Route 1 Regional Growth Strategy
Interim Report #2

"Next Generation" Transportation System

Last Revised: 3-9-2009

BACKGROUND

In January and February 2009, *Route 1 Regional Growth Strategy* participants met in a series of four subarea workshops. The meetings provided an opportunity to re-orient study participants to the planning process and to brainstorm about the future of transportation in the region. The brainstorming session was designed around the goal of expanding transportation options in the region and creating a multimodal regional transportation network that could both support and be supported by sustainable economic development and land use in the future.

To guide the discussion, participants were asked to consider a range of transportation strategies intended to enhance access and mobility in the region in the context of smart growth planning principles. The strategies included:

- Travel demand management (TDM), including pricing policies;
- Transportation systems management (TSM), including highway access management; and
- Strategic investments in new capacity, including rail, BRT, bus, shuttles, pedestrian/bicycle facilities and roads.

At the workshops, participants engaged in a group discussion related to TDM and TSM with an emphasis on the feasibility of implementing pricing policies and access management in the region. Following the group discussion, participants split up into small groups to discuss opportunities for strategic capacity investments. The discussions yielded input that ranged from broad concepts to very specific "project" ideas.

The Route 1 Growth Strategy study is intended to result in a long-term, integrated vision for land use, transportation and economic development in the region. Given this context, it was necessary for the project team to review and synthesize the input received into a conceptual framework equal in scale and detail to the concept land use scenario developed during an earlier phase of the study. The following description is the result of the synthesis process.

“NEXT GENERATION” TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

Based on participant input, the defining characteristics of the region’s “next generation” transportation system will be multimodal connectivity and travel choice. As shown in Figure 1, the system includes a hierarchy of travel modes nested together to connect inter-regional activity centers and serve intra-regional origins and destinations.

