

UNION COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

BUREAU OF TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

UNION COUNTY TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD

Draft Meeting Notes, January 25, 2023

RECORD OF THE MEETING

The January 25, 2023 meeting of the Union County Transportation Advisory Board was called to order at 3:10 PM using **Zoom** by First Vice Chairman Joe Venezia. The Chairman read the required notice pursuant to the Open Public Meetings Act.

“The Chair wishes to announce that pursuant to the requirements of N.J.S.A. 10:4-10 of the Open Public Meetings Act adequate notice of this regular meeting of the Union County Transportation Advisory Board has been given by mailing a meeting schedule to the newspapers circulating within the County of Union and designated to receive such notice, and by posting the 2023 annual meeting schedule with the Office of the County Clerk.”

ROLL CALL

Attendee

James Ulrich
Antonio Panagopoulos
Mayor Jen Blumenstock
William Nierstedt
Stephen Wilson
Mayor Linda Karlovitch
David LaGruth
Joseph Chrobak
Michael Disko, Jr.
Zenobia Fields
Daniel Lee
Isabel Sousa
Jacqueline Garcia
Jay Robaina
John Morgan
Michael Rella
Joseph Venezia
David McAlister

Representing

Clark (Alternate)
Fanwood
Garwood
Garwood
Hillside
Kenilworth
Kenilworth
Linden (Alternate)
Mountainside (Alternate)
Plainfield
Rahway
Roselle
Roselle Park
Roselle Park (Alternate)
Scotch Plains
Springfield (Alternate)
Union
Westfield

Also in Attendance

Commissioner B.J. Kowalski
Ted Ritter
Robert Charkowsky
Ricardo Matias
Phil Kandl
Liza Betz
Tony Hall
Stephen Dunn

Commissioner Representative UC TAB
North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority
Union County Media Expert
Union County Engineer
Union County Division of Strategic Planning
Union County Bureau of Transportation Planning
Member of the Public
Member of the Public

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Approval of the January 19, 2022 meeting minutes were approved. Mr. Chrobak moved and Mr. Nierstedt seconded.

COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Betz, Union County Bureau of Transportation Planning, had several announcements regarding communications. Member appointments to the UC TAB were received from the following municipalities: Berkeley Heights, Clark, Cranford, Elizabeth, Garwood, Hillside, Linden, Mountainside, Plainfield, Rahway, Roselle, Roselle Park, Scotch Plains, Springfield, Summit, Union and Westfield.

Frank Ortiz, Chairman, regretfully has submitted his resignation to the UC TAB. He and his family have relocated to outside the County. Vice-Chairman Joe Venezia has agreed to be acting Chairman for this meeting.

Finally, Tony Hall, Rahway, will no longer be serving on the UC TAB as a representative from Rahway. And, as is the custom when a long-standing member has left the UC TAB, his contributions are noted in a resolution of appreciation. The Chairman read the resolution. Mr. Hall has served from 2006 through 2022 as a representative from the City of Rahway; and held the position of Chairman in 2007 and 2008; and the UC TAB extends its sincerest gratitude to Mr. Hall for a job well done.

REPORTS FROM COUNTY STAFF AND AGENCIES

NJTPA

Ted Ritter, NJTPA staff, reminded TAB members that the NJTPA is the federally authorized Metropolitan Planning Organization for northern and central New Jersey, including Union County. He noted that Commissioner Bette Jane Kowalski serves on the Executive Committee of the NJTPA Board of Trustees and is a strong advocate for transportation improvements in the County and regionally.

While the NJTPA Board's job is to prioritize about \$2 billion in federally funded surface transportation improvement projects annually, the NJTPA also administers municipal programs. He said these include the Vibrant Places Program, Planning for Emerging Centers Program, and the Complete Streets Technical Assistance Program. Mr. Ritter noted that Cranford successfully used the latter of these programs for its Post Office Plaza reimagining project.

The program offers free technical assistance to develop projects designed to make streets safer and more accessible and useable for all, regardless of travel mode or ability.

Mr. Ritter said the Vibrant Places Program funds municipal projects to help towns enhance their public spaces and transportation connectivity. The Planning for Emerging Centers Program funds municipal projects to better integrate transportation and land use for future economic development opportunities. Details on all three competitive programs are available at www.NJTPA.org.

