

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project was initiated and funded by the Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders. A Project Task Force was formed at the outset of the study of key county stakeholders. These individuals are listed below. We thank all participating task force members for their expertise and guidance, which was essential to the study. In addition, the consultant interviewed over 50 individual stakeholders to gain additional input into the study, which included all members of the Board of Chosen Freeholders, and relevant county department heads and transportation managers. Municipal stakeholders consisted primarily of planning staff or consultants, and transportation managers. Other stakeholders included representatives from such organizations as Keep Middlesex Moving, the Middlesex County Improvement Authority, and the United Way, as well as a State Assemblyman. A list of all stakeholder meetings and participants is provided in Appendix B of this report.

Middlesex County Comprehensive Transportation Study Task Force

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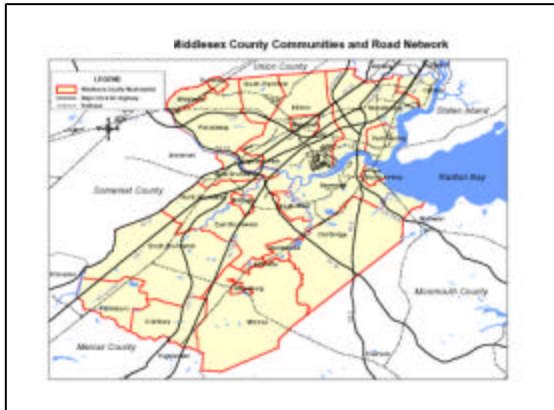
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THE STUDY: MIDDLESEX COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION STUDY

Middlesex County is located within the heart of one of the most dynamic states in the nation. Major new trends are impacting the Middlesex County transportation environment. New growth and development in the southern portion of the County, increasing immigration in the northern



part, the aging of the baby boomers, and economic globalization, are all current trends that have and will continue to impact the County and the State of New Jersey in meaningful and profound ways. Middlesex County grew by 12% between 1990 and 2000 and is projected to grow another 8% by 2010. This is a faster pace than New Jersey as a whole. In short, the transportation environment in Middlesex County has changed considerably over the past few decades and will continue to change as the developments mentioned above evolve into the future.

The Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders initiated this study with the recognition of this complex and evolving environment and the realization that the provision of transit in the County is fragmented between state, county, municipal, and private operators and also between different departments within the County government itself. This means that key transportation needs are unmet, and inefficiencies are present.

A unique and fluid transportation environment requires that Middlesex County implement a new organization model in order to provide efficient and effective transportation services to Middlesex County residents.

Middlesex County Department of Transportation	
Organizational Structure	
New County Department	
Responsibilities	
<i>Existing Functions</i>	<i>New Functions</i>
AWTS	Expansion of demand-response (AWTS)
Central Vehicle Maintenance	New fixed-route service
	New shuttle service
Implementation Schedule	
Transition to new department in July 2004	
Full implementation by 2006	
Incremental Costs	
Year 1 (Jul- Dec 2004) – Additional Operating \$286,000, Capital - \$150,000	
Year 2 (2005) – Additional Operating - \$1,234,000, Capital - \$1,340,000	
Year 3 (2006) - Additional Operating - \$1,271,000, Capital - \$1,250,000	

THE RECOMMENDATION: IMPLEMENT A NEW MIDDLESEX COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

The study recommends that Middlesex County create and implement a new Middlesex County Department of Transportation. The new Department of Transportation will be a separate County Department and handle transportation issues exclusively. This option was one of six broad organization alternatives evaluated in the study.

The new department will combine AWTS service (operations), planning, and maintenance, which are now in three different County departments. It will provide staff dedicated to the main tenance of AWTS and other transportation operations as well as take responsibility for central vehicle maintenance for all County vehicles. In addition, storage and maintenance of all vehicles will take place in one location and the head of the operations, administrative, and maintenance divisions will all report to one person, the Director of the Department of Transportation, who in turn will report to a single Middlesex County Freeholder.

WHY A NEW ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE?

The County commissioned this study because of the recognition that there was a need to address the shortcomings of how transportation is provided in the County. The consultant team conducted extensive stakeholder interviews, which included all members of the Board of Chosen Freeholders, and relevant county department heads and transportation managers. Municipal stakeholders consisted primarily of planning staff or consultants, and transportation managers. Other stakeholders included representatives from such organizations as Keep Middlesex Moving, the Middlesex County Improvement Authority, and the United Way, as well as a State Assemblyman, and others.

Based on input from these stakeholders, an assessment of existing services, and an analysis of transportation needs, this study identified a series of transportation objectives in the following areas. Key objectives included:

- Improve AWTS service quality
- Meet local needs through planning and coordination with NJ Transit
- Address current unmet needs by developing new service recommendations in the following areas:
 - Employment-related transportation
 - Elderly transportation
 - Disabled transportation
- Improve coordination with municipal transit operators, including a centralized transit broker who can schedule trips for multiple services.
- Explore contracting opportunities
- Expand advertising and create a brand identity for County transportation

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF A NEW COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION?

