

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

In Attendance:

Board Members	Additional Attendees	Staff
Milverne Cooke	Ryan Gerhardt, Chesapeake & Delaware RR	Chris Vitz
Sean Dolan		John Hayes
Ron Francioli		Kevin Stephens
Jack Holland		
Ilene Dorf Manahan		
Manuela Schuster		
Jigar Shah		
Len Resto		
Commissioner Shaw		

I. Call to Order: John Hayes called the meeting to order at 2:33 pm.

II. Roll Call: Mr. Hayes read the roll call. Nine voting members were present during roll call.

III. Welcome and Introductions: Mr. Hayes welcomed all in attendance.

IV. Approval of Minutes from July 18, 2023 Meeting: Approval of the minutes was moved by Len Resto, seconded by Melverne Cooke, and unanimously approved with Mr. Resto abstaining.

V. Reports:

Mr. Hayes announced that Dede Murray left employment with Morris County, and introduced Kevin Stephens who recently graduated from Rutgers with a master's in planning and started working at the County in June.

A. Road & Bridge Projects:

Mr. Hayes provided an update on NJTPA's development of a Safety Action Plan involving eight counties in the region, including Morris County. This is a part of a larger effort across the United States to eliminate crashes involving serious injuries and fatalities. Safety Action Plans provide a framework for improving safety, with

the ultimate goal of eliminating fatal and serious injury crashes. The project will have a large public outreach component and be data intensive. The plan will present recommendations to improve safety through design, education, and enforcement. Adoption of the plans by the County Commissioners will make the Counties eligible to apply for implementation funding through the Federal Safe Streets and Roads For All grant program. The timeline for the Safety Action Plan consists of a kickoff planned for November 2023 and completion by December 2024.

Ms. Cooke asked about driver training being included in the project's agenda. Mr. Hayes stated that education and enforcement methods could be recommendations that come out of the study, citing issues like speeding and aggressive driving.

Chris Vitz, County Engineer, reported that the County's annual paving program is continuing, with about 20 miles paved so far and a wind-down period potentially beginning next month. Mr. Vitz reported that one of the county's paving engineers left in August.

He also reported on several of the County's Bridge projects. There is currently work being done on Richards Avenue Bridge in Dover that should be finished in the next month. Schooley's Mountain Road Bridge, which involved a full closure to traffic, was completed three weeks ahead of schedule, before the schools opened in Washington Township. The stone-arch bridge on Millbrook Avenue in Randolph also was completed, following some setbacks caused by a storm that caused a section of the bridge to partially collapse. This bridge was also reopened before school started. Progress on the Landing Road Bridge continues with the demolition of three more homes to clear the area for construction. The construction of the Landing Road Bridge is expected to start next year when the funding becomes live.

Mr. Hayes reported that the Fall 2023 Traffic Count Program has kicked off. Counts from 30 locations along county routes will be collected. Summary data from the previous ten years of traffic counts are available on the Morris County website.

B. Route 24 / Columbia Turnpike Interchange:

Mr. Vitz reported that \$1 million in funding for preliminary engineering for the Route 24 / Columbia Turnpike Interchange Project was secured. Though, the County still requires a formal letter from NJTPA stating that the County can incur costs in order to advance. The RFP for preliminary engineering will be prepared so the County will be ready to bid out the project as soon as possible.

Ron Francioli questioned if the funding for the project from NJTPA is anticipated. Mr. Vitz responded by stating that the project was added to the NJTPA's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the NJTPA's Board of Trustees, which includes Commissioner Shaw, voted to add it to the TIP. Commissioner Shaw further elaborated by explaining that the project was added to the TIP at the beginning of the year and is divided into several phases. The project is roughly 3-4 years out from construction. Commissioner Shaw believes that it would be a

good idea to put a general update out to the municipal stakeholder group that helped with the project. Mr. Francioli stated that Florham Park is also very interested in the project and asked if there is anything we can do in getting the funds released. Commissioner Shaw responded by stating that there is ongoing correspondence and we are making progress. Mr. Vitz confirmed to Mr. Francioli that \$1 million of funding will be going towards preliminary engineering in 2024 and \$1.5 million for final design.

