

Route 1 Regional Growth Strategy

Trenton Sub-Area Workshop – Round 1

Meeting Notes

January 29, 2009



**Mercer County Administration Building
640 South Broad Street, Trenton**

Purposes

This was one of four meetings designed to re-launch the Route 1 Regional Growth Strategy initiative at the subarea level. The meeting served to reiterate the study purpose and objectives in the current context; elicit participant input on transportation investment preferences; review the land use concept scenario; and look ahead to next steps in the process.

Stakeholder Participants

Sandy Brillhart, Jim Parvesse, Paul Cohn, Leslie Floyd, Jesse Buerk, Matthew Lawson, Jay Corbalis, Pam Mount, Barry Ableman, Rick Hrawczun, Glenn Reibman, Dan Pace, Tom Clark, Andy Carten.

NOTE: Participants' comments on systemic dynamics in the subarea are noted in the Issues section at the end of this document.

Congestion Problem Areas

They brainstormed locations in the subarea where congestion is worst.

- Need better connections from Trenton train station to downtown offices
- Better signage – Rte 1 North to Rte 1-B and to 206
- I-195 – 29
- Delaware crossings – US1 and Calhoun St. bridges into Trenton
- Hamilton
- Scudders Falls
- Rte 206 intersections
- Franklin Corner – Rte 1/Rt 206
- 95 / 295 at Rte 1
- 95 ramps in Lawrence – 206, Princeton Pike, Federal City
- Mix of regional and local traffic
- W. Trenton line through to PA – BRT over Scudders Falls Bridge
- Lane drop on Rte 1 South

TDM Discussion

Participants were asked how supportive they are of these measures. Their comments:

- Tolling – feasibility with so many turn offs in this area?
- Implementing parking fees would need to be region wide
- Parking meters work only in certain locations
- Any fees make the region less competitive
- Gas or VMT tax are better solutions – dedicate funds to mass transit & infrastructure improvements – a legislative solution

- Employer assistance for transportation as part of compensation package
 - Make value of parking a taxable benefit
 - Parking cash-out – potential to gain if you don't use your parking spot
 - Similar to existing tax benefit for transit
- Towns could revise land use regulations regarding parking requirements (reduce minimum parking requirements) to be an incentive for business, not punitive – benefit to corporations to not have to build and maintain parking structures. Could accomplish through stormwater / impervious surface regulations
- Link housing and jobs (“Company town” affordable housing)

Access Management Discussion

Participants were asked how supportive they are of these measures. Their comments:

- Use access permit process more aggressively, improve the process
- Retrofit access management is very hard to do
- New development / redevelopment – tighten local standards for municipal / county roads
- Zoning must permit cross-access easements
- Improve conditions for ped / bike (many driveways means can't walk or bike easily)

Small Group Discussions – Transportation

Participants worked in small groups, facilitated and scribed by team members. They discussed and marked up maps with ideas for improvements in various transportation modes that might add capacity and reduce congestion in critical places in the subarea.

A – Summary of Proposed Concepts – Transportation

Small Group A: Group Facilitator Ranjit Walia, Scribe Rob Williams

Participants: Barry Ableman, OSG; Glenn Reibman, DRJTBC; Dan Pace, Mercer County; Rich Krawczun, Lawrence Township.

Rail

- New Service: W Trenton Line – Gap in service, connect it with downtown Trenton
- Enhance service:
 - W Trenton to Trenton – Increase frequency of service
 - Improve parking capacity at W Trenton, Hamilton, and Princeton Junction

Bus

- Currently not a lot of demand
 - Perhaps increasing frequency would make it more convenient and increase ridership and demand
- Shuttle service
 - Need E/W loops
 - Connect office parks, major developments, colleges (major Origins and Destinations)
 - Lawrence would like a shuttle with two alternatives
 - Commuter shuttle for employees and major employers in area during peak commute periods
 - Entertainment/Quality of Life Service –Serve seniors, students, others in getting between schools, university, shopping, etc.

- Communities expressed desire for “Dial-A-Ride” service.

BRT

- Take it from concept to reality
- Would need to enhance with E/W shuttle service
- Run BRT in “counter direction”

Roads

- Intersection improvements
- No new roads

Bike/Ped

- All new/redevelopment should be bike/pedestrian sensitive
- Bridges

B – Summary of Proposed Concepts – Transportation

Small Group B: Group Facilitator Jim Hess, Scribe Marge Quinn

Participants: Leslie Floyd, Mercer County; Paul Cohn, NJ DOT; Jim Lewis, NJ DOT; Sandy Brillhart, GMTMA; Jim Parvesse, Lawrence Township.

