



June 19, 2018

TNJ 2.0 Efficient Task Force Meeting

Summary:

- Courtenay Mercer, Mercer Planning Associates, highlighted the activity recaps that she and the other Task Force chairs provided at the Together North Jersey (TNJ) Forum earlier in the day. She introduced updates on the NJ Transportation Infrastructure Bank, and clean energy initiatives. Modeled after the successful NJ Water Bank, it will reduce the cost of financing local infrastructure projects. Following this, there were announcements for the TNJ Training Institute, which will have a Pedestrian Safety workshop on July 13, 2018, and North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA) workshops and funding opportunities.
- Tom Schulze, NJTPA, provided a presentation about the NJTPA Transit Hub Pilot Program. Twenty-one municipalities submitted proposals for technical assistance regarding downtown transportation centers in their respective communities. NJTPA selected three proposals representative of different transit hub community sizes: Dunellen (small), Bloomfield (medium), and the City of Passaic (large). Mr. Schulze is working with American Planning Association-NJ Chapter (APA NJ) to solicit volunteer planners to conduct the program and hopes to begin community coordination over the summer.
 - Vivian Baker, NJ Transit, noted the NJDOT Transit Village Program and the resource challenges faced transit rich municipalities in following through with the program.
- Meeting then addressed priority actions for the upcoming year.
 - Focus Area 11 which is to reduce transportation petroleum use will be transferred to the “Resilient” task force. This sparked a conversation on how the task forces can improve communication between one another.
 - Notes, conference calls, or meetings between Task Force chairs could allow for improved collaboration between the separate subcommittees.
 - Emphasis will continue on Action 7.3 (Transit Hubs) already underway and the related 5.1 (Transit-Oriented Development) which can examine the outcomes of the Transit Hub pilot program.
- Three new areas to look at for the upcoming year include abandoned buildings/brownfields, emerging technologies, and safe-streets/vision zero
 - Abandoned buildings and brownfields- Barry Ableman, NJ Office for Planning Advocacy, and Stephen Kehayes, SP Kehayes, LLC, will take the lead to compile existing resources on these subjects and the report back to the task force for a possible training or workshop.
 - Emerging technologies (Strategy/Focus Area 7.7)- Task Force is interested in how it can support existing NJTPA initiatives regarding rideshare, car-share, and other emerging tech-based modes from a TNJ perspective. Megan Massey, Hudson County Planning Dept., will reach out to Solomon Caviness at NJTPA.
 - Pedestrian Safety/Vision Zero - Jersey City is taking on a great deal of pedestrian and street safety initiatives of interest for the task force to explore.



Meeting Minutes

I. Activity status update

- Infrastructure Bank
 - Governor Murphy's administration announced the NJ Transportation Infrastructure Bank will offer low interest loans to municipalities and counties to offset the costs of transportation projects. The funding will come from the recent gas tax increase. The NJDOT Local Aid Infrastructure Fund is providing the bank with the initial funds from said gas tax increase.
- Clean Energy Program
 - From the Alternative Fuel Readiness Planning: in late spring, NJTPA and Sustainable Jersey met with Somerset County to discuss preparing for electric vehicles and hosted two public workshops, (at NJTPA and in Monmouth County).
 - NJDEP is accepting applications for the "It Pays to Plug In" waiting list, New Jersey's electric vehicle workplace charging grant program.
 - The Board of Public Utilities is conducting an Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Stakeholder Process focusing on electric distribution system infrastructure changes needed to facilitate electric vehicle adoption.