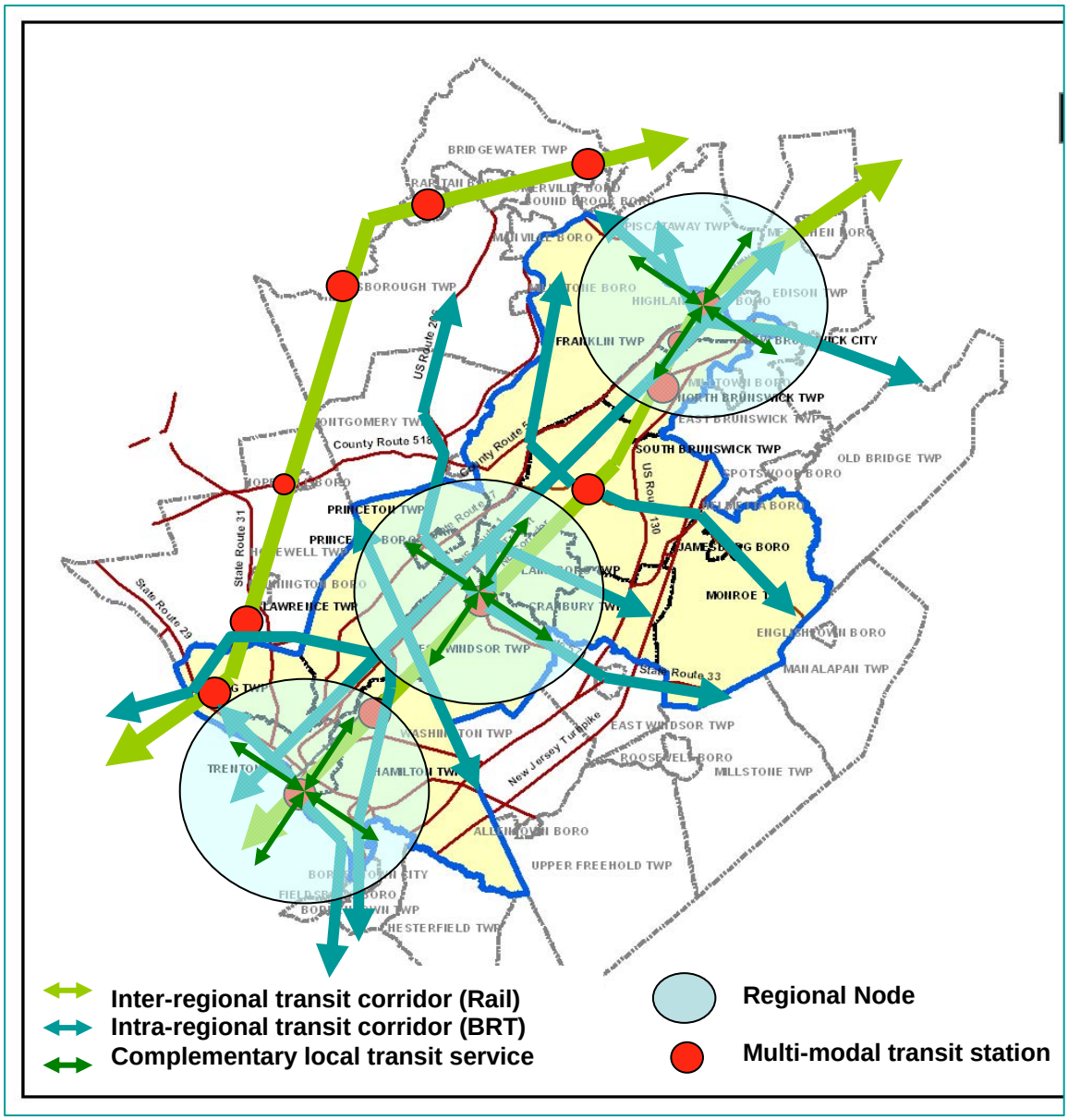

Figure 1: Concept “Next Generation” Transportation System

Inter-regional Rail Network

The NEC rail line, which runs through the center of the corridor, provides the foundation for inter-regional connectivity. The following improvements were suggested:

1. Construct a new NEC station at J&J TOD site in North Brunswick
2. Construct a new South Brunswick station (No connecting MOM service)
3. Improve parking, access and rail operations at Jersey Avenue station in New Brunswick (*How does this work with North Brunswick Station?*)
4. Increase parking capacity at Hamilton and Princeton Junction stations
5. Expand reverse commute service on NEC and add additional express trains to/from the NYC
6. Reactivate commuter rail service on the West Trenton Line

Intra-regional Transit Network (BRT/Bus, Light Rail, Streetcar)

In addition to inter-regional connectivity, additional transit services are needed to serve intra-regional travel and to interconnect existing and emerging centers of development/redevelopment. Toward that end, participants recommended that the Route 1/Princeton area and New Brunswick area BRT planning studies be advanced and expanded upon as follows:

1. Create an intra-regional transit system (BRT) between New Brunswick and Trenton built around a linear spine running along the Route 1 with three multimodal hubs in New Brunswick (Research/education, healthcare, arts/culture), Princeton/West Windsor/Plainsboro (Research/education, financial services, retail, healthcare) and Trenton (State government). Use exclusive right-of-way wherever appropriate and feasible.

2. Create a system of lateral feeder services that connect to the Route 1 BRT spine via key east-west corridors. Participants suggested the following east-west corridors:
    a. Route 18/Easton Avenue (East Brunswick, New Brunswick, Piscataway, Franklin)
    b. Route 522/South Middlebush (Monroe, Jamesburg, South Brunswick, Franklin)–***See note***
    c. Plainsboro Road/Rt 130 (Plainsboro, Cranbury)
    d. Route 33/571/Rt 206 (Hightstown, East Windsor, West Windsor and the Princetons)–***See note***
    e. Quakerbridge/Province Line Road (Lawrence, West Windsor, Hamilton)
    f. I-95/295 (Hamilton, Lawrence, Hopewell)

g. Route 206/Olden Ave/Parkway Ave (Hamilton, Trenton, Ewing)– ***See note***

3. Consider "growing" portions of the BRT network to LRT over time.

4. Anchor the BRT corridors with park & ride facilities. Suggestions included:
    a. I-95 in Bucks County and Ewing/Lawrence
    b. I-295 at Route 33 in Hamilton
    c. Route 130
    d. NJ Turnpike at 8A
    e. I-287 at Exits 10 in Franklin
    f. Route 18/Route 9 in Old Bridge
    g. Ryders Lane in East Brunswick
    h. Along Route 27
    i. Monroe Township locations (Applegarth Road)

NOTE*: participants suggested converting the Dinky to streetcar, adding more stops and extending it to Nassau Street and into downtown Princeton. Participants suggested extending the converted Dinky service from Princeton Junction to Plainsboro Village Center and the new hospital site in Plainsboro. Participants also suggested extending the RiverLINE to the State House and further west to West Trenton via an existing freight line that runs parallel to the Olden Avenue/Parkway Avenue corridors. Finally, participants suggested considering conversion of the MOM line corridor to light rail/streetcar or BRT serving the local host communities*

Complementary local transit services

Complement the inter- and intra-regional transit networks with local bus and shuttle services that will "knit" together existing land uses and increase ridership on the higher order networks. Suggestions included:

1. Enhanced local bus service in Trenton and New Brunswick.

2. Improved bus connections to NJ Turnpike Exit 8A area in Cranbury, South Brunswick and Monroe, including:
    a. From Trenton along Route 33/130
    b. From New Brunswick along Route 130
    c. Along the NJ Turnpike from 8A north.

