18, 2023; October 17, 2023; January 16, 2024.

IX. Public Comments:

Mr. Francioli asked if there were any updates for the Hanover Ave/Route 202 intersection. Mr. Vitz reported that there is talk of new development on one of the corners of the intersection, however there is nothing else to report.

Mr. Large asked if the I-287 sign on Columbia Turnpike right outside of the airport could be replaced. The sign was damaged during a storm and repaired. Mr. Vitz said the County will make the request to the state.

Mr. Large asked if there will be meetings during the Route 24 interchange project to see how it will impact the airport and access. Mr. Vitz responded that there will be large outreach efforts during preliminary engineering, final design, and as construction starts.

X. The Next Regular Meeting: Tuesday, April 25, 2023 at 2:00 pm.

XI. Adjournment: Adjournment of the meeting was moved by Mr. Resto, seconded by Mr. Reilly, and unanimously approved. The meeting was adjourned at 2:50 pm.

Minutes prepared by John Hayes, Division of Engineering & Transportation