



COUNTY OF ESSEX / COUNTY OF HUDSON



Local Concept Development Study for Bridge Street Bridge over the Passaic River City of Newark and Town of Harrison, NJ

PUBLIC INFORMATION CENTER MEETING NO. 2 - HARRISON SUMMARY REPORT

DATE: Tuesday, December 10, 2019
TIME: 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.
LOCATION: Harrison High School Library
401 Kingsland Avenue, Harrison, NJ
ATTENDEES: Sign-In Sheets (*available upon request*)

PURPOSE OF MEETING

The purpose of the Public Information Center meeting is to inform the public of the Purpose and Need Statement and to solicit public input and comment on the conceptual alternatives and the Preliminary Preferred Alternative (PPA) for bridge improvements. This meeting is being conducted in conformance with Federal and State regulations.

MEETING SUMMARY

1. A total of eleven (11) individuals signed-in at the Public Information Center (PIC) meeting in the Town of Harrison at the High School Library from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Ten (10) project team members were in attendance.
2. The meeting was designed as an open house format with display boards to provide project information for viewing by the general public and to provide reference in addressing any questions from the public.
3. Two handouts were available at the sign-in table: (1) PIC Project Information handout and (2) blank PIC Comment Form, which were distributed to the general public upon sign-in to the meeting (*handouts attached*). The PIC Comment Form could be completed to hand in at the meeting or could be faxed, emailed or mailed to County of Essex Project Manager Luis E. Rodriguez or to County of Hudson Project Manager Joseph Glembocki, PE.
4. The project display boards presented during the open house included: (1) aerial map of each of the conceptual alternatives and the Preliminary Preferred Alternative, (2) cross sections of the existing and proposed new bridge, (3) bridge profiles indicating possible heights of the bridge over the Passaic River for accommodating marine traffic and (4) environmental screening map indicating resources and constraints.
5. A screen presentation area was available with seating for viewing the PowerPoint presentation, which was presented at 6:30 p.m. After introductions from the Project Team, Essex County and Hudson County welcomed everyone with the following overview comments.
 - (a) Thomas Malavasi, Hudson County Engineer, thanked everyone for coming to the public meeting and for the opportunity to present the information. The project was delayed awaiting the U.S.



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Coast Guard requirements. The NJTPA received the U.S. Coast Guard letter for the bridge vertical clearance over the river, so the project can now move forward. Hudson County welcomes your input. Please let the Project Team know your interests.

- (b) Martine Culbertson, Meeting Facilitator, explained that the purpose of this public meeting is to present the concepts developed at prior outreach meetings for bridge improvements and to compare each as displayed in the completed alternatives matrix to recommend the alternative concept that best meets the needs while minimizing impacts, referred to as the Preliminary Preferred Alternative (PPA). She explained the project information handout provides the schedule and web site address and the PIC Comment Form is for providing written comments that the Project Team can review. After the 30-day comment period that ends on January 10th, the Project Team will ask for resolution of support for the PPA by the municipalities and the Counties to complete this Bridge Study and the project can move to the design phases and to construction thereafter.
6. Bruce Riegel, Hardesty& Hanover Project Manager, provided project information via power point presentation slides with the following key points. The presentation slides are available on the project web site: www.bridgestreetbridge.com under Community Outreach documents.
- (a) Currently, the project is in the Local Concept Development (LCD) phase, shown in blue on the Local Project Delivery Process. The table shows all the phases and list of the elements of each phase.
 - (b) The Concept Development Flow Chart shows the steps that have been completed including data collection, establishing a Purpose and Need Statement, developing conceptual alternatives and a comparison matrix analysis to recommend a Preliminary Preferred Alternative (PPA) to move forward to the preliminary engineering and final design phases.
 - (c) Slides provided photos and information on the project site and the condition of the existing bridge based on recent Bridge Inspection Reports.
 - (d) The LCD schedule is listed on the backside of the updated Project Information handout distributed at the meeting and it is posted on the project website. With each phase requiring an estimated 18 to 24 months, construction of the new bridge is anticipated to commence at least 5 years from the close of the LCD Study and after the new Clay Street Bridge is constructed.
7. Amy Sokalski, Project Engineer from McCormick Taylor, provided an overview of the substandard design elements of the bridge and approach roadway intersections.
- (a) Amy explained where there are limitations to making improvements due to the impact to private properties. She also reviewed the crash analysis data collected for the project study.
 - (b) A list of utilities identified in the project area was presented which needs to be taken into consideration with the bridge and roadway intersection improvements. Each entity will be contacted for coordination in the design and construction of any improvements.
 - (b) The display boards at the meeting show the existing bridge cross section and the proposed cross section as well as the bridge profile (height of the bridge) and the proposed preliminary traffic detour plan.



