

**MEETING MINUTES**  
**Morris County Board of Transportation Meeting**  
Tuesday, April 8, 2025  
Web-Ex Virtual Meeting

**In Attendance:**

<b>Board Members</b>	<b>Additional Attendees</b>	<b>Staff</b>
Kathryn DeFillippo	Ben Schummer	Christopher Vitz
Ronald Francioli	Jan Aguilos	Debra Dellagiacoma
Ilene Dorf Manahan		
Chairperson Len Resto		
Manuela Schuster		
Jigar Shah		
Commissioner Stephen Shaw		

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

**II. Roll Call:** Chris Vitz read the roll call. Seven voting members were present during roll call.

**III. Welcome and Introductions:** Chairperson Resto welcomed everyone in attendance for the Board of Transportation Meeting.

**IV. Approval of Minutes from January 14, 2025 Meeting:** Approval of the minutes was moved by Commissioner Stephen Shaw, seconded by Kathryn DeFillippo, and unanimously approved.

**V. Reports:**

**A. Safety Action Plan:**

Mr. Vitz provided an update on the development of Morris County's Local Safety Action Plan (LSAP). The North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA) is funding and managing the development of local safety action plans for eight counties in the NJTPA region. A consultant team led by Jacobs Engineering was hired to undertake the project. The LSAP will be focused on improving safety on county and municipal roads. The intent is to identify serious and fatal crashes and provide strategies for addressing those crashes through different approaches, including engineering, education, and enforcement. The goal is to develop recommendations that can be implemented.

Mr. Vitz reported that the project team has been working on identifying/ranking various intersections and corridors to help prioritize and focus future efforts. Meanwhile, the team is also developing the plan's guiding strategies for approaching safety. The public survey and interactive map on the Local Safety

Action Plan's website have closed. However, Mr. Vitz mentioned that the map and previously posted comments are still visible on the website.

Mr. Vitz stated that the third Local Implementation Group meeting is planned for the end of April. The Local Implementation Group is made up of different county government departments (planning, engineering, sheriffs, prosecutors, human services), several organizations (Avenues in Motion, NAACP, Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Northern NJ Safe Kids), and municipalities with the highest number of fatal and serious injury crashes. Chairperson Resto asked Mr. Vitz if Chatham was included in the Local Safety Action Plan due to its list of dangerous intersections. Manuela Schuster also asked if Randolph had also made the lists of municipalities involved. Mr. Vitz stated that he did not have the list with him at the meeting, but he would provide that information. A virtual public meeting is planned for some time in the spring. Mr. Vitz stated that the Board of Transportation will receive the meeting details and invitation when available.

The Local Safety Action Plan is expected to be completed by the end of June, when the consultant's contract ends. The completion and adoption of the LSAP by the County Commissioners would make Morris County eligible to apply for implementation funding through the Federal Safe Streets and Roads For All grant program.

## **B. Road & Bridge Projects**

Mr. Vitz reported on several projects funded through NJTPA's Local Safety Program. Kickoff meetings for the preliminary engineering phase of both South Morris Street from Millbrook Avenue/Munson Avenue to Byram Avenue in Dover and East Main Street/Mendham Road from Tempe Wick Road to Cold Hill Road in Mendham Borough/Township were highlighted. Mr. Vitz mentioned that the Mendham Borough/Township project includes the potential to replace a signalized intersection with a roundabout. Ilene Dorf Manahan expressed her concern about adding more roundabouts in the County and questioned why they returned. Mr. Vitz responded that traffic engineers have identified the problem of right-angle crashes at intersections, which produce more injuries and damage than some other types of crashes. Roundabouts lower speeds and prevent serious crashes caused by right angle crashes. Mr. Vitz stated that the roundabout in Mendham Borough/Township will be studied, and it has not yet been determined if it will be implemented.

Commissioner Stephen Shaw noted that there is an agreement between Morristown and the County about the roundabout at the intersection of Morris and Spring Streets. The agreement specifies that the developer will replace the roundabout with a traffic signal if data shows that the roundabout is not making the intersection safer. According to Commissioner Shaw, the data supports the idea that the roundabout creates a safe intersection. An attendee from the public, Ben Schummer, asked when the roundabout was installed in Morristown and when they began to be phased out in the region. Mr. Vitz stated that the roundabout was constructed about two years ago. The other question was answered by Ms. Manahan and Chairperson Resto, who both said the 1970s or 1980s were most likely when traffic circles began to be replaced by signalized

intersections. Mr. Schummer also asked if the return of roundabouts was due to the safety implications. Mr. Vitz replied that it is a combination of safety factors, an attempt to lessen the delays drivers face at intersections, and a way to reduce costs related to maintaining traffic signals. Ms. DeFillippo added that the need for traffic circles comes down to safety, which can be seen with the significant decrease in serious injuries and deaths from traffic accidents.

Mr. Vitz pointed out that both corridor projects are on busy County roads with many turning vehicles. The projects are also near schools with high student pedestrian traffic. The project team will review and develop corridor, intersection, and pedestrian safety improvements. At the moment, the project team has completed collecting traffic counts and is working on surveying the corridors. The grants awarded for these projects are for design and construction. The projects will also include public outreach with the impacted local communities, including holding public information centers and opportunities for local public officials to look at the plans and offer feedback and recommendations.

