



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 - NEWARK SUMMARY REPORT

DATE: Tuesday, December 10, 2019
TIME: 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.
LOCATION: Newark Public Library, LGBTQ Center & Library Resource Center
5 Washington Street, Newark, 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 seventeen (17) individuals signed-in at the Public Information Center (PIC) meeting in the City of Newark at the Public Library from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Eleven (11) 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 2:30 p.m. After introductions from the Project Team, Essex County and Hudson County welcomed everyone with the following overview comments.
 - (a) David Antonio, Essex County Project Manager, thanked everyone for coming to the public meeting and for the opportunity to present the information. The County of Essex is excited to see the



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proposed bridge improvements and for the project to progress to the design phase. It is a very important bridge crossing and Essex County is pleased that the NJTPA received the U.S. Coast Guard letter for the bridge vertical clearance over the river, so the project can now move forward.

- (b) Byron Nicholas, Hudson County Transportation Planner, thanked everyone for coming. Hudson County is also glad the delay is over and to see the project move forward now with the vertical clearance determination by the U.S. Coast Guard having concurrence by the agencies and with use of Federal funds.
 - (c) 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 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 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 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.
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- (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.
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 bridge the 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 identified 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 the navigational 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



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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; which would impact private properties on the approach roadways since the intersections at Route 21 (McCarter Highway) and Passaic Avenue would have to be raised significantly, a 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 new 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 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:
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• *Question/Comment #1:* What is the timing of the Clay Street Bridge and will then the Bridge Street Bridge be done? If both bridges can't be closed at same time, then later for Bridge Street Bridge.

Response #1: 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. The duration of the design phases for the Clay Street Bridge is estimated to be 4 years followed by a 3-year construction duration. Construction for the Bridge Street Bridge will commence after the new Clay Street Bridge is constructed.

Additional Response #1: A follow-up Public Information Center (PIC) meeting is not anticipated for the Clay Street Bridge, but an updated resolution of support will be asked of the municipalities since the project was significantly delayed awaiting the USCG letter for a navigation vertical clearance pre-determination.

Additional Comment #1: 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.

• *Question #2:* What is the current clearance under the bridge and what will it be when replaced?

Response #2: The vertical clearance of the existing the bridge is 7' MHW (mean high water) in the closed position over both waterway channels. The proposed movable bridge replacement will have a similar vertical clearance of 7' MHW over MHW over one of the two waterway channels as coordinated with the US Coast Guard via the Navigation Impact Report.

• *Question #3:* When will the Jackson Street Bridge be replaced? It's used a lot during special events held in Newark and in Harrison at Red Bull Stadium.

Response #3: Essex County will be applying to the NJTPA for an LCD Study of the Jackson Street Bridge. It is the next bridge both Counties are planning to advance utilizing federal funding. The Counties acknowledge it is a heavily used bridge during special events.

• *Question/Comment #4:* Will there be room for bicycles with the new bridge? Since 2017 when the new living units were constructed and a lot more housing in development, there's an increase in scooters as well as bicycles and pedestrians using the bridge.

Response #4: The new bridge will have a 6-foot sidewalk and an 8-foot shoulder on each side to accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists, respectively. The new widened bridge will allow access for bicycles in the shoulders which will also accommodate scooters, unless by ordinance scooters should be in the travel lanes.

• *Question #5:* What is the increase in cost for replacing the bridge with a movable structure rather than a fixed bridge structure?

Response #5: It is estimated that construction cost differential between a new fixed and movable bridge at this location is 50 million dollars. The USCG has the jurisdiction of the navigable channel of the Passaic River which issue a permit allowing for the bridge replacement based on the clearances needed for marine vessels as identified under the Navigation Impact Study.

14. At the end of the presentation, David Antonio, Essex County Project Manager, thanked attendees for their time and input. Attendees were encouraged to take copies of the handouts to share information



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with others. The 30-day comment period ends as of Friday, January 10, 2020 for the conceptual alternatives and the PPA.

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 public library adjourned at 4:00 p.m.
16. Two (2) completed PIC Comment Forms were received at the meeting (2-4 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 were on the PPA proposed bridge improvements, approach roadway intersections and/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