

MEETING MINUTES
Morris County Board of Transportation Meeting
Tuesday, July 14, 2026
Web-Ex Virtual Meeting

In Attendance:

Board Members	Additional Attendees	Staff
Carlos Duarte	Ted Ritter	Christopher Vitz
Jack Holland	Ben Schumer	John Hayes
Darren Large		Ryan Sprong
Ilene Dorf Manahan		
Chairperson Len Resto		
Manuela Schuster		
Jigar Shah		
John Sobotka		

I. Call to Order: Chairperson Len Resto called the meeting to order at 2:03 p.m.

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

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

IV. Approval of Minutes from January 13, 2026 Meeting and April 22, 2026 Meeting:

Approval of both minutes was moved by Ilene Dorf Manahan, seconded by Darren Large, and approved. Carlos Duarte abstained as he was not present at either of the meetings in question.

V. Morristown Airport Update:

Chairperson Resto inquired about a runway overrun incident that had occurred at the airport the week prior. Mr. Large explained that it had been a small, relatively inconsequential low-speed incident, but that it did require the aircraft to be towed back onto the pavement. Ms. Manahan inquired where exactly the incident occurred within the airport. Mr. Large illustrated that the aircraft exited off at the end of Runway 5. He then described the planned installation of an EMAS (Engineering Materials Arresting System) at the airport. The advantage of this system is that aircraft moving at far higher speeds will still be captured in the system. For low-speed incidents such as the one in question, the positives are limited as the replacement of system blocks has a high cost. Each block costs between \$20,000 and \$30,000 to replace.

Mr. Large then detailed the progress on the Runway 5/23 rehabilitation project, an approximately \$100 million endeavor. The runway was originally installed and designed in the 1940s and extended in the 1960s. The purpose of the project is to bring the runway up to what the 2030 standard will be for a runway environment. Between 2019

and 2024 the federal government invested \$52 million and the state of NJ invested about \$1.8 million. The airport itself has spent about \$1.4 million on the project. Safety has been the focus of improvements, as well as addressing grading issues in some wetland pockets that have appeared within the airport. A 36-inch circular culvert was replaced with a 72-inch box culvert, which allowed water to get across the airport with greater ease. The improvements are about half-way complete, and the airport will need an additional \$50 million to get the project completed between 2025 and 2030. The next phase of the project will receive around \$15 million from the FAA to complete base course paving at the end of the runway and improve grading where the airport's Instrument Landing System (ILS) is located. This will help prevent the accumulation of water and snow, the latter of which can impact the performance of the ILS. A deer grate will also be replaced to better keep deer off the airfield. This grant is expected in late August.

Chairperson Resto asked if the airport was once wetlands. Mr. Large stated that the area was wetlands prior to the 1940s and was a lakebed 10,000 years ago. The airport is built up on top of about five feet of fill. Ms. Manahan inquired if all the grants were federal, and Mr. Large stated that the grants are federal with state matches and local contributions. She also asked if the President flies into the airport. Mr. Large stated that the President has used the airport twice over the course of the summer. Mr. Resto inquired about the type of plane that the President uses to fly into the airport, and Mr. Large stated that it is not the traditional Air Force One Boeing 747, but a smaller Boeing 757, as the airport is not equipped to handle the larger aircraft.

Manuela Schuster asked if any commercial flights would use the airport when the work is done, and Mr. Large stated that the airport is a Part 91 airport and does not hold the necessary 139 Certificate to operate commercial flights. The improvements are meant to standardize the airfield for the current traffic that it experiences.

Mr. Resto asked Mr. Large to estimate the increase in usage experienced by the airfield over the last 5 years. Mr. Large stated that prior to the year 2000, the airport saw over 250,000 operations a year. In 2025, the airport only saw 120,000. However, 120,000 represents a bounce back from the 60,000 operations that were seen coming out of the Covid-19 pandemic. Jigar Shah asked why there has been such a decrease since the year 2000, and Mr. Large stated that a lot of those flights in 2000 were general aviation, which has gotten more expensive or the pilots have aged out over the last 25 years. There were also as many as six or seven flight schools operating at the airport during that time. Mr. Large also stated that the airport's jet operations account for around 60,000 to 80,000 of the airport's operations, while military operations is 500 per year. The number of flight operations per category fluctuates year to year.

Before Covid-19 most of the airport's jet operations were business-based, and now the airport has observed an increase in leisure/charter traffic. This is potentially the result of an increase in local wealth, and an effort on the part of the charter companies to make their operations more affordable and accessible.

Mr. Large described how the airport was one of the first in the country to have LED lights when they were installed in 2006. In 2025 the airport received a grant from the Department of Transportation to replace those first-generation LEDs and replace any remaining airfield signage that was not LED. By the end of 2026 it is expected that all

taxiway lights and airfield signs will be all LED. Runway lights will be replaced further along in the improvement process.

