

MONMOUTH COUNTY PLANNING BOARD TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL

PAUL KIERNAN, JR.
Planning Board Chairman



ERIC NELSON
Council Chairman

Minutes for the Meeting of the
Monmouth County Transportation Council
Tuesday, September 13, 2016
Monmouth County Planning Board
One East Main Street
Hall of Records Annex Building, 2nd Floor
Freehold, NJ 07728

I. CALL TO ORDER – 7:00 PM

II. ATTENDANCE – ROLL CALL

Members Present

Frost, Barry
Nelson, Eric
Vernick, Jeff
Hennessy, Thom
VanNortwick, Peter
Garaguso, Anthony
Grbelja, Nancy
Doyle, Peter
Barrett, Betsy

Staff Present

James Bonanno – Staff Advisor

Members Excused

Members Absent

Thomas, Edmund
Long, Dina

III. REVIEW OF MINUTES

Approval of the March 8, 2016 minutes was sought by Chairman Nelson. Ms. Grbelja motioned to accept the minutes. The motion was seconded by Mr. Frost and the minutes were accepted by the council.

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IV. NEW BUSINESS

Thomas burke has Resigned from the Transportation Council:

Mr. Nelson informed the Council that he had received an email from Mr. Burke in June notifying him of Mr. Burke's resignation from The Monmouth County Transportation Council due to issues outside of the Council.

Master Plan Workshop discussion and comments:

Mr. Bonanno asked the members of the council if they had any comments or questions about the Master Plan Workshop held on May 10th. Mr. Frost commented that he felt there was a lot of public interest in the transportation portion of the Master Plan as well as the entire Plan itself but overall the council members were satisfied with the meeting and had no comments or questions.

Discussion of letters received from Senator Beck, Senator Singer, and Assemblyman O'Scanlon regarding NJ TRANSIT's removal of rear-facing bus signage:

Mr. Bonanno provided the council with and summarized the correspondence received in return to the Council's letters to the County's Legislatures regarding NJ TRANSIT's removal of rear-facing bus signage. Senator Beck's Office sent the Council a copy of the letter that was sent to NJ TRANSIT to inquire about the rear-facing bus signage issue but no other correspondence was received. Senator Singer addressed a letter to the Transportation Council outlining the response he received from NJ TRANSIT; The removal of signage is intended to keep the newer buses uniform with the rest of the fleet. The older buses have had problems with their rear facing signs which break and malfunction easily and require a significant amount of maintenance. NJ TRANSIT made the decision to remove the signs in order to save on future maintenance costs. Assemblyman O'Scanlon received a similar answer through an email conversation with NJ TRANSIT. Both Senator Singer and Assemblyman O'Scanlon felt that the responses received from NJ TRANSIT were sufficient reasons for removing of the rear-facing bus signage.

It was the consensus of the council that the rear-facing bus signage is an important and valuable asset to NJ TRANSIT buses and that it would be best if NJ TRANSIT waited until the signage malfunctions to remove it.

V. PRESENTATION

James Bonanno will present on new and improved bus service to Brookdale Campuses:

Mr. Bonanno presented to the Transportation Council NJ TRANSIT's proposed service adjustments to better serve Brookdale Community College Campuses in Lincroft and Hazlet. Bus routes 833 and 835 are to be consolidated into a new bus route 838 which will provide a single seat ride from Freehold Raceway Mall to Brookdale Community College and Sea Bright at a weekday hourly frequency. This service will also be available on Saturdays at an eighty five minute frequency. The 832 bus route is to be extended to the Lincroft Campus as well providing a one seat ride to Brookdale from the Route 35 corridor at an hourly frequency on weekdays and Saturdays. The 817 bus route is to be extended to the Hazlet higher Education Center four times a day to coincide with class times. Finally connections times between these routes and the 831, 834, and 837 routes as well as other in neighboring Monmouth County municipalities are to be improved to decrease down time between bus connections.

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VI. REPORT OF STAFF

Master Plan Has Been Sent to Print:

Mr. Bonanno informed the Council that the Draft Master Plan had been sent to print and draft copies had been placed in each library within the county as well as each municipal office in order to allow residents and local officials to review and submit comments for the finalization of the Master Plan at the upcoming Planning Board Meeting on Monday, October 17th. Mr. Vernick asked if The Monmouth County Planning Board or Planning Department had any specific Master Plan Transportation recommendations that the council should start working to achieve. Mr. Bonanno briefed the Council on a recommendation pertaining to an interactive public transportation map that the council will be assisting with during the development stage. The map will be available on the internet and will provide users with step by step instructions and direction throughout Monmouth County using public transit, and bicycle infrastructure. The Transportation Council will be instrumental in the completion of this recommendation.

Gateway Project Progress:

Mr. Bonanno updated the council that the Gateway Project will receive \$70 million dollars for preliminary engineering work. Half of which is to be provided by Amtrak, and the remaining half by The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. U.S. Transportation Secretary Fox has ensured steps are being taken to fast track the federal review processes and permitting. And an executive committee has been established by Amtrak, Port Authority, U.S. D.O.T., and NJ TRANSIT in order to focus on environmental permitting, construction and preliminary engineering, funding and financing, and governance matters.

Mr. Frost asked if an estimated timeline has been provided for this project to which Mr. Bonanno informed him that one has not been provided, but the project is estimated to take ten years.