3. Improved local bus services along: Princeton Pike in Lawrence; Witherspoon St. Bunn Dr. and Great Rd in Princeton; and Route 27 from Princeton to New Brunswick and further north.

4. New or expanded local shuttle services in West Windsor, Princeton Borough and Township, Lawrence, Hamilton, South Brunswick,

Monroe/Jamesburg, Franklin and New Brunswick connecting local activity centers such as office parks, shopping centers/malls, hospitals, schools, universities, Turnpike Exit 8A and existing/future train stations.

Strategic roadway investments

In addition to transit services, a number of investments were recommended to address existing roadway deficiencies and provide new capacity. These include:

1. NJ Turnpike – Widening from Interchange 6 to 9, including redesign of interchange 8 (SPUI and direct connection to Rt. 133). Consider new interchange at "8B" between Interchanges 8 and 8A. Consider bus only on-ramps and HOV for buses as part of widening

2. I-295 – interchange improvements at Sloan Avenue and at Route 33 in Hamilton

3. I-95 – Scudders Falls bridge widening

4. Route 1 – Traffic flow improvements between Quakerbridge Road, and I-95/295, including interchange improvements at both Quakerbridge Road and I-95/295 in Lawrence

5. Route 1 – Interchange improvements at Route 18 in New Brunswick

6. Route 1 – Penns Neck improvements

7. Route 1 – South Brunswick bottleneck improvements from Plainsboro border to North Brunswick

8. Route 1 – Operational improvements in North Brunswick

9. Route 1 Business – Operational and Boulevard improvements from Route 1 Freeway to the Brunswick Circle in Lawrence Township

10. Route 130 – Operational and access management improvements from New Brunswick to Hamilton, including new interchange at Route 32

11. Route 27 – Operational and access management improvements from Somerset Street in New Brunswick to Route 518 in South Brunswick/Franklin, including but not limited to NJFIT improvements From Somerset Street to Howe Lane in New Brunswick and intersection improvements at the Howe Lane, Bennets Lane, Cozzens Lane and Beekman Road intersections.

12. Route 29 – Boulevard improvements in Trenton

13. Route 33 – Operational and access management improvements in Hamilton Township (Gladding Jackson recommendations)

14. “Missing link” connections at various locations:
    a. Complete final segment of CR 522 in South Brunswick
    b. Repair Province Line Road bridge between Cherry Valley Road and Rosedale Road in Princeton
    c. Connect Canal Pointe Blvd to Nassau Park Blvd in West Windsor (BRT only)
    d. Extend Finnegans Lane in North Brunswick

15. Minor widening, operational and access management improvements along various county road corridors:
    a. Quakerbridge Road from Route 1 in Lawrence to Sloan Avenue in Hamilton, including intersection improvements at Sloan Avenue to prevent queueing on I-295 ramps
    b. CR 571 from NEC rail line to Route 133 in West Windsor
    c. CR 522 from Route 1 to Route 130 in South Brunswick
    d. CR 535/Cranbury South River Road/ Cranbury Road (Middlesex County, limits not known)
    e. CR619 in Monroe

The following improvements were suggested but no consensus was evident: Route 92 from NJ Turnpike to Route 1; Route 92 from Route 1 to Route 206, extend CR522 from Route 1 to connect with CR518/Route 206.

Supportive policies and improvements

In addition to the above, participants indicated support for a variety of supportive policies. These included:

1. Expand the use of travel demand management strategies, including but not limited to: enhanced rideshare services, enhanced marketing and outreach to employers and commuters, expanded vanpool incentives, enhanced transit information program, and parking cash-out Incentives.

2. Enhance and improve bicycle and pedestrian facilities and connections throughout the study area to foster greater use. Specific suggestions included:
    a. Johnson Trolley line bridge over I-95 in Lawrence
    b. Projects to ease crossing Route 1 and the NEC rail line
    c. Sidewalk improvements along Route 27
    d. Bicycle lanes on Livingston and Jersey Avenue corridors in New Brunswick and South Middlebush Avenue in Franklin
    e. Bike trail connections from Route 27 to Jersey Avenue station via freight rail ROW

f. Provide incentives in the form of tax breaks and bicyclist amenities (e.g., bike racks/lockers, showers, etc)

g. Focused education and outreach

3. Use transit and highway ITS to provide more traveler information

4. Improve way-finding signs to facilitate access to transit