The airport has had members of the NJDOT and NJ legislature visit over the last year. The airport has also sent representatives to Washington D.C. to advocate for aviation and transportation spending. Corey Hanlon, the airport's governmental affairs manager, has been on the road engaging with organizations that the airport works with.

Mr. Large moved on to the airport's relationship with the ongoing World Cup tournament. Significant planning was put into preparing for the events; however, the airport did not see the traffic that had been expected during the initial phases of the tournament. The airport put together a parking plan that was modeled after the one developed for the Super Bowl held at MetLife Stadium in 2014. The plan was for the airport to be able to accommodate 130 aircraft on the ground during each game. There were some traffic increases, and some of the players landed their planes at the airport, but as of the day of the Board meeting, the numbers had fallen short of expectations. The airport anticipates additional traffic for the upcoming World Cup final. Compounding this, the President being at the final will impact the nearby Teterboro airport, pushing even more traffic towards Morristown Airport. The airport anticipates that it will be able to accommodate the flights, as it has been preparing for nearly a year. The airport sent representatives to do some marketing to potential visitors in Europe, and Mr. Large provided a diagram of the Presidential TFR (Temporary Flight Restriction) that will be in effect over MetLife. The diagram illustrated how Morristown Airport is outside the TFR and will be unaffected by the presence of the president, unlike Teterboro and Newark.

The airport did some redevelopment in the west tie-down area to accommodate 36 tie-downs. Smaller aircraft have already been moved to this new tie-down area. This freed up another area for a new hanger space to be constructed. This space was financed by Atlantic Aviation and completed in September of 2025.

Mr. Large then brought up pilot training and the ongoing pilot shortage. The airport currently has 4 flight schools. Because the area often has imperfect weather, the flight schools need to squeeze in as much training as they can when conditions are suitable for training. This leads them to sometimes operate outside of what would be considered normal hours. Morristown Airport's tower hours are from 7 AM to 10 PM, and the airport has seen the flight schools operating even earlier and later than these times. They have worked to engage with the flight schools and limit them to the active tower hours. While the flight schools are not actually doing anything wrong, the airport wants to be a good neighbor to the community. They have had conversations with Hanover and Florham Park to ensure that the flight schools have not been too disruptive.

Chairperson Resto commented on just how disruptive the World Cup can be to nearby airport operations, and Mr. Large added that the recent Taylor Swift wedding and NBA finals in New York City saw the airport receive a lot more traffic than usual. When Teterboro and Newark get busy, Morristown Airport helps relieve the pressure.

VI. Reports:

A. Freight Activities

Rehabilitation of Bridges 14D30.56 and 14D30.78: Mr. Hayes reported on two bridge rehabilitation projects along the Dover and Rockway railroad, north of East Main Street in Rockaway Borough. There are four rail freight customers located north of these bridges. Bridge 14D30.78 is a 76-foot-long bridge that NJDOT awarded Morris County \$318,000 to rehabilitate. The grant will cover sandblasting, painting, and repairing any corroded steel. The grant award letter was received in March, and the grant agreement should be coming later in the summer. Bridge 14D30.56 is 200 feet long and crosses over the Rockaway River. The County was awarded a grant of \$647,000 from NJDOT to repair this bridge. The plans are nearing completion, and Morris County is waiting for a permit from NJDEP. The NJDEP will decide on the permit approval by August 29. The County hopes to advertise the 14D30.56 rehabilitation bid by the end of the year.

Dover & Rockaway Railroad Realignment: Mr. Hayes provided an update on the realignment project. The project is designing a connection starting from an existing siding located east of Dover Train Station; the new rail would run from NJ Transit's existing rail, cross under South Salem Street Bridge, cross over the Rockaway River, and connect to the Dover & Rockaway Railroad near Sammis Avenue. While the consultant team was completing the survey work, they discovered a NJDEP Riparian/Wetland Mitigation Area on a JCP&L-owned property that is in the path of the proposed rail alignment near Sammis Avenue. It looks like a remediation project on the property was recently completed. Since the April Board meeting, the County's consultant team prepared a package to request a meeting with NJDEP to discuss the property. The package was sent to NJDOT's Bureau of Environmental Resources for refinement and assistance in navigating this request with NJDEP.

Rail Bridge Inspection Program: Mr. Hayes reported that the County's annual rail bridge inspection program is underway. The consultant 2026-2027 contract was executed on May 13 and the team has begun inspecting bridges.

Railroad Crossing Rehabilitation: Mr. Hayes also reported on a few rail crossing projects. The bid package for repair of the Mercer Street and Union Street crossings along the Dover & Rockaway Railroad in Dover was advertised on June 18, and the project should be awarded on July 22. The repairs should be completed this year and will include the replacement of the rails and ties.

The Main Street Crossing in Roxbury along the Chester Branch will have its crossing signals upgraded. These improvements were the result of the town receiving a Transportation Alternatives grant. They are making improvements to support pedestrians and bicyclists on this road. NJDOT recommended the signaling upgrades, and an asphalt sidewalk will be installed across the tracks. The Main Street crossing project should be completed next year.

