

**Morris County Freight Rail Advisory Committee
Tuesday July 12, 2011: 2:00 PM
Morris County Administration & Records Building
Fifth Floor, Knox Room
Morristown, NJ**

The Meeting was called to order by Chairwoman Nordstrom at 2:05 PM.

In Attendance:

| Board Members | Other Attendees | Staff |
|--|---|----------------|
| Chairwoman Margaret Nordstrom, Chairperson | Gary Behrens, Roxbury | Erik DeLine |
| Carolyn Blackman (Proxy for James Dodd, Dover) | Chris Mazzei, Morris & Erie Railway | Andrew Kay |
| Jack Holland, Holland Manufacturing | Tom Phelan, Eng-Wong, Taub & Associates | Frank Pinto |
| Allen Napoliello, Randolph | Jakub Rowinski, NJTPA | Gerald Rohsler |
| Frank Reilly, Board of Transportation | | |

I. Welcome

Chairwoman Nordstrom welcomed everyone to July's meeting.

II. Approval of minutes from April 12, 2011

Mr. Frank Reilly made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Gary Behrens seconded the motion. The minutes from April 12, 2011 were unanimously approved.

III. Morris county Municipal Guide for Freight Planning

Mr. Erik DeLine introduced the new Municipal Guide for Freight Planning, produced by the Department of Planning and Development. He explained that the guide is part of the ongoing efforts for freight planning within Morris County. Examples of the guide were provided to all meeting attendees, but Mr. DeLine noted that the 250 final copies will be slightly larger in size.

Mr. DeLine explained that the purpose of the guide is to "start a conversation" about freight transportation issues with the County's municipalities, as local planning and zoning boards may not always consider freight-specific issues when issuing site approvals or zoning resolutions. The handbook will provide for an overview of such issues, helping to guide these entities. In this respect, the guide will serve as an

educational resource for local planning and zoning officials about the importance of planning for freight transportation and its impacts. Conversely, the guide will also provide industrial businesses with a clear explanation of the regulatory environment and legitimate concerns of municipalities.

Mr. Tom Phelan stated that the Municipal Guide will serve as a legacy from the “Freight Infrastructure and Land Use Analysis” study, for which his firm served as consultants.

Chairwoman Nordstrom thanked the staff and asked if any of the municipal representatives to the committee believed the guide would be helpful. Mr. Gary Behrens said that it would. Mr. Frank Reilly stated that the guide concisely illustrated both the problems and concerns with freight transportation while also explaining its benefits.

IV. Update to Phillipsburg Height Clearance Issues

At the request of the Committee, Mr. Phelan left the room for the discussion.

Mr. DeLine explained to the committee that Morris County had, in conjunction with Warren County, solicited the NJTPA to conduct a corridor study to analyze all alternatives that would solve the height clearance issues in Phillipsburg. He stated that funding for the study was contingent on the NJTPA board’s approval of the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) for FY2012. Mr. Jakub Rowinski noted that the UPWP had already been approved and that the corridor study would need to be approved as an amendment to the UPWP.

Mr. DeLine stated he was in the process of drafting a request for proposal to conduct the study, which had expanded from looking only at the bridge at Phillipsburg to include all bridges along the Washington Secondary line, from Phillipsburg to Dover, where NJ Transit operates. The study would also examine the possibility of allowing 286,000 ton rail cars to operate along the Washington Secondary line.

Mr. DeLine further explained that three alternatives for the clearance issue at Phillipsburg would still be addressed. These are raising the bridge, lowering the rail bed, and relocating a switch. He also stated that Warren County expressed an interest in including an analysis of the economic impact of allowing for 17-foot rail cars underneath the Main Street Bridge.

In the discussion, Mr. Chris Mazzei asked how long such a study would take and what NJ Transit’s involvement would be. Mr. DeLine answered that study would take approximately 9-12 months, with work hopefully beginning in October, and that an NJ Transit representative would likely sit on consultant selection committee. Mr. Reilly advised that Norfolk Southern should also be involved.