He also encouraged TAB members to check out the latest issue of InTransition magazine, which the NJTPA publishes. Free subscriptions are available at www.intransitionmag.org. The latest issue covers post-pandemic transportation, microtransit, electric vehicle market and ownership trends, and the potential of hydrogen powered freight vehicles.

Mr. Ritter said the NJTPA continues to create new videos including an MPO 101 video series on its major programs and initiatives which can be viewed either on YouTube or the NJTPA's website.

Finally, he pointed to the unprecedented opportunities for transportation improvements through the Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act (IIJA). New grant or program opportunities offered through IIJA is updated regularly at www.NJTPA.org/IIJA

Mr. Ritter concluded by noting the NJTPA Board's next meeting is March 13 at 10:30 a.m.; this will be the first NJTPA Board meeting held in-person since the pandemic. He noted Board meetings are streamed live on the NJTPA's website and recordings are posted within a week after the meeting.

County Transportation Planning Report

Ms. Betz announced that regrestfully, the NJDOT was unable to present on the Route 82/Route22/Garden State Parkway Interchange at this time. Ms. Betz described this project as one of several major state investments currently underway in Union County and listed the following:

Route 22/Route 82/Garden State Parkway improves safety and streamlines access within the Interchange by removing weaving sections. It also includes widening and deck replacement for Route 22 westbound bridge over Route 82. \$43.5 million project.

Main Street/CR577 Bridge over I-78 – this is a bridge replacement project between Millburn and Springfield Townships. It's expected completion is March 2023. Construction is \$4.1 million.

Route 22 Broad Street to Route 27/Empire Street Paving project in Hillside, Union County and Newark, Essex County. \$2 million project.

Route 22 Bridge over Echo Lake, Mountainside Borough – is a project to replace the culvert under the Route 22 Bridge over Echo Lake in Mountainside. The project is done in stages in order to maintain all travel lanes through the project to be completed in fall of 2024. \$9 million project.

Route 22 Chestnut Street Bridge Replacement project – was \$14 million in construction.

Bloy Street Bridge over Route 22 replacement project is in three stages and will replace the overpass, which is in poor condition, and improve the turning movements on the Route 22 eastbound and westbound ramps to and from Bloy Street. The new bridge will meet current design and safety standards. It will improve the clearance over Route 22. The project also will widen the Route 22 eastbound and westbound lanes to and from Bloy Street, as well as provide sidewalks and improve curb ramps to meet ADA standards. It is expected to be completed in the summer of 2023. \$11 million project.

The Elizabeth Intermodal Station Reconstruction Project – is a NJ TRANSIT lead project. It is a heavily used rail stop serving the Northeast Corridor and the North Jersey Coastline trains. Pre-Covid, it accommodated approximately 6,850 average weekday passenger trips. The work includes the demolition of the existing platforms, station buildings, stairs, and other infrastructure. There will be construction of new, longer in-bound and out-bound high-level platforms to accommodate a 12-car long trains for easier boarding. There will be the reconstruction of two existing elevator and construction of two new elevators and stairs. A new station building will include ticket office, operational office space, and retail space. Also, new security measures will be installed such as CCTV cameras, climate control waiting areas, and a better customer communication system including visual displays. \$71 million project.

Commissioner Kowalski added the Kapkowski Road – North Avenue East Improvement Project in the City of Elizabeth. Five intersections to be upgraded. \$17 million project.

In addition, Ms. Betz gave an update on the *Union County Electric Vehicles Infrastructure Study* which began last spring. The project's purpose is to support EV ownership, to plan the equitable placement of EV chargers with respect to underserved communities and to promote the state and federal incentives for EV purchases and for new EV chargers. The project is advancing towards completion by June 2023. A Public Meeting will be held on the initial recommendations in March 2023 and the UC TAB membership will be notified and invited to attend.