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8. Paul McEachen, Principal Senior Archaeologist from RGA (*formerly Richard Grubb & Associates*), explained that part of the screening conducted during the Bridge Study includes identification of any cultural resources such as archeological or historic features within the study limits.
- (a) The bridge itself is a potential element eligible for the National Historic Register which will be addressed in the design phases in coordination with the permitting agencies such as the NJDEP and NJSHPO (State Historic Preservation Office) to develop a cohesive plan for the bridge improvements that minimizes or mitigates any potential adverse impacts.
 - (b) As a historic bridge structure eligible for the National Historic Register, the bridge's history would be documented, photographed and based upon agency review, may include an interpretive display or sign of the existing bridge.
9. Rob Piel, Environmental Project Manager, from Amy Greene Consultants, explained the environmental process and the screening conducted during the Bridge Study. The environmental constraints screening map display board identifies the environmental resources and permits required for the proposed improvements.
- (a) Any transportation project receiving Federal funding must follow the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. When analyzing alternatives, one looks to avoid or minimize environmental impacts and if that's not possible then to provide mitigation. The environmental resources include air, noise, hazardous or contaminated sites, parks, wetlands, water resources, social and economic impacts.
 - (b) The screening of environmental resources helps to determine the permit requirements needed during the design and construction phases. It also identifies any resources that require further investigation or studies to determine adverse impacts. The Passaic River is a known superfund clean-up site under the jurisdiction of the EPA which is currently underway. The screening for the bridge study has been completed and although the project lies in a floodplain, there are no significant wetlands or other elements found that would require additional effort or impact to the project schedule.
10. The Bridge LCD Study also included a Navigational Study of the Passaic River, which Bruce Riegel provided an overview via slides. The results of the Navigational Study were presented to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) and identified commercial and/or recreational users of the river for determining clearances needed for vessels passing under the bridge.
- (a) The USACOE's Navigational Study for the USEPA's Lower Passaic River Restoration Project was also included in the NJTPA's Navigation Impact Report.
 - (b) For the Bridge Street Bridge, the Navigation Impact Report concluded that there is no commercial use of the Passaic River at this bridge location; only recreational use. The Newark fireboats need 18' clearance and the Passaic Valley Sewer Commission (PVSC) has skimmer vessels that cleans debris from the river for the recreational users and needs at least 16' clearance to navigate under the Bridge Street Bridge at high tide.
 - (c) Given the USCG determination that a fixed bridge replacement must provide 18' vertical clearance and which would impact private properties on the approach roadways since the intersections at
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Route 21 (McCarter Highway) and Passaic Avenue would have to be raised significantly, movable bridge replacement options need to be considered which would minimize property impacts.

11. Bruce Riegel then noted the input received from the community outreach meetings held to date in developing conceptual alternatives to meet the goals and objectives listed in the approved Purpose and Need Statement (*distributed at Community Stakeholders Meeting No. 2 in 2017 and is posted on the project web site*). Input comments received at the prior round of community outreach meetings were presented via slides that included: Local Officials meetings, Community Stakeholders meetings and prior Public Information Center meetings sessions.
 12. Amy Sokalski, Project Engineer from McCormick Taylor, provided an overview of each of the Conceptual Alternatives developed and referred to the completed comparison of alternatives matrix display board.
 - (a) Amy explained for each bridge alternative, a new bridge width of 80 feet is needed which includes two 12-ft eastbound lanes, two 12-ft westbound lanes, six-foot sidewalks and a 2' parapet on each side, and an 8 foot outside shoulder in each direction. The recommended bridge roadway cross section is supported by both Counties. The wider bridge with an additional lane in each direction is justified by the traffic analysis.
 - (b) The approach roadway intersection improvements would include: ADA compatible (Americans Disabilities Act) curb ramps, pedestrian countdown heads and pushbuttons, and crosswalk striping etc.) to reduce crashes and minimize pedestrian conflicts.
 - (c) Amy presented the completed comparison of alternatives matrix, explaining why other conceptual alternatives were dismissed and why the Preliminary Preferred Alternative (PPA) is recommended as best meeting the project needs and is most beneficial while minimizing adverse impacts. The PPA recommended (Concept 6A) is for a new movable bridge replacing the existing bridge on the same alignment with one 80-ft waterway channel.
 - (d) The display boards at the meeting show each of the conceptual alternatives, the comparison matrix, and the existing and proposed bridge cross section as well as the bridge profile (height of the bridge) and the proposed preliminary traffic detour plan for the public to view and comment.
 - (e) There was a brief review of the proposed traffic detour plan, as it is not possible for the bridge to remain open during construction. The detour plans will be discussed and developed in more detail during the design phase once additional engineering is completed along with traffic analyses. The duration of the new bridge construction is estimated to be 36 months.
 13. Below are the questions and comments received by attendees during and after the presentation, noted by Project Team members as follows:
 - *Question/Comment #1:* Will lighting be considered? Lighting is an issue at the bridge for car crashes and conflicts with pedestrians during dark conditions.
 - Response #1:* Lighting of the bridge roadway and sidewalks will be part of the design phases. It is helpful to submit written comments as to the key areas and specific lighting concerns so the Project Team engineers will review and implement elements into the design consideration.
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- *Question #2:* What's the status of the Clay Street Bridge?

