

MEETING MINUTES
Morris County Board of Transportation Meeting
Tuesday, April 16, 2024
Whippany Railway Museum
1 Railroad Plaza, Whippany, NJ 07981

In Attendance:

Board Members	Additional Attendees	Staff
Melverne Cooke	Laura Cerutti, Avenues in Motion	Christopher Vitz
Sean Dolan	Ryan Gerhardt, Chesapeake & Delaware LLC	John Hayes
Ron Francioli	John Sobotka, Chesapeake & Delaware LLC	Kevin Stephens
Darren Large		
Ilene Dorf Manahan		
Frank Reilly		
Manuela Schuster		
Jigar Shah		
Chairperson Wells		
John Wetzel		

I. Call to Order: Chairperson Wells called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

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

III. Welcome and Introductions: Chairperson Joe Wells thanked everyone for attending the in-person Board of Transportation Meeting at the Whippany Railway Museum in Hanover Township, and also gave his appreciation for the tour of the museum that was provided to Board members before the start of the meeting.

IV. Approval of Minutes from January 16, 2024 Meeting: Approval of the minutes was moved by Melverne Cooke, seconded by Ilene Dorf Manahan, and unanimously approved.

V. Reports:

A. Road & Bridge Projects:

Local Safety Action Plan

Mr. Hayes provided an update on the development of Morris County's Local Safety Action Plan (LSAP). NJTPA is funding and managing the development of

safety action plans for 8 counties in the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA) region. The Plan is focused on improving safety on County and municipal roads with the ultimate goal of eliminating serious injury and fatal crashes in Morris County. The intent is to create a plan that can be implemented. Mr. Hayes reported that the first Local Implementation Group meeting was held on April 10, provided some information on what was discussed, and shared some of the slides from the consultant's presentation.

The slides included statistics on fatal and serious injury crashes in Morris County, as well as potential Emphasis Areas that the strategies could focus on. Ms. Manahan recommended that the Distracted Driving Emphasis Area is divided into more categories such as cell phone usage and the application of make-up by drivers. Mr. Wetzel asked if this data could be broken down individually by town. Laura Cerutti and Mr. Hayes responded by stating they could provide resources with that information. Ms. Manahan also recommended an emphasis on motorcycle drivers. Ms. Cooke suggested a breakdown that could differentiate the statistics between electric and traditional bicycles. Mr. Wetzel asked about the existence of specific traffic scenarios in the data. Mr. Hayes stated that the data is more focused on broad trends. Jigar Shah asked a question about the role traffic signals play in the data that has been presented. Mr. Vitz explained the process for how the County investigates if a traffic signal is warranted.

Public outreach strategies for the plan's development were also discussed at the Implementation Group meeting. The project will have a website with feedback forms and maps to gather public feedback. There was discussion of public meetings as well and potentially having a table at an existing public event. Ms. Manahan asked about the possibility of educating younger audiences with the elements included in the Local Safety Action Plan. Ms. Cerutti responded that Avenues in Motion can work with schools to educate students through various learning experiences, like presentations. Ms. Manuela Schuster and Ms. Manahan mentioned that working with local police departments can create outstanding learning opportunities for younger audiences while creating a solid connection between the community and local law enforcement. Ms. Schuster suggested training pedestrians, including young people, to walk on the left side of the road facing oncoming traffic when there is no sidewalk present.

Mr. Hayes also shared a slide on the Safe System Approach, which will help guide the development of the plan. This process is an effective way to address and limit the risks commonly occurring on local roadways. The Safe System Approach prioritizes fatal and serious injury crashes. It recognizes that humans are vulnerable and make mistakes. It also recognizes that there is shared responsibility, the need for proactive safety, and the importance of redundancy to eliminate crashes. Mr. Wetzel asked what the Safety Action Plan would cost the County. Mr. Hayes stated that the entire LSAP is directly funded by the NJTPA.

Various County Updates

Mr. Hayes reported that the contract for Morris County's Spring 2024 Traffic Count Program was awarded to a contractor, Malick & Scherer, P.C., to conduct traffic counts at 30 locations on roads that fall under Morris County's jurisdiction.

The data is required to be submitted to the County by July 31, 2024. The County is also updating its GIS traffic signal and intersection data.

Christopher Vitz reported that the County is developing the Request For Proposals (RFP) for the preliminary engineering phase of the Route 24 / Columbia Turnpike Interchange Project. The Park Avenue paving project will begin in May and should be one of the first County paving projects for the year. The paving program will likely continue until December 2024. The demolition of buildings in preparation for the Landing Road Bridge construction in Roxbury also continues, and the construction of the bridge is expected to begin in 2025. Mr. Vitz reported that the County has seen a noticeable delay in the delivery of traffic signal equipment due to a supply shortage that is not expected to be resolved soon. This shortage is delaying the completion of intersection projects.

Following the earthquake on April 5, engineers from Morris County Division of Engineering & Transportation played an integral part in ensuring critical County infrastructure was not damaged by the quake and subsequent aftershocks. The County inspected seven bridges and two dams after the earthquake. In addition to these inspections, these engineers played a pivotal role in assessing any structural damage to the 1 million square feet of County office space. Mr. Vitz acknowledged that additional bridges still need to be inspected. Several Board members inquired about the extent of damage to the County's buildings. Mr. Vitz responded by stating that no significant damage had been identified.