Another NJTPA Local Safety Program-funded project is an intersection improvement project at Morris Street and Ridgedale Avenue. The project will provide safety improvements for both pedestrians and vehicles, and is currently in the preliminary engineering phase. Mr. Vitz reported that the intersection is part of Morristown's historic district. As a result, the project team is required to go through the state's Historic Preservation Office, which has requested an architectural survey of the intersection. This survey includes gathering photos and historical information about the buildings around the intersection. Mr. Vitz expects a "no significant impact" response from the Historic Preservation Office. Ms. Manahan mentioned that the Schuyler House, a block away, is what she believes is the closest historical structure in the area. Mr. Vitz replied that the old firehouse is one of the historic buildings, making this survey necessary. Mr. Schummer asked if this project would include the implementation of a traffic circle. Mr. Vitz said that the proposal for this project would only involve widening Ridgedale Avenue to create an exclusive right-turn lane.

Mr. Vitz added that the County is still waiting for the State's final signatures on the grant agreement for the Route 24 and Columbia Turnpike interchange project to receive funding and be able to award the contract. Ron Francioli asked what phase the project was in; Mr. Vitz responded that the project is in preliminary engineering, which involves refining the plan that was put together during concept development.

Mr. Vitz reported that a Local Officials Briefing was recently held on the Lenape Island Bridge replacement project that is in the concept development phase. The bridge is County-owned and connects to a 30-home island in Denville. Mr. Vitz stated the discussion was centered around the alternative that the County is promoting to replace the existing 13-ft wide bridge with a new 16-ft wide, one lane bridge to the island. Mr. Vitz stated that a Public Information Center will be held at the end of the month for this project.

Mr. Francioli asked if there were any updates on the Route 80 closure. Mr. Vitz said that the state has taken the lead on the problem, and the Morris County Engineering Division has not had much involvement. However, Mr. Vitz noted

that many County roads have been impacted, and the County has suspended all roadwork (utility, paving, and bridge projects) on County roads in the impacted area, unless it is an emergency. NJDOT anticipates that two lanes of traffic in both the eastbound and westbound directions would be opened by the beginning of May and hope to have all lanes opened in June, however that could be subject to change. Ms. Manahan inquired about the cause of the sinkholes in the area. Mr. Vitz stated that they resulted from deep old mineshafts that could not have been easily filled in the past. When the road was originally constructed it was not thought to be a problem, but over the decades since the interstate was built it became a problem. Mr. Vitz explained that the state is driving in piles in the area and sealing it with a concrete cap, essentially a “bridge underground”. Mr. Vitz also added that the state plans to inspect Route 15 to ensure no similar situation occurs. Ms. DeFillippo and Ms. Manahan said they both have noticed increased truck traffic in Roxbury, Rockaway, and Wharton due to the Route 80 closures. Ms. DeFillippo also expressed her pleasure at how the state handled the situation with police and financial assistance.

### **C. Freight Activities:**

Mr. Vitz provided some background information on the existing freight railroads in Morris County. The County owns three freight railroads: the Dover & Rockaway Railroad, the High Bridge Branch, and the Chester Branch. Day-to-day rail operations are handled by Chesapeake & Delaware LLC under a 5-year management agreement. Morris County is responsible for capital projects, any significant changes to the railroads, and railroad bridge inspections and repairs.

Dover & Rockaway Realignment: Mr. Vitz noted that progress has been made on the Dover & Rockaway Realignment project. The goal of this project is to remove the rail from downtown Dover. And the town would like the ROW to become a greenway or path. NJTPA's Freight Concept Development program identified the preferred alternative for moving the rail. The County secured a grant for the project's design from NJDOT's Rail Freight Assistance Program a few years ago. The County started the design process; however, environmental restrictions were identified, such as newly deed-restricted riparian areas and wetlands that would make the preferred alternative not likely. The newest potential alternative would involve connecting the NJ Transit rail line and the Dover & Rockaway Railroad near Samis Avenue in Dover. This alternative would eliminate most of the existing track in downtown Dover, eliminate nine public and one private rail crossings, require the development of a new bridge over the Rockaway River, and removes the need for a costly computerized Positive Train Control System (PTC) on the existing switch, which would cost upwards of \$1 million. This new alternative is potentially feasible. NJ Transit has indicated that from a high-level review, connecting to their existing rail siding would be acceptable. Any design impacting their rail or right-of-way would still need to be approved by NJ Transit. Mr. Vitz stated that the consultant for the project has provided the County with sketches illustrating the new alternative. Mr. Vitz mentioned that Alex Dougherty,

Dover's municipal planner, has positively influenced this project, especially in getting the entities involved together to push the project forward.

**VII. Old Business:** None

**VIII. New Business:** Mr. Francioli stated that the County of Morris should look into the growing traffic congestion around Hanover Avenue at Route. 202 heading into Morris Plains beginning earlier than usual, around 3 p.m. Ms. Manahan added that she has also noticed earlier congestion on Route 287 and Route 124. Ms. DeFillippo explained that the sinkhole situation on Route 287 and Route 80 and drivers trying to find alternative routes to avoid those roadways are the likely explanation for the earlier increases in traffic.

**IX. Public Comments:** Mr. Schummer inquired about the small sinkhole found on Route 287 northbound shoulder, and asked if the lane closures were reopened. Mr. Vitz responded that the situation was resolved, and a rotting corrugated metal pipe under the roadway created the issue. The state ultimately replaced the pipe, and the lanes were reopened, though the shoulder remains closed. Mr. Schummer also asked about the federal government's role in developing the new bridge to Lenape Island. Mr. Vitz stated that the County can receive funding for bridges and usually seeks state or federal funding for bridges when they are over \$5 million. The Lenape Island bridge project is estimated to cost \$10 million.

**X. The Next Regular Meeting:** Tuesday, July 15, 2025, at 2:00 pm.

**XI. Adjournment:** Adjournment of the meeting was moved by Ms. Manahan, seconded by Ms. DeFillippo, and unanimously approved. The meeting was adjourned at 2:43 p.m.

*Minutes prepared by Kevin Stephens, Division of Engineering & Transportation*