

# 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, September 15, 2020  
Monmouth County Planning Board  
One East Main Street  
Hall of Records Annex Building, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Freehold, NJ 07728

---

## 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  
Lucarelli, Ben

### Staff Present

Bonanno, James – Staff Advisor  
Schmetterer, David  
Romatowski, Erik

### Members Excused

Frost, Barry  
Van Nortwick, Peter

## III. REVIEW OF MINUTES

Approval of the Council's July 14, 2020 minutes was sought by Mr. Garaguso. Mr. Nelson motioned to accept the July 14<sup>th</sup> minutes which was seconded by Ms. Grbelja and accepted unanimously by the Council with the exception of Mr. Lucarelli and Ms. Barrett who abstained.

## IV. OLD BUSINESS

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

During the council's August break, the council's executive committee and staff reviewed NJ TRANSIT's 10-Year Strategic Plan and 5-Year Capital Plan with three questions in mind: 1) Are any goals or initiatives missing and need to be brought to NJ TRANSIT's attention, 2) are there any Monmouth County locations that would be good candidates for specific plan recommendations or strategies, and 3) do any goals or recommendations need

# MONMOUTH COUNTY PLANNING BOARD TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL

**JAMES GIANNELL**  
Planning Board Chairman



**Anthony Garaguso**  
Council Chairman

additional detail? Led by Chairman Garaguso and Vice Chairman Vernick, the following draft list of priority issues were discussed at the September meeting:

- 1) NJ TRANSIT should seek to better leverage expensive resilience investments to support regular service and future system expansions by having these improvements serve multiple purposes. As an example, NJ TRANSIT's proposed mid-line flyover loop track now planned for North Brunswick along the Northeast Corridor Line that would turn southbound trains back north could be moved further south to South Brunswick. This would provide a higher level of service to a future South Brunswick station that is planned to anchor a possible Route 1 Bus Rapid Transit System, and could additionally serve as a flyover overpass needed to provide a connection to support possible future passenger rail line development.
- 2) NJ TRANSIT should seek to develop training that empowers NJ TRANSIT customers faced with dangerous situations before police response can arrive with life-saving training and preparation for unexpected security events on transit vehicles and property. An example of this type of training known as ALICE (Alert, Lockdown, Identify, Counter, Evacuate) trains users to assess a situation and determine a course of action based on their specific location and exposure to a dangerous event. This recommendation follows an unsolved active shooter incident at the Old Bridge Park and Ride over a year ago, where NJ TRANSIT's response to the council's request for improvements to real time customer and employee alerting capabilities and better customer training to escape active shooter events focused only on training provided to their police force and employees; an approach that continues in NJ TRANSIT's Strategic Plan. Mr. Lucarelli asked how this training could be made available to customers. Mr. Vernick responded that NJ TRANSIT could develop interactive training webinars, videos, live events or even pamphlets that could be made available through their website and phone application.
- 3) NJ TRANSIT should seek to partner with communities and developers to encourage Transit Oriented Development (TOD) and mixed-use pedestrian friendly development around transit stops and stations, particularly along the U.S. Route 9, and N.J. Routes 36, and 35 corridors within Monmouth County and around the Aberdeen-Matawan Train Station as identified for Transit Oriented Development in Monmouth County's Bayshore Development Plan due to its proximity to U.S. Routes 35 and 36, the Garden State Parkway, and the North Jersey Coast Line. Ms. Barrett added that the current real estate boom that is taking place has seen a lot of interest and investment in homes near transit.
- 4) NJ TRANSIT should seek to improve the availability of shelters, amenities and lighting for bus customers, particularly along the U.S. Route 9, and N.J. Routes 35, and 36 corridors which have high ridership levels at many stops. Additionally, NJ TRANSIT should consider including Monmouth County bus stops in their Solar Bus Shelter Pilot Program which uses solar panels to power lighting as shelters that are utilized late into the evening.
- 5) Based on NJ TRANSIT's Bus Rapid Transit strategies and initiatives described in their Strategic and Capital Plans, the council recommended that NJ TRANSIT launch a bus rapid transit pilot program along heavily used bus corridors in Monmouth County such as U.S. Route 9, where NJ TRANSIT and the New Jersey Department of Transportation are working to design new bus priority signals and infrastructure into existing intersections along Route 9.
- 6) NJ TRANSIT should seek to support development of first and last mile connections to transit in local communities using micro-mobility and mobility-as-a-service strategies. This approach will expand access to

# MONMOUTH COUNTY PLANNING BOARD TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL

**JAMES GIANNELL**  
Planning Board Chairman



**Anthony Garaguso**  
Council Chairman

local areas extending beyond Monmouth County's rail stations and bus stops. For example, underutilized NJ TRANSIT facilities such as the old Matawan-Aberdeen Train Station could be repurposed to serve as a micro-mobility hub providing and servicing bicycles and electric scooters. Mr. Garaguso referred to the specific mention by NJ TRANSIT in their Strategic Plan to connect the Henry Hudson Trail to the Matawan-Aberdeen train station and suggested they continue to encourage similar development that provides people with easy access to transit services. NJ TRANSIT should also seek to promote and provide information about these services on their webpage and social media channels.

