

# MONMOUTH-OCEAN-MIDDLESEX RAIL PROJECT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

## *MEETING MINUTES*

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**To:** Attendees

**Date:** 10/25/03

**From:** Ruby Siegel

**Meeting Location:** Toms River Ramada

**cc:** File: 5312 – T23

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**Re:** SYSTRA Project # 5312  
**Meeting Title:** MOM CLC Meeting  
**Meeting Date:** 9/24/03

**Attendees:**

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation
Alan	Avery	Ocean County Department of Planning
John	Bartlett	Ocean County Board of Chosen Freeholders
William	Braden	Central Jersey Rail Coalition
Jeff	Carty	Academy Bus Lines
Andy	Cioffi	Manalapan Township
Rick	Dean	McGuire Air Force Base
Hank	DiPasquale	Ocean County Transportation Advisory Board
Kathy	Edmond	Ocean County Department of Transportation and Vehicle
Frank	Edwards	Lakewood Township
Joyce	Fertig	Shrewsbury Township
Robert	Forrester	Shrewsbury Borough
Sean	Gertner	Lakehurst Borough
Bonnie	Goldschlag	Monmouth County Department of Planning
Dorothy	Gratton	Howell Historical Society
Daniel	Green	Central Jersey Rail Coalition
Daniel	Kerwin	NJ Association of Railroad Passengers
Arthur	Kondrup	Western Monmouth Chamber of Commerce
Susan	Levine	Marlboro Township
Robert	Baron	CentraState Healthcare System
Thomas	Marlin	Manchester Township
Regina	Maurer	Jersey Shore Group Sierra Club

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation
Henry	Nicholson	Monmouth County Division of Transportation
Phillip	Pozner	Lakewood Historical Society
James	Shannon	Dover Township
Emilia	Siciliano	Shrewsbury Borough
Neil	Solondz	Lakewood Blue Claws
Garrett	Stasse	Monmouth County Economic Development and Tourism
Alma	Strack	Monmouth County Office of Aging
Pat	Torpey	Monmouth/Ocean Counties
Frederick	Trutkoff	Manchester Township
Thomas	Tunney	Manchester Township
George	Ververides	Middlesex County Department of Planning
Benjamin	Waldron	Monmouth-Ocean Development Council
Tom	Wilson	Strategy Group
Thomas	Worsdale	Naval Air Engineering Station

### **Highlights:**

The CLC meeting was intended to inform committee members of the study team's progress since the initial CLC meeting held in late March 2003. The meeting included a brief introductory presentation providing a project update followed by each discipline leader giving a synopsis of the work accomplished to date. The presentation concluded, and committee members were invited to visit display areas that were set up around the meeting space. The four display areas, one for each of the primary study disciplines (Engineering, Environmental, Operations and Ridership), were staffed by project team members and were designed to demonstrate to committee members the physical work that has been accomplished thus far and that will continue to be refined as the DEIS process continues. It was emphasized throughout the meeting that the information displayed is work-in-progress, but will serve as the foundation upon which the substantive DEIS work is developed. This open house/fair-like format was well received by committee members because it gave them the opportunity to interact with project team members who are intimately familiar with the technical elements of the project. The meetings concluded with closing remarks by the project team followed by an open microphone discussion, which allowed committee members to raise any project related issues. A description of the issues raised and the project team's response is below.

### **Questions/Issues Raised**

The following questions/issues were raised during the 'open microphone' portion of the meeting.

1. Bill Braden, Chairman of the Central Jersey Rail Coalition, stated he believed that NJ TRANSIT was overlooking portions of Eatontown as a viable park-n-ride site proximate to the Garden State Parkway. Mr. Braden was made aware of one of the two current Eatontown candidate station locations, Pine Brook Road, but believes an area situated more closely to the Parkway (east or west) would minimize impacts to local roads and be more attractive to daily commuters.
2. Daniel Kerwin, New Jersey Association of Railroad Passengers, stated that the local media has been running stories giving specific details about NJ TRANSIT's intent with respect to the alignment and service. Most notably was a story reporting that the alignment in Jamesburg would contain double track and that NJ TRANSIT was planning to operate 42 trains per day along the MOM alignment.