II. Upcoming Training Sessions and Workshops

- TNJ Free Workshop on July 13, 2018 hosted by the TNJ Training Institute regarding Pedestrian Safety
- NJTPA Workshops and Funding Opportunities
 - Free Workshop Implementing Complete Streets at the Local Level: The workshop is split into four sessions.
 - a) Tuesday, June 26 8:30am-4:30pm at NJTPA, One Newark Center, 17th Floor, Newark, NJ
 - b) Wednesday, June 27 8:30am-4:30pm at Bloustein School, 33 Livingston Ave Room 369 New Brunswick, NJ
 - Complete Streets Technical Assistance Program
 - a) The Voorhees Transportation Center of Rutgers University (VTC), Sustainable Jersey, and NJTPA are offering municipal governments free trainings and technical assistance related to a specific task in nine municipal governments



III. The Efficient Task Force- Featured Presentation

- Mr. Schulze presented the Transit Hub Planning Program (https://togethernorthjersey.com/?page_id=25261)
- A successful December 15, 2017 Transit Hub Workshop with an expert panel set the stage for a pilot program.
- The pilot program will use technical assistance from professional planners, associated with APA-NJ, to assist towns with transit centers to improve the land use and development around the transit hub.
- Of 21 applicants, three were selected by an NJTPA/TNJ Efficient Task Force group. Although originally planning for one urban, one suburban, and one rural community, based on the applicants a large, medium, and small community were selected instead.
 - Bloomfield - Watessing Avenue NJ Transit RR station. This is the medium municipality. Close to the border with East Orange, the neighborhood is cut off by the Garden State Parkway. Some industry still left in the area but mostly residential. The NJTPA Transit Hub Committee sees major potential for the area.
 - Dunellen - station on the Raritan Line. This is the small municipality that was selected. The station is in the downtown on North Avenue. There are numerous single family homes and parking located near the station.
 - City of Passaic, Main Avenue Bus Hub - This is the large municipality. Pedestrian safety is the major concern here. A former rail line has been converted to center parking, which coupled with complicated intersections, and highway exits, make this bustling downtown difficult to traverse by foot.
- Next Steps for Transit Hubs:
 - APA volunteers- seeking to solicit and bring aboard volunteer planners who can commit to the project.
 - The goal is to complete these projects/reports in two to three months
 - Jeff Vernick, NJTPA, mentioned the importance that these initiatives utilize community outreach and engagement.
 - Watsessing Avenue also will have a pedestrian studio conducted examining this particular area.
 - Ms. Baker also inquired into how NJTPA engaged communities in their previous efforts to develop or make changes to these hubs. Reiterating what had been said by Mr. Vernick, Ms. Baker mentioned how NJ Transit- Transit Villages have done similar work in Dunellen, specifically, but the town government does not have the bandwidth to absorb and implement some of the technical assistance. She emphasized how community engagement will be important, so that town residents will be involved in the project to see that the technical assistance is carried out.
 - Mr. Schulze mentioned that documentation could be one way in which the planners can help support the town so that there is clear information left behind, once the project is complete.



- Some planners in the room thought it may be difficult to have great documentation as all of the volunteers may not have the time to do so. Mr. Vernick also suggested that NJTPA tools may help support the teams' work - particularly the agency's SALUIT (small area land-use model).

IV. Potential for Other Initiatives

- Priority actions for next year:
 - Strategy/Focus Area 11 (reduce transportation petroleum use) will go to Resilient Task Force
 - a) General agreement on this issue, however Ms. Baker noted the limited communication between the task forces. One area to consider is that there should be an improved way to monitor what other task forces are doing for improved collaboration and to prevent unnecessary repetition.
 - b) Conference calls, webinars, meeting notes online, and bimonthly meetings between chairs were all suggestions to encourage this collaboration.
 - Strategy/Focus Area 7.3 (Improve conditions and services at transit hubs) is already underway. Will reconvene to discuss what happens with the NJTPA transit hub project to inform future initiatives with this strategy/focus area.
 - The NJDOT Transit Villages program has strong criteria and evaluation tools. This can be shared with the NJTPA Transit Hub Project.
- Safety:
 - Jersey City will be creating a Vision Zero Action Plan by early 2019. Bike/ped safety has been a priority of this task force, so the task force will follow Jersey City's progress as a potential model for other communities.
- Abandoned Properties and Brownfields
 - There was discussion about the potential for a workshop or educational forum concerning brownfields and abandoned properties. There seems to be a great amount of resources already available, and there is a desire to not duplicate anything already being done.
 - An interagency work group training session is already being planned. TNJ could potentially partner on this effort.
 - The strategic action for brownfields will be to examine what is already being used for information dissemination.
 - The TNJ Institute could be a method for involving communities and planners that would be interested in learning more about brownfields and abandoned properties.
 - The two steps will be:
 - a) Gather existing information and resources
 - b) Create workshops