- 7) NJ TRANSIT should seek to purchase low-floor city transit model buses as they modernize the bus fleet. Mr. Garaguso explained that low floor buses can improve service quality and reliability by reducing time needed for passengers to board at stops to better keep on schedule, and more easily board disabled or elderly riders to the vehicle.
- 8) NJ TRANSIT should seek to better leverage their investments in new technology and their Clever Devices system installed on every NJ TRANSIT bus. While the Clever Devices system provides "one-way" vehicle to passenger information such as stop announcements and feeds real time data to NJ TRANSIT maintenance and vehicle tracking, NJ TRANSIT should further explore "two-way" passenger – vehicle interactive technologies based around its smartphone application. This could include requests from and detection of waiting bus customers at stops (particularly useful at night at poorly-lit bus stops and off-route on request stops) and providing "connection protection" to inform slightly late-running bus drivers to hold a connecting bus for transferring customers. Mr. Vernick also suggested using cell phone application technology to warn truck drivers when they are approaching low NJ TRANSIT rail bridges which are often struck by over-height trucks. These collisions cause these bridges to be taken out of service delaying trains and buses. Mr. Ponzio felt that increasing the amount information being utilized by technologies already implemented is a great way to increase communication between NJ TRANSIT and its customers. He added that as an NJ TRANSIT phone application user he has noticed a new feature that informs potential riders how full each bus or train is. This allows users to possibly pass on a full bus for one with fewer riders which is especially helpful for social distancing due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 9) NJ TRANSIT's should seek to test the Train Battery Pilot Program mentioned in the 5-Year Capital Plan on North Jersey Coast Line trains with connections traveling beyond Long Branch to Bay Head. This Pilot Program would install batteries on train locomotives which can be used to power electric trains on stretches of rail that are not electrified. This program would help NJ TRANSIT meet clean energy goals affordably while speeding commute times by removing the current transfer at the Long Branch Station.
- 10) NJ TRANSIT should increase the quality and availability of bicycle and micromobility accommodations aboard trains to improve accessibility to all users and reflect the needs of the communities they serve. Currently restrictions regarding their number, types, and storage of bicycles on trains at specific times of the day create a barrier to their owners using NJ TRANSIT services. Because these personal modes are a low-cost way to provide first and last mile access from transit stops to communities, NJ TRANSIT should pilot development of dedicated railcars for use on the North Jersey Coast Line by retrofitting viable commuter rail cars nearing retirement to serve bicycle and micro-mobility travelers in coastal communities with high demand for first and last mile trips to transit.
- 11) Similar to an earlier discussion pertaining to technological improvements, Mr. Garaguso brought the Council's attention to NJ TRANSIT's plans for contactless fare payment. It is his feeling that contactless fare payment will

# MONMOUTH COUNTY PLANNING BOARD TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL

**JAMES GIANNELL**  
Planning Board Chairman



**Anthony Garaguso**  
Council Chairman

greatly speed up interactions between customers and NJ TRANSIT staff and keep vehicles moving. Mr. Ponzio added that with all the available phone applications and technology it is surprising NJ TRANSIT has not done this sooner. The Council agreed contactless fare payments should be prioritized in NJ TRANSIT's Strategic and Capital Plans.

- 12) In line with its Strategic Plan goals of becoming a better business partner and using their purchasing power to promote local economic development, NJ TRANSIT should seek to leverage their transit facilities and properties to create a more open format that can support local businesses and community growth. Although this would require a rethinking of current transit real estate policies that offer leases only to a limited number of concessions, these locations could serve as business incubators for food-on-the-go vendors, ride hail services, community performers and artists, and technology startups that would benefit both commuters and the local communities. NJ TRANSIT should work with interested communities in identifying available station and parking locations that could begin this process.

Members expressed support for the issues identified. Mr. Garaguso asked the Council for any additional recommendations to add to the list. Ms. Barrett suggested that more flexible parking permitting strategies may help improve overall parking availability and generate more revenue. She cited that a number of individuals purchase monthly or yearly parking permits for use only a few times a year reserving spaces that could otherwise be used by daily commuters. Mr. Vernick suggested technology such as phone applications for parking that may be able to help this situation.

Mr. Garaguso asked how the Council would like to proceed with bringing these suggestions and recommendations to NJ TRANSIT's attention. Mr. Vernick indicated that whatever action the Council takes should be intended to start a discussion with NJ TRANSIT about addressing these needs. Staff were directed to work to simplify and focus the night's discussion into a smaller document framed around the original three questions; what goals or initiatives are missing and need to be brought to NJ TRANSIT's attention, what are Monmouth County locations that would be good candidates for specific plan recommendations or strategies, and which goals or recommendations need more detail.