Mr. Behrens asked if NJ Transit had an interest in moving passengers past Hackettstown. Mr. DeLine said that he believed this option had been eliminated as part of the Raritan Valley Study, as the trip from Phillipsburg to New York was too far for most riders. Mr.

Reilly suggested the Allentown-Lehigh Valley MPO be involved in this study, to which Mr. DeLine replied that the MPO had already done a similar study that addressed their interests in the rail line.

Mr. Frank Pinto stated that, should the study reveal that the only acceptable alternative is to relocate the switch at Phillipsburg, the issue of future passenger services arises. Mr. Gerald Rohsler noted that a switch relocation would allow NJ Transit to control the switch, which Norfolk Southern opposes. Mr. Mazzei explained that bridge would need to be raised approximately 2 feet, if raising the bridge is the preferred alternative.

Chairwoman Nordstrom expressed that perhaps, depending on the scope of economic development concerns, any recommendations should be coordinated with statewide agencies.

Mr. Phelan was allowed to reenter the room once the discussion was complete.

V. Current Initiatives

A. High Bridge Branch/Route 10 Crossing

Mr. DeLine gave an update on the project to improve the High Bridge Crossing at Route 10. He stated that his division is working with NJDOT, and the project is funded. Mr. DeLine said that specifications for the project needed to be updated, as inspections had revealed standing water near and drainage would have to be addressed.

B. Railroad Construction Projects

Mr. DeLine provided updates for several rail projects, requests for proposal for which are currently being reviewed by the County's Purchasing Department. Mr. DeLine updated the committee on the status of the Route 46/Chester Branch project, which he hoped would be available for bid by next week. He explained that crossing projects have a 1-2 day turnaround and are largely pre-constructed, and therefore have little adverse impact. Mr. Rohsler emphasized that these projects will typically only last for 1 day.

Mr. DeLine then stated that the specification quotes for the Sussex/Warren Streets grade crossing project had already been reviewed. He said that construction may begin this year, but would probably be held off until the spring of 2012. Mr. Rohsler explained that NJDOT had notified his division that funding should be in place by July. Ms. Carolyn Blackman asked for clarification and Mr. Rohsler explained that once the Commissioner of the DOT had approved all changes, then bids for the project could go out. Ms. Blackman emphasized that temporary fixes to the grade crossing had been made several times already and that residents are looking for a permanent solution.

Mr. DeLine then updated the committee on the High Bridge Branch Resurfacing project, which required the installation of new ballasts and ties. The total cost for this project, said Mr. DeLine, would be \$1.58 million, of which the County was providing 10%. Mr. Behrens asked for the specific location of this project. Mr. Mazzei explained that

resurfacing would take place for nearly the entire length of the branch, from Route 46 west toward Route 10.

C. High Bridge Branch FRA Inspection

Mr. Mazzei explained that, recently, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) had found several defects in the High Bridge Branch's rail. In particular, near mile post 17.22, toward Flanders, the head of the scale track had become damaged.

D. Dover & Rockaway Maintenance Work

Mr. Mazzei explained that, due to erosion, several large concrete blocks would be used to stabilize the track structure of the Dover & Rockaway railway. Mr. Pinto expressed concern that this work would require a "Permit by Rule" from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. Mr. Mazzei offered to provide photo-documentation of the site for submission to DEP. Mr. Pinto emphasized that this issue illustrates the importance of analyzing alternatives to crossing through Dover.

VI. Open Discussion

Mr. Reilly congratulated County Staff on the event marking the reopening of the Chester Branch railroad, calling it the County's "highlight of the last 20 years." Mr. Behrens said he would like to receive a copy of the original invitation to that event, as the Roxbury clerk wished to have a plaque made. Mr. Jack Holland said that all material had been removed from the rail line since the event took place.

Mr. Mazzei ended discussion by remarking that, in regard to Dover and Rockaway maintenance work, County Concrete had agreed to provide the necessary concrete blocks and that the rail flanges would be washed out.

VII. Adjournment

Mr. Behrens made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Mr. Reilly seconded the motion. The meeting was unanimously adjourned at 3:15 pm.

Respectfully Submitted

Erik DeLine
Senior Planner