Post Red Bank Street Smart Campaign Report and upcoming Street Smart Campaigns:

Mr. Bonanno informed the council that Asbury Park, Long Branch, Bay Head, and Manasquan as well as Red Bank all hosted Street Smart Campaigns during the Summer of 2016.

Proposed Gas Tax Increase:

Mr. Bonanno updated the council on the current status of the proposed gas tax increase and the various plans currently being considered. Governor Christie's plan involved lowering the State's Sales Tax one percent and raising the retirement tax threshold, while the State Senate wants to eliminate the Estate Tax, Create a tax credit for the working poor and veterans, and raise the threshold for retirement and pension income. The disagreement between the two possible solutions lies in which solution better provides the residents of New Jersey with a better tax relief to go along with the raising of the gas tax without losing money for the budget.

Mr. Vernick reminded the council that Governor Christie has put a hold on all transportation projects funded by the State Transportation Trust Fund until a deal has been made and asked council staff engineering advisor Mrs. Jakimowska what Monmouth County projects have been halted by the Governors decision. Mrs. Jakimowska responded that all County projects had been halted as all County projects use money provided by the State Transportation Trust Fund. Mr. Vernick raised the concern that construction crews that were working on these projects before the halt may have moved onto other jobs and may not be able to immediately come back to work on County jobs when the freeze on spending is lifted or may require a fee to continue work. He also asked in the event of an emergency, is there any way a project can continue. Mrs. Jakimowska responded that yes in the case

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of an emergency the job funding will be provided to ensure the project's completion for the safety of residents and visitors.

NJ.com article "Two NJ TRANSIT Rail Unions Ratify New Contract, Ending Strike Threat":

Mr. Bonanno updated the council on the conclusion of the negotiations between NJ TRANSIT and two Rail Unions who threatened to strike in June. SMART Transportation Division Local 60 representing conductors and train men, and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers have reached an agreement with NJ TRANSIT and ratified their contracts. NJ TRANSIT made concessions to allow for workers to stay in an existing health insurance plan if they are willing to pay more, instead of requiring them to switch to a new plan. In return, the unions agreed to accept two payments this summer and next summer for retroactive pay owed to them for the time worked with no contract. The threat of a rail strike has now ended.

NJ.com article "Controversial Audio surveillance of NJ TRANSIT Riders Comes to a Quiet End":

Mr. Bonanno informed the council that a previous concern of the council pertaining to audio surveillance on light rail transit has come to an end. NJ TRANSIT will no longer record audio surveillance on light rail.

NJ.com article "Why NJ Toll Plazas aren't Going Away Anytime Soon":

Mr. Bonanno introduced the council to a new tactic other states are implementing along toll roads of only tolling electronically. States such as Pennsylvania and Florida have replaced traditional toll booths with automatic sensors that will either charge a driver's EZ Pass, or mail a driver a fare. Mr. Garaguso stated that he had read an article that stated this strategy has not been working well for Pennsylvania and that the state is worried for the future of its infrastructure due to a lack of people paying fares. He offered to send the council the article at a later time. Mr. Vernick asked if neglecting to pay a fare invoice resulted in consequences for the driver, but the article did not specify and council members were also unsure. Mr. Nelson's opinion was that strategy like this would need to have clearly defined penalties for violators. Without them there is nothing to stop people from neglecting toll invoices and decreasing the revenue collected by the toll road. Mr. Vernick asked if there is an existing need for this strategy in New Jersey and if its implementation is being considered to which Mr. Bonanno replied that there is plan or discussions at this time to implement this strategy however; it is proven to increase the flow of traffic and decrease bottlenecks at toll booths.

Asbury Park Press article "Keep Promise, Build Terminal on West Side":

Mr. Vernick introduced the current complications facing the development of a new Port Authority Bus Terminal in New York City. Originally Port authority had decided to hold a design competition for the new bus terminal allowing for companies to propose what the new terminal would look like. This was a cause for concern to New York State and City officials who felt this design competition did not incorporate the wishes of the residents of the City. These officials sent a letter to Port Authority notifying them of a potential law suit if they move forward with the development of a new bus terminal in Manhattan. This threat resulted in numerous New Jersey officials sending letters to Port Authority demanding the bus terminal be built in Manhattan and explaining that creating a two seat ride for commuters would lead to many switching to using their personal vehicles. A decrease in public transit utilization would mean the roads would become more crowded. New York officials are hoping Port Authority decides to cancel the design competition and continue with a plan that better involves the public. At this time Port Authority is still contemplating what should be done to best accommodate the residents of both states. Mr. Vernick stressed the importance of the new bus terminal; that it is outdated and cannot handle the larger buses we use today as well as the greater volume of bus traffic it experiences today. The development of a new bus terminal is extremely important for Monmouth County commuters traveling into Manhattan.

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Monmouth County Library is having an exhibit on The History of Transportation in New Jersey on October 5th
Mr. Nelson explained the exhibit will be taking place in two sessions. The first of which will be explaining the history of airports and air transportation while the second session explores the history of rail transportation.

VII. PUBLIC COMMENT

No comments were received from the public.

VIII. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Next public Monmouth County Transportation Council meeting – 7:00PM Tuesday, October 25, 2016 at the Monmouth County Division of Planning Conference Room at 1 East Main Street, 2nd Floor, Freehold, NJ 07728

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Following a motion to adjourn the meeting by Ms. Grbelja and seconded by Mr. Doyle, the meeting was adjourned at 8:15 PM.