Ms. Betz referred to these dates related to Transportation Planning and a summary of them will be emailed to members before the end of the week.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING RELATED NOTICES

NJ Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Council (NJ BPAC) Meeting: NJPAC meets at 9:30 AM to Noon, Wednesday, March 23, 2023. Check the website for more details as they become available. bikeped@ejb.rutgers.edu

NJTPA Meetings: The NJTPA Board of Trustees Meeting, 10:30 AM, Monday, March 13, 2023. At 10:30 AM, Tuesday, February 21, 2023 two Board Committee meetings: 10:30 AM, PPC/PEDC meeting; and 1:00 PM, the Freight Initiatives Committee. www.njtpa.org

NJ TRANSIT Meetings: The NJ TRANSIT Board of Directors Meeting: 6:00 PM, Wednesday, February 8, 2023. www.njtransit.com

Portal Bridge Project Update:

www.njtransit.com/portal

Hackensack Riverkeeper - For boat tours of the Hackensack River and More:

<https://www.hackensackriverkeeper.org/>

NJTPA InTransition Magazine:

<https://intransitionmag.org/>

County Engineering Report

Ricardo Matias, County Engineer, reported on engineering work underway in the County:

Gordon Street Bridge, Roselle/Roselle Park – Construction is underway and steel is up on the Roselle side. Delivery of trusses expected in February. If work advances as expect, completion expected in summer 2023.

There are two scour protection projects to address erosion about bridge abutments that will be coming up soon: Central Avenue Bridge, Rahway and Randolph Road, Plainfield.

Lamberts Mill Road & Rahway Avenue traffic signal, Westfield – Still working Conrail on the light signal. Some of the technology on the Conrail side has become outdated. It's estimated to be ready by end of March.

Road repaving projects:

2022 Roadway Resurfacing – Work remains on two roads: Summit Avenue in Summit which is pending completion of outside utility work and Raritan Road, Clark.

2023 Roadway Resurfacing – The list of roadways will be on the County website.

Regarding the NJ TRANSIT Portal Bridge project, Mr. Matias took a Hackensack River tour about five years ago which took him under this Bridge as well as others. He recommends the tour. (The website was sent to members following the meeting.)

LOCAL REPORTS ON TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Mr. Robaina highlighted two recent Roselle Park resolutions. One establishes a rapid flashing beacon at Jerome Street and Route 28. Following the roadway work on Faitoute, a beacon will be also installed. Also, shared bicycle marking or sharrows are being placed on Colfax Avenue beginning at the exiting Roselle Park bicycle path and ending at the abandoned Rahway Valley Railway. Also, the Borough has been working with NJDOT on "Don't Block the Box" at Grove Street and Route 28.

Mr. Nierstedt mentioned that NJ TRANSIT has resumed its "Adopt a Station" program and that the Garwood Rail Station has increased ridership. It is looking for a high-level platform, handicap ramps more stops. He suggests six or seven towns along the RVL approach NJ TRANSIT for a shared pedestrian and bicycle path on the RVL right of way.

Ms. Garcia reported the Womens Transportation Seminar International (WTS) is hosting a webinar on *Driving Equitable Outcomes Through Electric Vehicles* on 2.9.23.

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Kowalski mentioned a flood control meeting she had recently attended in Newark and both Mr. Chrobak, Linden, and Mr. Lee from Rahway were also in attendance. It was hosted by the Army Corps of Engineers. The Project is the NY-NJ Harbor and Tributaries Coastal Storm Risk Management Study. It is still accepting public comment. This is the website:

<https://www.nan.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works/Projects-in-New-York/New-York-New-Jersey-Harbor-Tributaries-Focus-Area-Feasibility-Study/>

PUBLIC INPUT

Mr. Dunn noted that in 2022, there were thirty fatalities on Union County roadway with thirteen pedestrians and one bicyclist. In Hudson County, which has about 200,000 more in population had seventeen fatalities. Both Hoboken and Jersey City have robust Vision Zero program. Vision Zero is a strategy to eliminate fatalities and reduce serious injuries.

Mr. Hall mentioned that Hazelwood Avenue in Rahway continues to be closed due to work underneath the railroad mainline. This requires detours and it is not clear when the roadway will reopen.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned with a motion by Mr. Nierstedt with Mr. Robaina seconding.

Respectfully submitted,



Liza Betz, AICP, PP

Union County Transportation Planning Manager

LB/rs

Attachment: Membership List