NJDOT is funding the improvements inside the rail crossing right of way, while the County is responsible for everything outside of the right of way like striping and signs.

Rail Operator Updates: John Sobotka from the Chesapeake & Delaware, the County's freight railroad operator, updated the Board on recovery efforts following the recent storms. 39 trees had fallen on the tracks along the three rail lines. The operator spent about two and a half days clearing the trees and was able to ensure there was no freight interruption to the ten customers that the railroad services. There were also several false activations at grade crossings. This happens when a crossing loses power and it goes into a failed state. The railroad will then send a crew to investigate and restore power to the crossing.

The railroad has scheduled a contractor to spray on July 16 and July 17. Previously they were only spraying twelve feet out from the center of the track, but they are now spraying fifteen feet out. The railroad is also interested in working with the County to setup a brush and tree clearing program to clear certain sections of the railroad each year.

Mr. Sobotka reported that there is a potential new customer along the Chester Branch. County Concrete is considering having light aggregate delivered from North Carolina in hopper cars. Their current supplier, based out of Pennsylvania, is closing. The shipments would come in groups of six cars at a time.

A customer on the Dover & Rockaway Railroad, 84 Lumber, has received nine carloads so far this year, up from their previous average of one-to-two carloads per year. The goal of the new 84 Lumber manager is to increase the numbers to two-to-three cars per month. Mr. Sobotka attributed this to the commitment of the County and the state of New Jersey to maintaining the railroad and the positive effect that it has on customer confidence. Another company, Polyfill, in Rockaway Township was considering moving their operation, but decided to stay and even expand based on this commitment.

The Toys for Tots train has been scheduled for December 6 and will run from Rockaway to Flanders.

The Chesapeake & Delaware is monitoring NJDOT's repair of South Main Street Bridge that crosses over the Washington Secondary railroad in Phillipsburg. The railroad operator travels on the Washington Secondary to bring freight into Morris County. The Chesapeake & Delaware is in discussions with NJDOT to ensure sufficient clearance is provided after repairs so Plate F sized railcars can continue to pass beneath the structure.

B. Route 24 & Columbia Turnpike Interchange Project:

Christopher Vitz, County Engineer, reported on the design of the Route 24 & Columbia Turnpike Interchange Project. There was a meeting this past week with

the design consultants and NJDOT to discuss the grade of the new ramp from Route 24 up to Park Avenue. The consultants will continue work on their environmental documents and do soil borings to determine what is in the ground that contractors will eventually dig into and pave over. Meetings will be scheduled with local public officials and then the public to reintroduce the project, provide a status update, and begin gathering feedback from residents.

Ms. Manahan inquired about the large property at the northeast corner of Columbia Turnpike and Park Avenue, and Mr. Large mentioned that it will likely become some sort of medical building. Mr. Vitz said he did not think the County saw a site plan yet.

Mr. Large asked about a bridge replacement on Columbia Turnpike near Ely's Tropical Fish, and Mr. Vitz replied that the project is still happening, but has been delayed a few times due to environmental impacts.

C. Road & Bridge Projects:

Mr. Hayes reported that the County's spring traffic count has concluded. 21 of the locations were observed to have increased in volume since the last time they were studied (most around 2021). Only five saw a decrease in volume of a few thousand, while those that increased saw an increase of a few hundred to over a thousand per day.

Mr. Resto brought up an intersection that has been coming up more with Chatham residents. He has had two close calls there himself, so he has stopped using it. The intersection is North Passaic Avenue and Weston Avenue. A resident on the northwest corner trimmed his hedges back to improve the sightline, but it does not seem like enough of an improvement. Mr. Resto asked if there were any plans for a traffic signal at this location. Mr. Vitz said that there were no plans for a signal, though there was a recent pedestrian incident. In this incident the pedestrian failed to utilize the crossing button. Some improvements are planned for the intersection, however if it continues to be a problem a traffic signal is not out of the question.

VII. Old Business:

Chairperson Resto reported that there was not any old business to cover.

VIII. New Business:

Mr. Hayes announced to the board that Ted Ritter from the NJTPA will be retiring. After thanking the Board, Mr. Ritter reported on a new NJTPA guidebook on resilience hubs. A resilience hub is a multifunctional place that provides community support, services, and resources before, during, and after extreme weather events. This guide is intended to be more readable and accessible and gives towns a six-step process to develop resilience hubs. The goal is to help these towns increase their ability to bounce back from extreme weather events.

Chairperson Resto thanked Mr. Ritter for his years of attendance and involvement with the Board of Transportation.

IX: Public Comments: None

X. The Next Regular Meeting: Tuesday, October 13, 2026, at 2:00 pm.

XI. Adjournment: The motion for adjournment was made by Mr. Shah and seconded by Ms. Manahan. The meeting was adjourned at 2:55 p.m.