

# MONMOUTH COUNTY PLANNING BOARD TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL

JAMES GIANNELL  
Planning Board Chairman



Anthony Garaguso  
Council Chairman

Minutes for the Meeting of the  
**Monmouth County Transportation Council**  
Tuesday, October 13, 2020  
Monmouth County Planning Board  
One East Main Street  
Hall of Records Annex Building, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Freehold, NJ 07728

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## I. CALL TO ORDER – 7:00 PM

## II. ATTENDANCE – ROLL CALL

### Members Present

Garaguso, Anthony  
Vernick, Jeff  
Nelson, Eric  
Ponzio, Nicholas  
Grbelja, Nancy  
Barrett, Betsy  
Frost, Barry

### Staff Present

Bonanno, James – Staff Advisor  
Schmetterer, David

### Members Excused

Van Nortwick, Peter  
Lucarelli, Ben

## III. REVIEW OF MINUTES

Approval of the Council's September 15, 2020 minutes was sought by Mr. Garaguso. Ms. Barrett motioned to accept the September 15 minutes which was seconded by Mr. Ponzio and accepted unanimously by the Council with the exception of Mr. Frost who abstained.

## IV. OLD BUSINESS

- *NJ TRANSIT 10-Year Strategic Plan and 5-Year Capital Plan*

Mr. Garaguso reminded the Council of their extensive review of NJ TRANSIT's 10-Year Strategic and 5-Year Capital Plans and introduced a draft cover letter to be sent to NJ TRANSIT outlining the suggestions and recommendations that were discussed. Additional detail for each suggestion will be provided in an attached table.

Council members and Staff discussed the letter's format and text and offered minor edits which Staff incorporated.

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Mr. Frost expressed concerns that the letter should touch more on the need to expand rail services in New Jersey to communities that currently don't have access to transit. Mr. Garaguso noted that the council's focus on Monmouth County targeted more financially feasible and locally supportable improvements including adding potential trail and path connections to rail stations, adding first and last mile micro-mobility (i.e., bicycle, pedestrian) share services and leveraging rail station assets to support community economic development, and innovative ideas such as proposed development of a low-height warning cell-phone application for trucks approaching NJ TRANSIT rail bridges. Mr. Vernick noted the suggestion to locate a proposed mid-line train "flyover" turnaround loop along the Northeast Corridor in South Brunswick (rather than in North Brunswick as NJT proposes) would permit future expansion of rail service to a new south Brunswick station and provide possible future passenger rail line extensions into neighboring municipalities and counties. Following discussion, Mr. Garaguso directed Staff to provide a letter to Council Officials that includes the format changes and proposed edits for their final review and signature before distribution.

#### *- Communication Monmouth County Customer Needs to NJ TRANSIT*

Mr. Garaguso focused the Council's attention on a news article reporting that NJ TRANSIT Chief Experience Officer & Customer Advocate Stewart Mader was leaving employment with NJ TRANSIT. Mr. Vernick reminded the Council that given that their goal in inviting Mr. Mader to its May 2020 meeting was to improve communications with NJ TRANSIT and follow-up on customer committees he was creating, he expressed concern that this position is now vacant and that the committees had still not been formed. Mr. Vernick suggested that while the Council's Strategic and Capital Plan recommendations represent a step towards providing customer input, he emphasized that the Council will need to stay focused on creating a dialogue with NJ TRANSIT as further customer representation and involvement roles are determined by the agency.

#### *- Garden State Parkway Entrance Number Signs*

Mr. Frost reminded the Council of a discussion from earlier in the year about the possible addition of signage at the entrance ramps to the Garden State Parkway informing drivers of the corresponding exit ramp's number. He asked if any action had been taken to suggest this addition to the Turnpike Authority. Staff informed the Council that an email had been sent to contacts at the Turnpike Authority suggesting this addition in February of this year.