- There was discussion about having separate workshops for brownfields and abandoned properties. This will be revisited after resources and information has been compiled.
 - Mr. Ableman and Mr. Kehayes will take the lead to compile existing resources on these subjects and the report back to the task force for a possible training or workshop.
 - Communication and Getting the Word Out About Workshops
 - There was concern about how to get information out to TNJ municipalities and interested parties about Institute workshops. There was a consensus that some communication should come from other parties and not just the VTC. Doug Greenfeld voiced that membership involvement on the task forces has waned, which results in more work being contracted to the VTC and not done by the task force directly.
 - Reaching out about Institute workshops and other TNJ initiatives should go through various channels so that it can reach more people. There were suggestions to reach out to the League of Municipalities, Downtown New Jersey (Courtenay is Executive Director), Society of Engineers, County Associations
 - Technology and Transportation: Strategy/Focus Area 7.7
 - Brian Fineman, NJTPA, suggested that the Task Force consider how the TNJ perspective might contribute to transportation technology actions. NJTPA is exploring car-share, ride-share, corridor management, and other new tech-based services which can have significant implications for equity, the environment, and local communities.
 - Downtown NJ is partnering with VTC on a panel discussion about new technology in downtowns.
 - Task force members were interested, but also noted that the technology area is broad and that many task forces are doing related work. The task force will take note of what others are and have been doing.
 - Ms. Massey will reach out to Mr. Caviness at NJTPA to see if there are opportunities for collaboration or education regarding technology and transportation.
- V. Where are we now and where do we want to go?
 - Leadership:
 - Ms. Mercer will remain co-chair of the task force for the upcoming year.
 - Mr. Kehayes volunteered to be co-chair of the task force.
 - New Member Packet:
 - Task force members will identify individuals that would be a good fit for the Efficient Task Force and send their contact information to the co-chairs so that they may send out new-member packets.
 - New contract with VTC:
 - July 1 begins a new TNJ and NJTPA contract with the Rutgers-VTC.
 - More opportunities for graduate student research or work such as:



- a) Data collection for NJTPA transit hubs- Ms. Baker noted that she and Zach Subar had used VTC students to collect development data for the areas around the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail (HBLR) and created a database using that data.
- b) Mapping the transit hubs
 - (1) One noted challenge also mentioned by Ms. Baker is the precise definition of a “transit hub”)
 - (2) Some data might be difficult to come by as some municipalities will not share information, or do not have accurate information to share.
 - (3) VTC is already working on a similar project.
- c) NJ Future is an organization with municipal data that might be helpful for projects like the Transit Hubs.
- d) Improved levels of engagement with municipalities and municipal governments helps make projects like the Transit Hubs better. Ms. Baker noted this in her experiences with NJ Transit Transit Villages and the HBLR development database.

VI. Next Steps

- Brownfields and abandoned buildings: Mr. Ableman and Mr. Kehayes will compile resources first and then present to task force for possible educational opportunities. Collaboration with VTC would also be possible for this task.
- Pedestrian Safety/Vision Zero: Ms. Mercer will monitor and report back on Jersey City’s progress. Based on their experiences and results, this could be a future TNJ and Efficient Task Force supported initiative.
- Technology: Ms. Massey will reach out to Mr. Caviness at NJTPA regarding technology initiatives that NJTPA is currently working on. This could include:
 - Rideshares/car shares
 - Signal optimization
 - Current work NJTPA is doing with consultants
 - Future technology collaboration with VTC
 - “How does technology and how will technology impact communities in North Jersey?”

