

Morris County Freight Rail Advisory Committee
Tuesday April 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
Freeholder Margaret Nordstrom, Chairperson	Gary Behrens, Roxbury	Erik DeLine
Freeholder Gene Feyl	Jakub Rowinski, NJTPA	Frank Pinto
Kathy DeFillippo, Roxbury	Tom Phelan, Eng-Wong, Taub & Associates	Gerald Rohsler
Jack Holland, Holland Manufacturing	James Wagner, Kuiken Brothers	
Wes Weis, M&E		
Allen Napoliello, Randolph		

I. Welcome

Freeholder Nordstrom welcomed everyone to April's meeting.

II. Approval of minutes from January 11, 2011

Councilwoman Kathy DeFillippo made a motion to approve the minutes. Councilman Al Napoliello seconded the motion. The minutes from January 11, 2011 were unanimously approved.

III. Morris County Freight Infrastructure and Land Use Analysis Study Update

Mr. Tom Phelan gave an overview of Morris County's Freight Study, which is being conducted by his consulting firm Eng-Wong, Taub & Associates. During the presentation, Mr. Phelan described some of the existing issues for Morris County's freight transportation network, including the current volume of truck traffic on interstate highways and the projected growth by as much as 20.8% by 2035. Additionally, the rail system had height clearance constraints to the west and the east, which limits the kind of services that can be provided by rail.

Mr. Phelan also detailed the importance of the industry to Morris County, noting that 8.7% of the employment base was situated in the manufacturing, warehousing and storage, and transportation sectors. Total direct, indirect, and induced employment totaled

nearly 55,000 people with a total economic output of \$25.2 billion. These industries accounted for \$960 million in state and local tax revenue.

In analyzing the economic impact of the county owned railroads, Mr. Phelan included eight companies that do business on the line or are expected to receive rail service in the near future. These businesses employ 349 full time workers, with an additional 316 indirect or induced jobs. As a result of these companies, there is a total of \$175.4 million of total economic output.

Mr. Phelan also pointed out that there are some benefits to the rail being owned by the County that cannot be quantified, including the protection of rail rights-of-way for existing and future industrial sites, providing shippers an alternative to truck transportation, being more responsive to quality-of-life issues, and acting as an intermediary between the operating railroad and local communities.

Mr. Phelan discussed the selection of certain sites that would benefit local goods movement operations in the area or promote the potential for development in these locations. These sites included the former Eden Mill location in Hanover, the Green Pond Road industrial area off exit 37 on I-80, the Howmet/McWilliams Forge area along the Dover & Rockaway alignment, and the Hercules site in Roxbury. In each location, Mr. Phelan described the constraints to the sites and the sites' assets.

Mr. Phelan talked about some of the County's preliminary infrastructure needs, noting that some of the necessary improvements are outside of the county, notably at Phillipsburg where the railcar clearance is only 16'6", preventing taller box cars from entering the county via the Washington Secondary rail line. Mr. Phelan also noted that the county would greatly benefit if the allowable weight limit along NJ Transit lines from Hackettstown to Dover were increased from 263,000 to 286,000 pounds, which is now the industry standard. Finally, Mr. Phelan described the potential for realigning the Dover & Rockaway railroad using another former rail alignment. This improvement would eliminate twelve grade crossings through Dover, improve freight operations for existing customers along Green Pond Rd, and potentially create new rail access to McWilliams Forge. Some of the challenges this project faces include a new junction east of the Dover rail station, which is in NJ Transit electrified territory and experiences much more passenger service than west of the station; potential wetlands impacts; and the proximity of the new alignment to the McWilliams Forge operation.

Councilman Gary Behrens asked about the wetlands along the Dover & Rockaway. Mr. Phelan responded that there was existing wetlands between the Dover & Rockaway Railroad and the former alignment of the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western's Rockaway Loop. A connection for the realignment would require crossing through the wetlands, and the impact would have to be mitigated.

Mr. James Wagner from Kuiken Brothers Lumber noted the importance of higher box cars and greater weight for his operation in Succasunna. Freeholder Feyl asked if Kuiken

Lumber's other locations were affected by the height and weight constraints with Mr. Wagner indicating that it was just the Succasunna location.