The evaluation of which organizational alternatives could best meet the objectives above considered a range of criteria, including the following:

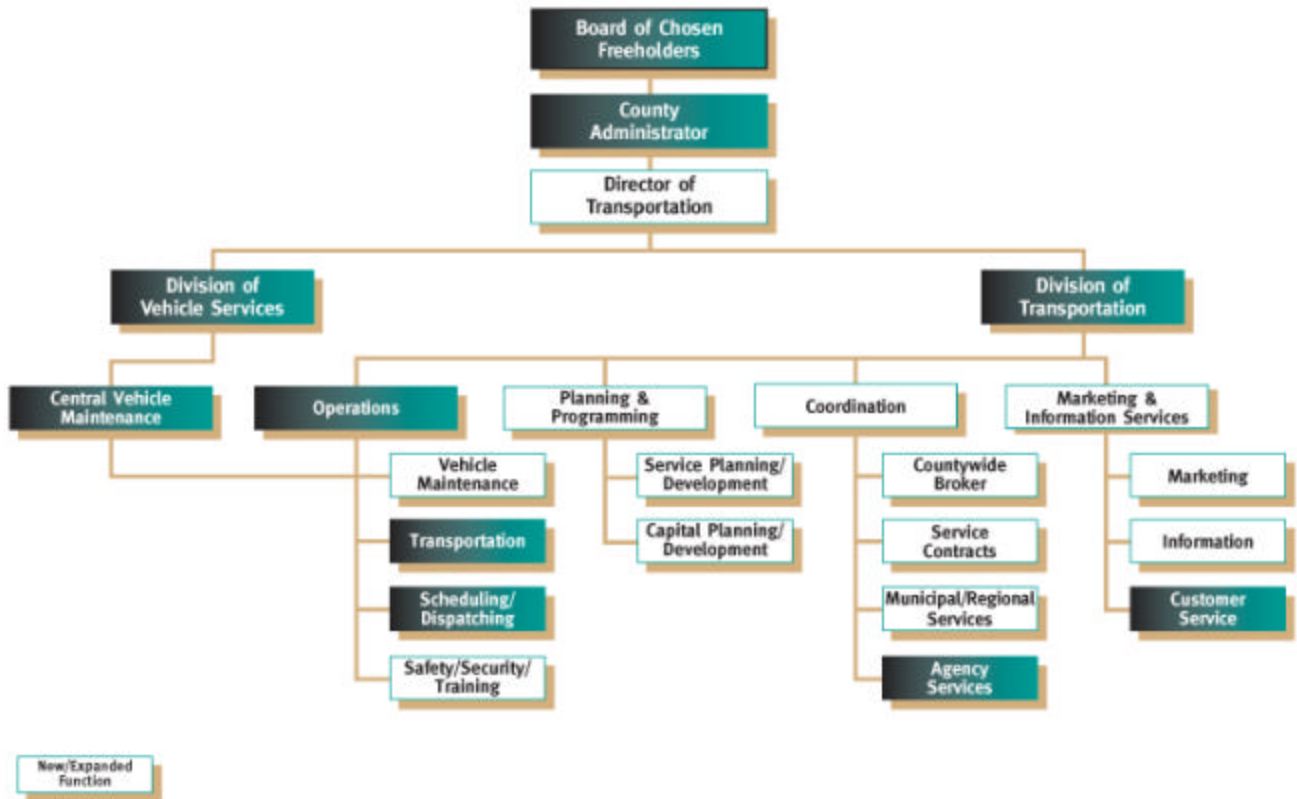
1. *Accountability* - County elected leaders and County officials want an **accountable** organization structure. This means that a **clear chain of command** will be in place in order for Middlesex County elected officials and citizens to assess the performance of the transportation system. A new County Department of Transportation will establish this chain of command by placing all transportation responsibility with **one department**.
2. *Implementation* - Establishment of a new County Department of Transportation within the County government **will be straightforward** and will not duplicate responsibilities of other departments. By contrast, legal and structural issues would need to be overcome if transportation functions were removed outside the direct County government structure.
3. *Compatibility* - Transportation will be the **single focus** of the new County department unlike other options or alternatives that place transportation under an agency or department with broader goals. Having transportation as its own department will result in an organization that is responsive to transportation issues, as opposed to one that has many different responsibilities.
4. *Quality of Service* - Consolidation of vehicle maintenance and planning functions with the transportation operator will allow for greater oversight and translate into **improved service**. Because of the singular focus of the new County Department of Transportation, this will likely yield **improvements in ridership and more effective operation of service**.
5. *Responsiveness to Markets* - With its broader mission, the new County Department of Transportation will be able to be **responsive to the diverse County transportation needs** identified in the study.

