

CONGESTION BUSTER TASK FORCE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD MAY 21, 2002 NJDOT Multi-Purpose Room, Ewing, NJ

Attendees:

Task Force Members (or Delegates):

Chairman Jim Sinclair, NJBIA	Joanne Jaeger, Sadat Associates
Ken Afferton, Edwards & Kelcey	Jerry Lutin, NJ Transit
Sandra Brillhart, Greater Mercer TMA	SFC Dan Morocco, NJSP
Jack Claffey, DVRPC	Bill Ragozine, Cross County Connection
Dotty Drinkwater, CSNJ	Martin Robins, Rutgers-VTPI
Mike Egenton, NJ Chamber of Commerce	Judith Schleicher, I-80 Mobility Task Force
Erica Ferry, Pharmacia	

Invited Guests:

Brad Lane, Michael Baker Corporation	Bob Kaiser, Michael Baker Corporation
--------------------------------------	---------------------------------------

DOT Staff:

William Beetle	Abbas Hirya	Adnew Tessema
Noreen Cardinali	Roman Horodysky	Tom Thatcher
Talvin Davis	Jim Lewis	Susan Weber
Debra Firman	Judith Parrish	

WELCOME and OPENING REMARKS

- The meeting was called to order by Chairman Jim Sinclair at 1:00 p.m. Brief introductions were made around the room.
- The Chairman directed the group's attention to a draft copy of the final report. He said many of the incomplete sections of the report need the collective thought of the entire Task Force. Chairman Sinclair said the Task Force needs additional time, beyond the one-year life given in the statute. He would like to post the report on the website to gather additional public response. He anticipates presenting the report to the Transportation Committees in the fall.

NEW BUSINESS

Analysis of Subcommittee Recommendations

- Judith Parrish, NJDOT Bureau of Technical Analysis, presented the analysis of subcommittee recommendations. Representatives for the consulting firm of Michael Baker Corporation were available for questions. Judi discussed the methodology used and the challenges for analysis.

She stated many recommendations were open-ended, lacking specificity necessary to quantify benefits. Some recommendations reflecting similarity were “packaged” together.

- Results showing reduction during “peak hour” were provided three ways:
 - Vehicle trips (VT)
 - Vehicle Miles traveled (VMT)
 - Reduced Delay (addresses congestion through operational improvements)
- Results were calculated for the following time frames:
 - Short term – 2002-2005
 - Near term – 2005-2010
 - Long term – beyond 2010
- Key results from each subcommittee are shown below:

TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

- Implementation and expansion of off-peak value pricing would remove 5,600 to 6,400 vehicle trips from peak period travel.
- Incident management, signal re-timing, signal coordination and ramp metering have a high impact on congestion with a 6 to 11 minute travel time savings.
- Discussion ensued about ways to expand value pricing to other toll roads and bridges:
 - Larger price differential would cause more trips to move out of peak period.
 - Cannot determine if vehicles that moved out of peak hour switched to non-toll roads
 - Revenue and interest of the State must be considered when changing pricing programs.

GOODS MOVEMENT

- Expanded hours of truck operation would eliminate 7,200 to 8,200 peak hour truck trips.
 - Discussion with distributors would be a good starting point in implementation process.
 - Must be carefully planned to not affect residential quality of life.
- Truck/bus-only lane from exits 8A to 14 on NJ Turnpike would significantly reduce trip delay.
- Encouraging trucks to use NJ Turnpike is a promising area that needs further exploration. It works well with value pricing recommendations of traffic management subcommittee.
- Proposed capital projects would have a significant impact on reducing delay

DEMAND MANAGEMENT

- Descriptions of recommendations tended to limit results; many were marketing/promotion related.
- Specific mileage thresholds and dollar limits needed to quantify the impact of legislative/regulatory-related recommendations
- Discussion ensued. Telecommuting, expansion of commuter benefits programs, parking fees and “Parking Cash Out” were noted as areas worthy of further exploration.

- Some recommendations will be re-worked for further analysis. An example is: How many peak hour trips would be saved, if office workers telecommuted one day every two weeks?
- For commuter incentives to be effective, they must:
 - Be embraced by employers
 - Carry significant disincentives
 - Offer a reasonable alternative
- It was noted that ridesharing has been declining in New Jersey. Chairman Sinclair asked the entire Task Force to suggest ways to double the number of people that carpool. Ideas can be forwarded to the CBTF secretary for compilation.

TRANSIT & PASSENGER RAIL

- Core transit system needs to be adequately maintained before additional ridership can be realized. Lack of sufficient funding could negatively impact VT and VMT if ridership declines.
- Increased capacity, frequency of service and priority bus lanes were mentioned as areas deserving more exploration.
- It is difficult to calculate the cost of adding additional passengers, since costs vary by line or route.

LAND USE

- Most recommendations were not quantifiable due to insufficient data, assumptions and time frame for analysis.
- Recommendations involve legislative and/or regulatory changes that affect future development.
- In the long term, substantial reductions in VMT and VT could be realized if regional development patterns were improved.

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

- Restricting high school students from driving to school has possibly the highest, single impact of all recommendations. Approximately 34,000 daily trips would be saved if this recommendation was implemented.
- This recommendation probably requires legislation and will likely face significant resistance.

Criteria for Selecting Recommendations

- Subcommittees will rework and add specificity to some recommendations. Reworked recommendations are to be submitted by June 7th for reanalysis. The intent is to have recommendations with higher impact on reducing vehicle trips and travel time.
- Task Force members were asked to complete a matrix and evaluate each recommendation on political feasibility, fiscal feasibility and likelihood of implementation.
- The Chairman asked members to use the matrix as a tool in deciding what recommendations the Task Force should move forward. He also reminded the group to consider other ideas and “missing recommendations.”

ORGANIZATIONAL ITEMS

- Future meeting dates: Wednesday June 19th, 1 p.m., NJDOT Training Room
Tuesday July 23, 1 p.m., NJDOT Multi-Purpose Room
- CBTF members to review letterhead to verify correctness of names and affiliations.
- Jerry Lutin of NJ Transit was asked to take chair the Transit & Passenger Rail subcommittee while Anita Perez is on medical leave.
- The meeting adjourned at 4:20 p.m.