C. Freight Activities:

Dover & Rockaway Railroad Runaround Track: Mr. Hayes stated that the design for the Dover & Rockaway Railroad Runaround Track was completed, and the construction will go out to bid soon. The runaround track will be built north of I-80 in Rockaway Township to improve railroad operations and will be funded by NJDOT's Rail Freight Assistance Program (RFAP).

Chester Branch Rail Bridge: Mr. Hayes reported that an NJDOT RFAP Application was submitted for the design of a new Chester Branch Rail Bridge over Berkshire Valley Road in Roxbury. The bridge has a clearance of 11'-5", which is too low for trucks to travel beneath. There have been many trucks that have crashed into the bridge. There are many large warning signs and flashing signs on the approaches, but trucks continue to hit the bridge. These crashes have closed the road, and they have shut down rail service affecting customers along the Chester and High Bridge Branches. The bridge was studied in NJTPA Freight Concept Development Program, the report was completed this summer. The study determined that the best approach is to replace the bridge with a new bridge that meets the standard height requirements. The preferred alternative calls for bridge that provides a 14' 3" clearance.

Len Resto commented that there is currently a similar situation with NJ Transit's bridge in Chatham.

Mercer and Union Street Crossings in Dover: Mr. Hayes reported that a diagnostic team meeting from NJDOT was requested for the Mercer and Union Street Crossings in Dover. This is the first step in receiving funding for repairs on the debilitated crossings. If funding is received NJDOT would pay for both design and construction.

Railroad Bridge Inspection Program: Mr. Hayes stated that the 2023 Railroad Bridge Inspection Program has kicked off in September. This follows an FRA requirement for rail bridges to be inspected every 540 days. The inspections of 16 bridges and 16 culverts along the County's three freight railroads should continue for the rest of the year.

D. Pompton Valley Rail Trail Updates:

Mr. Hayes stated that following the last Board of Transportation meeting the construction of the 4.7 mile trail from Mountain View Train Station in Wayne to River Drive in Pequannock continues to advance. At the Pompton River Bridge, bearings were installed and repairs to the steel have occurred. The concrete

abutments at the Packanack Bridge were poured, and the piles were driven for the elevated section of the trail/boardwalk section of the trail. Paving and grading has occurred at various sections of the trail. The contractor has also installed fencing, guiderails, boulders, and kiosks. Work will continue through the winter as long as the weather is favorable. The project is still on schedule to be completed in the summer of 2024.

VI. Old Business:

Manuela Schuster asked about the status of the Human Service Transportation Coordination Plan. Mr. Hayes reported that the final TAC meeting was held in May and the final report is being drafted.

VII. New Business:

Ted Ritter from NJTPA could not make the meeting, however, Mr. Hayes relayed several of Mr. Ritter's announcements. The first announcement was for the Morris Canal Working Group Meeting, which will be held virtually on November 8 at 10:30 am. This meeting will feature reports from NJTPA and the Morris Canal Society on recent developments and project updates. Mr. Hayes also highlighted the NJTPA's YouTube Channel and their series "MPO 101", for anyone interested in learning more about the NJTPA and what they do. MPO stands for Metropolitan Planning Organization. The next NJTPA Board of Trustees Meeting will be held in-person on November 13 at 10:30 am.

Mr. Hayes stated that Frank Reily recommended that a future Morris County Board of Transportation Meeting be held at the Whippany Rail Museum. This location could be considered for the spring meeting.

Ms. Manahan reported on a recent article about Morristown Medical Center. The Center is preparing a 15-20 year development plan for its campus and along Madison Avenue. Ms. Manahan described the concerns regarding the potential impact on the community and transportation, specifically Madison Avenue and I-287. It has not yet been formalized or submitted to the Morristown Planning Board.

Mr. Resto reported that the Senior Center of the Chathams is trying to get some type of transportation for seniors to access the center. There are seniors in the community who do not have the ability to get to the center. Mr. Resto asked if anyone has any ideas for a source of funding to get in touch with him.

VIII. Public Comments: None

IX. The Next Regular Meeting: Tuesday, January 16, 2024, at 2:00 pm.

X. Adjournment: Adjournment of the meeting was moved by Ms. Cooke, seconded by Ms. Manahan, and unanimously approved. The meeting was adjourned at 2:43 pm.

Minutes prepared by Kevin Stephens, Division of Engineering & Transportation