## **V. NEW BUSINESS**

#### *- Trenton Transit Station Improvement Study*

Mr. Garaguso introduced the Trenton Transit Station Improvement Study being undertaken by the City of Trenton, the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, and New Jersey Department of Transportation and directed the Council's attention to the project's website. He explained while this station is not located in Monmouth County it is used by many western Monmouth residents and is an important transit hub for Central New Jersey. Staff notified the Council that a recording of the Study's first public meeting is available on the website for those who are interested and that additional information will be posted to the website including dates of future public meetings and opportunities to get involved. Mr. Vernick added that this study will encompass traffic circulation around the Station across all modes of transportation, station amenities including parking, and connections to other transit services including The River Line Light Rail. He encouraged Council members to review the material and bring any thoughts or suggestions they may have for the study to the Council.

## **VI. TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER**

#### *- Fall 2020 Newsletter Analytics (Put actual statistics and changes from previous newsletter in minutes)*

Staff informed the Council that the Transportation Newsletter now has over one thousand subscribers. The fall newsletter released on October 5, 2020 was distributed to 1,022 recipients, which is an increase of 117 recipients from the summer

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newsletter. Staff continued that compared to the summer newsletter analytics the fall newsletter had 18 fewer total opens at 641 but 10 greater unique opens at 268 which are 27% of all recipients. Staff explained that while the number unique opens has been increasing with each newsletter the percentage of recipients has remained relatively steady which implies a slowly growing steady group of readers. The fall newsletter also saw an increase of 50 in total clicks and increase of 40 in unique clicks which are 8% of all recipients. While the percentage of unique opens has been steady the percentage of unique clicks has increased by 3%.

The most popular articles in the fall issue were related to: the Motor Vehicle Commission, road and rail bridge infrastructure, electric vehicle chargers along the New Jersey Turnpike, the self-driving vehicle corridor in Michigan, how to avoid collisions with wildlife, and travel resources provided by EZ Ride Transportation Management Association. Staff stated that this fall newsletter has seen the highest number of article clicks to date.

Mr. Garaguso commented on the popularity of the Motor Vehicle Commission articles moving forms online to reduce the wait for customers at their agencies and stated he himself has recently experienced difficulty with renewing his vehicle registrations. Ms. Barrett added that she has seen posts in The Rumson Patch from people having trouble accessing Motor Vehicle Commission services and many are recommending traveling to other agencies around the state that may be experiencing less congestion. She added that it may be helpful to include all Motor Vehicle Commission locations in the next Transportation Newsletter. Staff recorded Ms. Barrett's suggestion and assured they would keep the Council informed of the Motor Vehicle Commission's efforts to relieve customer wait times.

## **VII. REPORTS OF STAFF**

### *- Tourism and Events Demand Management Update*

Staff updated the Council the first Advisory Committee Meeting for *Monmouth Within Reach* was held on September 24, 2020 and the project team has contracted with Streetlight and Airsage to attain access to location-based travel data. Staff presented the Council with select slides from the Advisory Committee presentation illustrating the location based data collected and outlined the project team's plan to refine this data by time of day and date to determine where people are gathering in relation to events. The finalizing of the project's website and public survey are still underway but should be available in the near future. The development of a Spanish survey as well as a Spanish translated website are currently being undertaken to ensure the project is available to all communities, residents, and visitors to Monmouth County who are interested in participating. Additional language website translations and surveys will be made available if the project team's data collection reveals any underrepresented communities within Monmouth County.

## **VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Ms. Nyna McKittrick asked if the Council is aware of any efforts to construct pedestrian overpasses over U.S. Route 9 to allow for bus passengers to more safely cross the road. She expressed concerns for the safety of those forced to cross U.S. Route 9 on their daily commute home. Although the Council was not aware of any plans for specific infrastructure, Mr. Vernick noted that the Council's review of NJ TRANSIT's 10-Year Strategic and 5-Year Capital Plans recommended improving access to and amenities for riders at bus stops along high-volume bus corridors, particularly along U.S. Route 9. The Council thanked Ms. McKittrick for her input and welcomed her thoughts and concerns at future Transportation Council Meetings.

## **IX. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Next public Monmouth County Transportation Council meeting will be – 7:00 PM Tuesday, November 10, 2020. The meeting will be held via Webex. Council members and members of the public will be provided with the Webex meeting information through the agenda notification system and email.

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## **X. ADJOURNMENT**

Following a motion to adjourn the meeting made by Mr. Vernick and seconded by Mr. Nelson, the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 PM.