Response #2: The Clay Street Bridge will progress to construction prior to the Bridge Street Bridge due to its age and current condition being worse than the Bridge Street Bridge. A follow-up Public Information Center (PIC) meeting is not anticipated to be needed for the Clay Street Bridge, but an updated resolution of support will be requested of the municipalities since the project was delayed significantly awaiting the USCG letter.

- *Question #3:* When will it start (*Clay Street Bridge*)? And what about Bridge Street Bridge?

Response #3: Once resolutions of support are received, the LCD phase will be completed and it is anticipated that the LPE phase of local preliminary engineering will begin fall 2020 and then after 2 years will be the Final Design Phase and then 3 years of construction. As such, estimated start of construction for Clay Street Bridge would be 2025 and for Bridge Street Bridge construction would begin in 2028.

Additional Response #3: Please note that now is the determination of the bridge improvements so the Project Team needs your input now, not when there are shovels in the ground a few years from now when the design will have been completed. There will be on-going community outreach during the design and construction phases of the project to provide input as information is available to review and comment.

- *Question #5:* How can you widen the bridge? What's the width?

Response #5: The new bridge width will be 80 feet. The roadway cross section of the bridge will have 6-foot sidewalks on each side and have 8-foot shoulders, in addition to two 12-foot lanes in each direction. This will allow for better safety and access for vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians.

- *Comment/Question #6:* There is a new 1st housing development. The development won't be completed until 2020 and move in isn't until 2021. What impact will it have related to the bridge?

Response #6: The Project Team will coordinate with the Town of Harrison as to any future development and potential impacts during construction, however the bridge width is limited to minimize impacts to private property at the approach roadway intersections.

- *Question #7:* Is it worth widening the railroad bridge crossing?

Response #7: The railroad bridge is privately owned by Conrail and it is not clear if at present it is an abandoned railroad truss.

- *Question #7:* What about Clay Street Bridge – will it be wider?

Response #7: Yes, similar to Bridge Street Bridge the new proposed bridge roadway cross section will have two 12-foot travel lanes and 8-foot shoulders in each direction with 6-foot sidewalks on each side.

14. At the end of the presentation, Thomas Malavasi, Hudson County Project Manager, thanked attendees for their time and input. He noted that due to the retail development in Kearny, Hudson County is advancing work on the right turn lane going south on Passaic Avenue to turn on the Clay Street Bridge. Attendees were encouraged to take copies of the handouts to share information with others. The 30-day comment period ends as of Friday, January 10, 2020 for the conceptual alternatives and the PPA.



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15. After the presentation, the Project Team was available to share information and answer any questions with regards to the presentation and the display boards. The attendees expressed appreciation for the opportunity to view and comment on the bridge study and possible bridge improvements. The PIC open house at the school library adjourned at 8:00 p.m.
16. No completed PIC Comment Forms were received at the meeting (6-8 p.m.).

Additional Notes:

17. During the 30-day public meeting comment period, a total of five (5) submitted written comments were received via email or the project web site, which ended on Friday, January 10, 2020. The PIC Comments received are in a separate file on the project web site with the personal contact information marked out (redacted). The PIC Meeting Summary Reports and PIC Comments Received files are posted on the project web site under the Community Outreach section.
18. Please note that any responses to PIC comments are reflected in the Frequently Asked Questions on the project website (www.bridgestreetbridge.com). The input from the comments received at the meeting and via email provided information on the PPA proposed bridge improvements, approach roadway intersections or proposed traffic detour plans.

We believe the foregoing to be an accurate summary of discussions and related decisions. We would appreciate notification of exceptions or corrections to the meeting summary within three (3) working days of receipt. Without notification, this meeting summary will be considered to be record of fact.

Bridge Street Bridge LCD Study Project Team