



Route 52 Public Information/Awareness Task Force Meeting No. 1 Report

MEETING DATE: February 4, 2003
TIME: 1:30 p.m.
LOCATION: **Ocean City, City Hall**

ATTENDEES

Michele Jones, City of Ocean City mjones@ocean-city.nj.us
Carol Beske, ACT Engineers, cbeske@actengineers.com
Tony Marsella, NJDOT, Community Relations, tony.marsella@dot.state.nj.us
Mike Sidani, Michael Baker Jr. Inc., msidani@mbakercorp.com
Bill Felix, Michael Baker Jr. Inc., bfelix@mbakercorp.com
JoAnn Delvescio, Ocean City Chamber of Commerce, ocnj@verizon.net

MEETING SUMMARY

The Committee met to develop both strategies and an action plan to keep public officials, business leaders, residents and tourists aware of the Route 52 Causeway and Somers Point Circle Elimination Improvements. The Committee's goal is to minimize uncertainty, build public trust and retain support for this project.

Following is a summary of the salient points, action items and committee assignments:

–Attendance - No Committee members representing the City of Somers Point were able to attend the meeting. Therefore the committee agreed to reconvene in Somers Point at its earliest opportunity to ensure good coordination and consistency. Tony Marsella will make arrangements with Somers Point.

–Accountability – Every conceivable piece of information that could be communicated to the public must be issued by the New Jersey Department of Transportation:

1. Correspondence – Written public inquiries will be routed to Dave Lambert, who will coordinate a response with Tony Marsella.
2. Press releases - must be released by NJDOT's Office of Public Information.
3. E-mail Inquiries - Dave Lambert will establish a central NJDOT email address for inquiries. He will decide who within NJDOT will respond.
4. Press Inquiries – refer to NJDOT's Office of Public Information. (Rick Remington – director)

5. Web-Site Updates – Baker will submit to Dave Lambert , who will coordinate with NJDOT’s Communications Office.
6. Public Display Materials, Brochures, Flyers, Newsletters, etc. - submit to Dave Lambert, who in turn, will coordinate with Tony Marsella and NJDOT’s Office of Public Information.

–Public Information Meetings – There will be separate meetings in Somers Point and Ocean City held back-to-back (either several days apart or one week apart). The meetings must be held before the tourist season commences (Memorial Day). Please note that the name has been changed from Public Information Center to Public Information Meeting at the request of Ocean City.

1. Meeting Dates – The Steering Committee must decide on the two meeting dates. Also there must be a public official’s briefing in each town at least three week’s prior to these meetings. Carol Beske will ensure that the topics are placed on the 2/27 agenda. Tony Marsella will subsequently schedule the briefings.
2. Meeting Locations – Tony Marsella, working with Michele Jones, will find suitable locations for the public information meetings in both communities.

–Public Officials Briefings - Tony Marsella will arrange for two public officials briefings, to be held respectively in Somers Point and Ocean City, in April 2003. These meetings must be held prior to the public information meetings

–Public Information Meeting Notices - Bill Felix will draft separate flyers for each meeting. Tony Marsella, based on advice from Michele Jones (and a yet to be identified Somers Point representative), will decide upon the scope of the distribution. Options to be considered include:

1. Property Owners Only – Baker will identify and prepare mailing lists of all property owners within 200 feet of the proposed improvements. This is the minimum distribution for the project. The mailings must occur at least 21 days in advance of the public information meetings.
2. Mass Mailings – Ocean City may opt to notify all Ocean City households. Tony Marsella will coordinate.
3. Targeted Distribution – Ocean City may opt to distribute flyers at supermarket racks, the Tourist Center, the Boardwalk Information Center, the Aquatic Center and the Arts Center. Tony Marsella and Michele Jones will coordinate.

–Newsletters – The Ocean City Chamber of Commerce distributes a newsletter (700 names) on a bimonthly basis. Two issues are forthcoming prior to the public information centers (March 1 and May 1). Martine Culberson could write a column for the newsletter. The first, needed very soon, in order to get into the March 1 distribution, could be:

1. Update of the previous press release that NJDOT did not distribute in December 2002.
2. Notice of the public information meeting.
3. Notice that the Route 52 website is up and running.

The second distribution will occur on May 1, 2003. Carol Beske will follow up with Martine.

–Public Access Television Channels – Both Ocean City and Somers Point have Channel 2 access – but through separate venues. Michelle Jones will coordinate with both communities. She will work with Mr. Chuck Smith at Mainland High School for the Somers Point access.

–Newspapers – Public Notice must be established in two Ocean City newspapers (O.C. Gazette and Sentinel-Ledger), The Atlantic City Press and a yet unidentified Local Somers Point newspaper. Tony Marsella will follow up – after the Somers Point meeting.

–E-Mail Inquiries – E-mail inquiries (i.e. those generated at the DOT website) will be channeled to one e-mail address that can be accessed by the DOT Project Manager and/or the Correspondence unit. The responsibility for handling these requests within DOT still needs to be resolved.

–Websites – There are four websites available to distribute vital information for this project. The NJDOT website will be the standard. Three others will be hyperlinked to the NJDOT website: Ocean City, Ocean City Chamber of Commerce, City of Somers Point. Bill Felix will finalize the public information for the NJDOT website and will draft regular project updates for it.

ACTION ITEMS (Feb. 10-March 7)

–Establish Somers Point task force meeting. – To ensure that the same message is communicated in both communities (Tony Marsella).

–Gain Steering Committee Approval of meeting dates, times (Tony Marsella)

–Get NJDOT Website in Operation – (Bill Felix). Build links (Camille Sinclair). Assess public reaction, and then adjust newsletters and brochures.

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

Bill Felix

Task Force Chairperson