Ruby Siegel stated emphatically that the operations and engineering group are evaluating locations where double track is feasible and makes sense from an operations standpoint, however there are no plans to double track the Jamesburg Branch through Jamesburg Borough. Ms. Siegel encouraged CLC members to talk with the media and local constituents and educate them based on factual information they learn from NJ TRANSIT and the project study team. She encouraged CLC members to share misrepresentations about the project with the project team as they become aware of them.

Mr. Kerwin, while appreciative of the suggestion, expressed a view that CLC members lack the necessary clout and resources to characterize adequately the project's status and attributes to the media.

3. Frank Edwards, Township Administrator for Lakewood Township, inquired as to exactly when the project will be built and expressed a concern over the deficiency in information regarding when the MOM project will be constructed.

Jack Kanarek stated in response that NJ TRANSIT has secured funds to complete the DEIS. However, funding decisions to progress the study further to an FEIS, preliminary engineering, final design and construction phase have not yet been determined. Mr. Kanarek sympathized with Mr. Edwards and the rest of the committee regarding the absence of definitive information regarding when service will begin operating.

4. Mr. Edwards inquired further about specifics regarding the MOM service plan.

Ruby Siegel stated that the study team is continuing to develop the service plan and thus information is not available at this stage in the analysis process. Additional analyses of run times, infrastructure capacity and ridership will inform the service planning effort. Initial analyses will be consistent with the type of scheduling in place on passenger rail lines in NJ TRANSIT territory---a concentration of service in the peak periods with some service in the off-peaks.

5. Susan Levine, Public Information Officer for Marlboro Township, expressed concern over some key watershed/environmental issues along the Matawan Alignment.

Jim Dowling informed Ms. Levine that the project study team is well aware of environmental sensitivities along, and proximate to the Matawan alignment and assured her that all potential environmental impacts will be investigated as part of the DEIS.

6. Representatives from the Strategy Group, a private consulting firm hired by Monmouth and Ocean counties, suggested holding an informal, but instructive press conference to debunk any myths circulating about the MOM project.
7. Hank DiPasquale, representing the Ocean County Transportation Advisory Board, recommended that NJ TRANSIT produce another newsletter, which would facilitate CLC member efforts in helping to educate their constituents about the project's current and future initiatives.

It was also suggested that, in conjunction with a revised newsletter or fact sheet, NJ TRANSIT/Project Study Team conduct smaller, town meetings to better educate the residents about the project. Many committee members raised concern that NJ TRANSIT/Project Study Team was

not communicating well enough with the media in an effort to raise awareness about the project and its virtues.

Ruby Siegel emphasized to the committee members that the information shared during the meeting is preliminary and will change. Thus, sharing the information with the media before it is complete would be irresponsible.

8. Sean Gertner, Borough Attorney for Lakehurst Borough, suggested that NJ TRANSIT take on more of an advocacy role to help steer public opinion in the direction of favoring the implementation of MOM service.
9. An issue was raised as to whether NJ TRANSIT is considering modal links to make the project more attractive. Specifically, some members suggested terminating some north-south bus routes at points along the rail line in Ocean and Monmouth counties thereby forcing commuters onto the MOM rail passenger service. Some committee members have the perception that the rail and bus services would be competing and not complementing one another in relation to ridership.
10. Daniel Green, Central Jersey Rail Coalition, stated that when Governor McGreevy was elected to office, he directed NJ TRANSIT to abandon its earlier role of advocating rail projects and mandated that the agency become an impartial player during the study/analysis phase of a project. Mr. Green explained to committee members that NJ TRANSIT is therefore limited insofar as its ability to demonstrate why the MOM project should be elevated to a high priority.

Jim Schwarzwaldner echoed some of Mr. Green's remarks stating that the Transportation Trust Fund is virtually out of money, and that it is unfair for anyone to ask planners to make categorical decisions about when a particular project will be built when so much of a project's future is dependent on funding availability.

Bonnie Goldschlag, Assistant Director of Planning for Monmouth County, stated that notwithstanding longer term funding concerns for projects, NJ TRANSIT should still provide a timeline that makes some assumptions, all things being equal. Ms. Goldschlag noted that state transportation legislation has been passed into law to include the MOM Passenger Rail Line as one of the "Circle of Mobility" expedited transportation projects.

*These minutes represent the recorder's understanding of the issues discussed. Please report any discrepancies to the recorder within seven days, otherwise the record will remain as written.*