Recovering Opportunities: Lessons Learned During the Lower Manhattan Recovery Effort

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Session Overview

– Overcoming Challenges
– Lessons Learned
  • Policy
  • Procedural
  • Technical
– Looking to the Future
Overcoming Challenges

- Midtown Manhattan is largest U.S. employment center, and Lower Manhattan is third largest

- **80% of commuters** to Manhattan business districts use transit

- New York region accounts for 40% of U.S. transit riders and 70% of U.S. rail riders

- MTA alone carries roughly 8 million trips per day on public transportation
  
  - *In 3 days, the equivalent of Amtrak’s yearly ridership*
  
  - *In 10 weeks, the equivalent of the nation’s domestic airline system*
Overcoming Challenges

- Major transit service lost
  • PATH WTC Station and NJ Tunnels
  • NYCT subway stations on the 1/9 and N/R

- New transit infrastructure as priority for economic revitalization of Lower Manhattan
  • Estimated 100,000 jobs displaced in changing travel patterns in Manhattan and NJ
  • Over 250,000 commuters impacted
  • 65,000 commuters to WTC each morning lost service (150,00 daily users of facility)
Policy Lessons Learned

– Define appropriate agency roles early
  • Engage executive leadership
  • Convene working groups
  • Formalize commitments

– Stay committed to common sense solutions
  • Ask a lot of questions
  • Penetrate bureaucratic barriers
  • Translate project objectives to agency missions and community interests
Procedural and Technical Lessons Learned

- The “rational model” typical of transportation planning is not always the best choice
- There is no substitute for face to face interaction
- “Mitigation” meets no one’s needs
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Procedural and Technical Innovations

– **Coordinated Cumulative Effects Analysis**
  - Addressed concerns of EPA while fulfilling needs of project sponsors for expedited project delivery

– **Environmental Analysis Framework**
  - Local project sponsor response to FTA technical assistance on cumulative effects analysis resulting in comprehensive, efficient approach to NEPA that could be transferable to other regions

– **Use of Environmental Performance Commitments**
  - Multi-agency agreements to incorporate environmentally friendly features to reduce adverse environmental consequences as part of actual project definition, thereby avoiding impacts

– **Expedited Project Schedules**
  - Achieved through interactive, on-board reviews to “do what it takes” to expedite environmental milestones and decisions
Proactive Environmental Management

- “Streamlined Stewardship”
  • ISO 14001 Certification
  • Top-down, bottom-up leadership
  • Shared database
  • Common methodologies
  • Consistent vocabulary and message
- Performance based approach
- Incorporate diverse agency and community interests
- Address all phases of project development
Looking to the Future

– Invest in early and extensive outreach to environmental resource agencies and the community

– Commit to environmental stewardship
  • Environmental Performance Commitments

– Engage project sponsors at all levels in the organization
  • Environmental Analysis Framework

– Formalize commitments through Memorandum of Understanding with relevant agencies

– Accelerate comment periods
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– Diana Mendes is a Senior Vice President of DMJM+HARRIS where she specializes in transportation project development.

– For the last two decades, she has worked on numerous large-scale projects throughout the country, assisting project sponsors to plan and implement environmentally responsible transportation solutions.

– She holds a Bachelors degree in Sociology from Mount Holyoke College, and a Masters degree in City and Regional Planning from the University of Pennsylvania.

– She is certified by the American Institute of Certified Planners, and is a contributing author on NEPA, Environmental Impact Assessment, and Transportation Planning in a new book by the American Planning Association and John Wiley and Sons.

– She was the WTS DC Chapter Woman of the Year for 2005