Rail

- Extend River LINE to Statehouse.
 - Would attract more riders, including day excursions.
 - Could generate some trips from north to south – is there a need for parking at north end?
- Extend River LINE to West Trenton / Airport area
- Re-activate West Trenton line

Bus

- Provide express bus along I-95 and US 1 from Pennsylvania to BRT – provide supporting park-ride capacity as necessary.
- Provide bus service to new hospital in Hopewell
- Provide bus connections between Trenton and BRT
- Provide shuttles to and from Hamilton station, including connections to Quakerbridge Road and US 130
- Increase station area parking, support redevelopment
- Implement Trenton Trolley

Roads

- Address congestion at interchange of US 1, I-95, and I-295.
- Also, heavy traffic on exit from I-295 north to Sloan Avenue
- Implement Route 29 boulevard
- Johnson Trolley Line bridge across I-95

C – Summary of Proposed Concepts – Transportation

Small Group C: Group Facilitator Jon Carnegie, Scribe Danielle Graves
Participants: Matthew Lawson, Mercer County; Pam Mount, Lawrence Township; Jay Corbalis, NJ Future; Jesse Buerk, DVRPC.

Rail

- More express trains to NY on NEC
- West Trenton Commuter Rail Line
 - To Philadelphia
 - Reactivation of Line to Hopewell & North (Raritan Valley Line)

LRT / BRT

- LRT, Trenton to West Trenton (State Street Connector)
- BRT improvement for Capital Connector

Bus

- BRT/Park-n-Rides – Bucks County, Airport, Hamilton Station, Trenton Station, I-295S
- Address US 1 & I-95/295 interchange for BRT accommodation
- JARC Service – Trenton to Exit 8A via US 130
- NJ TRANSIT Service to US 130 Corridor
- Think of BRT as tripod: US 1 is one leg, and I-95 and I-295 are the other two

Roads

- Address congestion at US 1 & I-95/295 interchange
- Propose full interchange at I-95/295 & Rt. 33
- US 1 & Franklin Corner Road intersection (Propose Flyover)
- Rt. 33 Improvements proposed by Gladding Jackson
- US 1 & Calhoun Street Exit
- Rt. 29 Blvd. Improvements
- US 1 Business – Proposed Boulevard and extension
- US 1 Toll Bridge Widening
- Scudders Fall Bridge Widening (I-95)
- Rt. 92 Bypass

Bike/Ped

- Bike/Ped accommodations from Trenton to Hamilton Station
- Bike/Ped multi trail underpass I-95

Other

- Mercer County Airport (establish a multimodal transit hub)
- Need to improve access to and from Trenton
- Need multi-modal connections between RiverLINE and BRT, including in Burlington County
- Complete interchange between I-295 and Route 33 in Hamilton and establish transit hub in this area
- Use old Reading RR right-of-way between West Trenton and downtown
- Possible conflict between TDM and adding new roadway capacity
- Federal process would require TDM for any new capacity expansions

Issues

Participants' comments on systemic dynamics in the subarea included:

- Look at the overall economic development picture; consider the economic competitiveness of NJ and of Trenton – what is future outlook?
- NJ's types of jobs changing, travel requirements to get to work changing
- Trenton has capacity [but...]
 - Sustainable design should be a strong component
 - TOD – NJT-Trenton is 6th busiest train station in NE, well placed
 - Need additional incentives for TOD, like infrastructure investment
 - Urban hub tax credit
 - Reduce the element of risk, make relocating to Trenton a wise choice
- Younger labor force and urban areas
- Not enough alternatives – need efficient neighborhood shuttles and bicycle accommodations
- Consider cross-river commuting flows (West Trenton Line and Scudders Falls Bridge project will address)
- Residents oppose new housing because it hasn't been managed well
 - Schools
 - Traffic
 - Misunderstood density / affordable housing
 - Get political pressure off locals – need a regional or state solution
- Think systemically – how does the transportation system affect economic development issues?

Land Use and Summary Discussion

Participants offered these thoughts after the land use presentation, and in summary:

- Like having a center in the Airport area
- Trenton is a municipality eager for smart growth density
- Think of Rte 1 BRT as standing on 3 (or more) feeder lines – 206, 571, ???
- Dedicated BRT or express bus lanes on Rte 95, Rte 295, Rte 1 – connect ASAP
- Make multi-modal connections easy, e.g., between the River Line and BRT
- Interest in looking across (artificial) boundaries, e.g., lots of development in Hopewell will impact the Rte 1 corridor
- NJ Future has a bill before the Legislature, the Smart Housing Incentive Act, to get state support for housing impact on school needs
- Must address public perceptions regarding impact of new housing. Towns need help here. Figure out how the public can be convinced redevelopment / housing is good for them
- Recognize different sizes and scales of centers
- Towns have goals to be 'livable communities' so people can walk and work in town; regional transportation is more for people coming here to work
- Dual focus – meet needs of local residents who must approve these changes although they many not use them (e.g., BRT)
- Review the process for working on TODs at Princeton Junction and Hamilton stations. Perhaps convene a panel including municipal officials to discuss issues of development and density, what worked and what they'd do different
- Note the Massachusetts center funding program.

- Streamline permitting at the state level. Somerset Regional Center may be useful model. Planning work has addressed housing issues
- Keep in mind overall objective: regional economic development + livability. Look at 1970 data (before I-95 completed, before exurb exodus from Trenton) for key indicators such as development density and jobs-to-housing ratios
- At economic development roundtable, could we find out why businesses leave?