## **V. NEW BUSINESS**

### *- MCTC Representative to the Monmouth Within Reach Advisory Committee*

Staff informed the Council that the Monmouth Within Reach Study would be having its first Advisory Committee Meeting on September 24, 2020 and requested a representative from the Transportation Council participate in the Committee on the Council's behalf. Mr. Garaguso asked the Council if any member would like to volunteer for the position. As an employee of the study's funding organization, Mr. Vernick recused himself. Mr. Garaguso encouraged other council members to consider volunteering as he found his previous experience with the Moving Mindfully Study's Advisory Committee to be enjoyable and enlightening and assured all Council members that they could take part if they decide to volunteer at a later date.

### *- Together North Jersey Local Technical Assistance Program*

Staff introduced a grant opportunity available to Monmouth County through the Together North Jersey's Local Technical Assistance Program. Instead of providing funding, the program offers the expertise and services of NJTPA and Voorhees Transportation Center Staff on projects that further the goals of Together North Jersey Plan. Staff provided the Council with a short list of eligible projects listed on the Together North Jersey Webpage, and Mr. Vernick noted some project examples that were completed under this program he was familiar with such as the development of a wayfinding guide for Bound Brook and designing of a pedestrian walkway in the heart of

# MONMOUTH COUNTY PLANNING BOARD TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL

**JAMES GIANNELL**  
Planning Board Chairman



**Anthony Garaguso**  
Council Chairman

Hackensack that reflects the arts and local characteristics of the community. Ms. Barrett asked if this program was available to non-profits and parks such as Sandy Hook. Mr. Vernick clarified that non-profits are eligible. Mr. Garaguso directed staff to make information on this program available to the Council via email after the meeting and encouraged Council members to both review the documents and forward them to any organization they believe may be able to utilize the program.

#### *- Transportation Alternatives Program*

Mr. Vernick introduced the Transportation Alternatives Program as a set-aside program that can provide funding for community based non-traditional surface transportation projects. He explained that while most transportation funding goes toward highways and transit this program is intended to fill the gaps in funding for projects such as trails, bicycle lanes, pedestrian infrastructure and other non-motorized transportation. Staff informed the Council that this information has been shared with The Monmouth County Parks System with the hopes of funding additional Henry Hudson Trail infrastructure and offered to include the Transportation Alternatives Program information along with the Technical Assistance Program information as previously discussed. Members expressed interest in reviewing and sharing the program information with interested organizations.

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

##### *- Draft Fall 2020 Newsletter*

Staff presented the draft Fall 2020 Transportation Newsletter to the Council and outlined the articles to be included such as: changes to the Motor Vehicle Commission (MVC) made by the Governor and the MVC to improve wait times for customers, School Student Travel information provided by EZ Ride, AMTRAK and NJ TRANSIT's work to limit delays along rail lines by permanently closing draw bridges and finding funds for replacing bridges, COVID-19's effect on bicycling in the United States, and NJ TRANSIT's Electric Bus Pilot Program happening in Camden, and others. Mr. Vernick called attention to an article regarding bicycle buses for children to safely pedal to school, and suggested that similar vehicles could potentially be utilized by the County's many visitors in seasonally congested tourist areas and shore communities around the County. Staff assured the Council they would make several changes in story additions and positions suggested by the council.

#### **VII. REPORTS OF STAFF**

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

Staff updated the Council that the Tourism and Events Demand Management Study has been given the name "Monmouth Within Reach." The name is intended to convey the study's intention of ensuring congestions doesn't prohibit Monmouth County residents and visitors from being able to reach local services and destinations. The project team has been working to finalize the project's website and Public Outreach Plan and will be holding the Study's first Advisory Committee meeting on September 24, 2020. Staff explained the study will be using location-based data collected from cellular devices like those used in the previous Moving Mindfully Study. Monmouth County purchased 2018 and 2019 data from Street Light and Airsage. 2020 data will not be used for this project as it has been skewed by the COVID-19 pandemic and will not give an accurate representation of the average transportation experience surrounding tourism and events.

##### *- Mr. Lucarelli, Fair Haven Bicycle Lanes*

Mr. Lucarelli informed the Council that at Fair Haven's Town Council meeting on September 14, 2020, the town voted to install bicycle lanes along River Road as part of a plan to better connect Red Bank to Rumson by bicycle. This portion of road will be the first spur in the bicycle network.

#### **VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT**

# MONMOUTH COUNTY PLANNING BOARD TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL

**JAMES GIANNELL**  
Planning Board Chairman



**Anthony Garaguso**  
Council Chairman

Ms. J.J. Mistretta, a resident of Freehold Township, thanked the Council for emphasizing the importance of transit oriented and mixed-use development strategies around transit infrastructure in its discussion of the NJ TRANSIT 10-Year Strategic Plan. She noted that she is in full agreement that this is important for providing affordable homes and transit access to lower income residents and those who do not own vehicles. Mr. Garaguso thanked Ms. Mistretta for her input.

## **IX. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Next public Monmouth County Transportation Council meeting will be – 7:00 PM Tuesday, October 13, 2020. The meeting will either 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.

## **X. ADJOURNMENT**

Following a motion to adjourn the meeting made by Ms. Grbelja and seconded by Mr. Nelson, the meeting was adjourned at 9:02 PM.