WHAT ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE WILL THE NEW DEPARTMENT HAVE?

The one key feature of the new Middlesex County Department of Transportation that deserves repeating is that **all transportation functions, including planning, operations, and vehicle maintenance will now be combined into one new County Department of Transportation**. The chart below displays new and expanded functions that will be divisions within the new Department. The new and expanded functions are shaded light green in the chart below. Three important **new functions are coordination, marketing, and planning/programming**.

Although the following organizational structure is envisioned when the program is fully implemented, it should be noted that not all these positions will be immediately filled, and it may take many years to achieve this structure.

Proposed Organizational Chart
Fully Implemented County Department of Transportation



HOW WILL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TAKE PLACE?

One of the main reasons why the new Department of Transportation option was selected was that it could be **impleme nted almost immediately**. Transitioning to a new department can take place within a year, and by initially contracting out certain operations to a private provider, expanded services can be established in year two.

The following bulleted list describes various steps ideally called for in the first three years of implementation. Taking all of these steps will go far towards achieving the transportation objectives that the study established. It is recognized that the availability of funding will determine whether the County is able to fully implement the following steps in the first three years of the program.

Year 1 - 2004 (July 1- Dec. 31)

- *Transition AWTS from the Department of Human Services into the new County Department of Transportation**
- *Hire Department Director, new Coordination and Marketing Managers, and expand current Operations staff by hiring three new Vehicle Mechanics and one Safety/Training Specialist*
- *Develop plans and procedure to improve and expand transportation services*
- *Begin to develop management/maintenance systems and begin improvements to customer service, scheduling, and trip planning and marketing*

**Current AWTS employees would continue to perform the same functions, but within a new department.*

Year 2 - 2005

- *Hire Planning Manager, Service Planning Specialist, and additional staff including a second Information Specialist, Coordination Assistant/Countywide Broker, and Coordinator for Municipal/Regional services*
- *Introduce expanded demand response service and new fixed route and shuttle services*
- *Contract with third party operator for fixed-route services and vehicles*
- *Continue to develop management/maintenance systems and continue improvements to customer service, scheduling, and trip planning*

Year 3 - 2006

- *Hire additional staff including second Safety/Training Specialist, Capital Planning Specialist, Marketing Specialist, and two more staff members in the Coordination division*
- *Install bus stops and shelters*
- *Complete improvements to customer service, scheduling, and trip planning and dedicated management/maintenance systems*
- *Phase in increase in demand response service and additional fixed-route and shuttle service*

Years 4-10 – 2007-2013

- *Design and complete expansion of existing County Central Maintenance Facility*
- *Expand the Coordination function to achieve full Countywide brokering*
- *Consolidate most municipal transportation services into the Countywide system*
- *Consolidate the BSS transportation services into the Countywide system*
- *Phase in further increases in the demand response service*
- *Phase in additional fixed-route and shuttle service*
- *Continue installation of bus stops and shelters as warranted*

WHAT NEW COSTS ARE ASSOCIATED WITH THE NEW DEPARTMENT?

Implementing a new County Department of Transportation and the new staff positions and services recommended in this study will require a significant financial commitment. Costs include not only those required to transition to the new department and improve existing operations, but also those that are necessary to initiate new services to meet identified County transportation needs. This program will incur additional annual operating costs totaling \$3.0 million by year three. This is in addition to \$4.9 million in fully allocated transportation related costs that are already being spent on transportation through County and other sources. An estimated \$2.7 million would also be required over the course of the three years for capital purchases of vehicles, computer software and bus stops. A major capital expenditure beyond the first three years is an expansion of the County's central vehicle maintenance facility.

Summary of Incremental Operating and Capital Costs Impacts

Year 1 - 2004 (July 1- Dec. 31)

- \$286,000 – Operating (New personnel for 6 months)
- \$150,000 - Capital (Management systems/website/communications)

Year 2 - 2005

- \$1,234,000 – Operating (New personnel, increased demand-response service, new shuttle and fixed-route services)
- \$1,340,000 - Capital (Demand response vehicles, shuttle buses, support vehicles, management systems/website/communications)

Year 3 - 2006

- \$1,271,000 – Operating (New personnel, increased demand-response, shuttle, and fixed-route services)
- \$1,250,000 - Capital (Demand response vehicles, shuttle buses, support vehicles, management systems/website/communications, shelters/bus stops)

It is anticipated that the majority of costs associated with the new County Department of Transportation and the expanded services will be funded through the current channels, especially by Middlesex County. Although it is clear that County resources will need to play a major role, other funding sources may fund a percentage of this proposed program. This could include some state and federal programs, and potentially, private contributions.

CONCLUSION

This study was intended to generate an organizational model that will facilitate and produce a Middlesex County transportation system that is more effective and efficient and able to meet current and future unmet needs. Successful implementation of the New Middlesex County Department of Transportation will enable the County and its residents to navigate through the challenging transportation environment that lies ahead.