Mr. Frank Pinto noted that Toys R' Us could also potentially benefit from improving the height clearance at Phillipsburg. Mr. Phelan stated that if you asked Toys R Us how they got their goods to their Mount Olive location, they would say by rail since they come into the west coast ports from Asia and are sent east through most of the country by rail before being offloaded to trucks and brought to their Distribution Centers. Improving box car height clearance could make it economical for the Flanders Toys R' Us facility to receive box cars directly without an inter-modal transfer.

IV. Addressing Height Clearance Constraints in Phillipsburg

Mr. Erik DeLine gave an overview of the height clearance constraints at Phillipsburg in Warren County, noting that this issue was raised as a result of the Freight Study. Mr. DeLine showed the area in Phillipsburg of interest, pointing out that the current switch existed on the western side of their South Main Street Bridge. This switch allowed trains to either continue down the Lehigh Valley Line or over to the Washington Secondary, which was how railcars reached Morris County.

To get to the Washington Secondary, the train would pass under a bridge that was considered "orphaned", which means that no governmental entity claims responsibility for the bridge. The bridge only allows for 16'6" of clearance and is in poor condition. The adjoining bridge over the Lehigh Valley Line is cleared for double stack trains, providing plenty of clearance for Plate F (17'0") boxcars.

One possible solution is to move the switch from the western side of the South Main Street bridge to the eastern side and run a connecting track between the Washington Secondary and Lehigh Valley Line through an area that is owned by the Town of Phillipsburg. The area is generally level between the two lines making this engineering feasible. Other possibilities include raising the bridge or lowering the Washington Secondary.

Mr. DeLine pointed out other challenges of accomplishing this height clearance issue noting that NJ Transit is studying the extension of the Raritan Valley Line out to Phillipsburg, the fact that its designated as a historical district, whether Norfolk Southern would be willing to make the changes, the configuration of the tracks, and funding the project.

Mr. DeLine stated that Morris County has already met with Warren County and Phillipsburg and received their interest and support, that there was a follow-up site visit with Gannett-Fleming Engineering for initial impressions of the area, and that the area will be looked as part of NJTPA's Rail Freight Capacity and Needs Assessment to 2040 study. Additionally, calls have been made to NJ Transit and Norfolk Southern to express the County's interest in this project.

V. Current Initiatives

Mr. DeLine gave an update on current freight rail initiatives in Morris County and provided an update on the Chester Branch Rehabilitation Project. Construction was complete and that the spike driving event was slated for May 11th at Holland Manufacturing.

Ms. DeFillippo asked about the emergency access from Route 10 with passage over the tracks. Mr. Pinto stated that he believed that Roxbury Police Department had received keys to the gates to the fence area near Kuiken Brothers Lumber and that access was being worked out through a Use and License Agreement between the county and Roxbury.

Mr. DeLine updated the committee on the potential realignment of the Dover & Rockaway. Mr. DeLine stated that NJTPA is looking to see whether the project may qualify for funding through its Local Capital Delivery Program and if it does, funding for the concept development phase of the project may be available. This would also enable the county to advance the project through the Engineering, Final Design, and Construction Phases.

VI. Open Discussion

Freeholder Feyl informed the committee that the state tried to delay the Commerce Boulevard project until 2015 in its Transportation Capital Program, but it was put back on target for 2012. Also, Sussex Turnpike was in the Transportation Improvement Program.

Mr. Wesley Weis brought up the County's proposal to move the Scale Track along the High Bridge Branch to the western side of Berkshire Valley Road, stating that it was a bad idea. Mr. DeLine noted that the county had further discussions with the M&E on this and agreed that it was not a good idea. He noted that by moving the scale track to the other side would require the M&E to conduct some push-pull operations on US-46. This would have a negative impact on traffic on the busy highway.

Mr. Jack Holland stated that the increase of allowable weight of rail cars from 263,000 to 286,000 would be beneficial to his business.

VII. Adjournment

Ms. DeFillippo made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Freeholder Feyl seconded the motion. The meeting was unanimously adjourned at 3:30pm.

Respectfully Submitted

Erik DeLine
Assistant Planner