B. Pompton Valley Rail Trail Updates:

Mr. Vitz reported that the winter season did not offer too many issues or setbacks to the continuation of the Pompton Valley Rail Trail construction project, outside of a few instances of flooding. The landscaping of the project area has continued. Additionally, the Pompton River Bridge repair work has continued, and the painting of the bridge is planned for the near future. Mr. Vitz stated that the project is still on track for completion sometime in the summer. Mr. Vitz and Chairperson Wells discussed that residents along the trail have expressed concerns regarding the tree-clearing work that has been taking place. Chairperson Wells also suggested that deer-resistant fencing may be required at the trail.

C. Freight Activities:

Dover & Rockaway Railroad Runaround Track: Mr. Hayes reported that the pre-construction meeting for the Dover & Rockaway Runaround Track project in Rockaway Township was held on January 17 with Morris County, the project designers (JMT), the project contractors (Railroad Construction Company), the County's railroad operator (Chesapeake & Delaware), Rockaway Township's Engineer, and officials from NJDOT. Site preparation has begun, with completion of tree clearing in the project area at the end of March. This project's design and construction is funded through NJDOT's Rail Freight Assistance Program. The construction phase of the project is expected to be completed this summer.

Chester Branch Rail Bridge: Mr. Hayes announced that Morris County was awarded a grant of \$558,432.90 through NJDOT's FY 2024 Rail Freight Assistance Program for the design of a replacement for the Chester Branch Rail Bridge on Berkshire Valley Road. The bridge currently has a clearance of 11'- 5", which is too low for trucks to travel beneath, ultimately leading to numerous truck crashes. Mr. Wetzel asked if a concept for this project was chosen. Mr. Hayes replied that the preferred alternative identified in concept development was replacing the entire bridge with one that would provide the appropriate clearance.

East Hanover Avenue Bridge: Mr. Hayes announced that NJTPA has selected the East Hanover Avenue Bridge Catenary Rail Clearance Project as a part of its FY 2025 Freight Concept Development Program. The study will identify a preferred alternative for eliminating the existing rail clearance issue under the East Hanover Avenue Bridge. The bridge is over NJ Transit's Morristown Line, which freight railroads also use to move cargo. The clearance issue is caused by overhead catenary wires that hang below the bridge, which, in turn, limits the height of railcars that can be moved on this line. Industry standard Plate "F" railcars, which have a height of 17' above the top of rail, cannot pass underneath the East Hanover Avenue bridge due to the catenary wires.

- D. Railroad Operations, Chesapeake & Delaware LLC:** Sean Dolan, Chesapeake & Delaware (C&D) LLC's General Manager, highlighted some recent developments on Morris County's railroad on their end. Recently, C&D received a Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Program Grant for the development of a geofence along a section of the Dover & Rockaway Railroad in Dover. The proposed project will develop and demonstrate an artificial intelligence-based (AI) method to detect and assess trespassing incidents through a defined geographical boundary that would be triggered by the movement of people and vehicles, alerting the user. Mr. Dolan stated that there will be a site visit between C&D, Rutgers, and Morris County at the project location before the expected project kick-off date in June. This geofence is planned to be in place for six months.

C&D's Safety and Service Consultant, John Sobotka, highlighted some challenges C&D has experienced with moving Plate "F" railcars on the NJ Transit Lines in Morris County due to the existing height limitations. Mr. Sobotka then mentioned an opportunity to increase rail operations that C&D would like to explore by creating a connection to the 2.5 million sq. ft. industrial Hartz Mountain Project in Roxbury. It could be an opportunity for C&D to increase rail business in the area while reducing the truck traffic on local roads. Mr. Sobotka also reported that Picatinny Arsenal is considering moving a large amount of military equipment by rail. Mr. Sobotka asked if the County could coordinate a meeting between the involved parties (Picatinny, C&D, County, etc.) to promote rail business by using the Kenvil Team Track as a potential staging area for the movement of the military equipment. Ms. Manahan inquired if there was an economic development group in Morris County, and if the County could coordinate communication with C&D. Mr. Vitz confirmed that the Morris County Economic Development Corporation (MCEDC) exists and that he would try to connect C&D with them. In closing, Mr. Sobotka thanked the County for the

upcoming construction of the Dover & Rockaway Runaround Track in Rockaway Township.

VII. Old Business: None

VIII. New Business:

Frank Reilly took a moment to discuss the history of the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad Subscription Club Car No. 2454 that the Board of Transportation meeting was held at the Whippany Railway Museum. Some historical facts that Mr. Reilly provided are that the railcar was built in 1912, rebuilt in 1929, and eventually donated to the museum by NJ Transit in 1986. After over \$1 million of restoration work was completed, the train is in pristine condition today. Chairperson Wells asked Mr. Reilly if the walls in the caboose were framed with wood or steel. Mr. Reilly replied that in their original state, the walls were wood. However, the wood frames were replaced with steel during the train's extensive restoration process. Following this, Chairperson Wells and Mr. Reilly thanked everyone for attending, and the meeting was concluded.

IX. Public Comments: None

X. The Next Regular Meeting: Tuesday, July 16, 2024, at 2:00 pm.

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

Minutes prepared by Kevin Stephens, Division of Engineering & Transportation