

I-295/I-76/Route 42 Interchange Reconstruction

THE NEW JERSEY STATE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

James E. McGreevey, Governor

VOLUME II, SPRING 2003

Jack F. Lettiere, Commissioner

Project Update

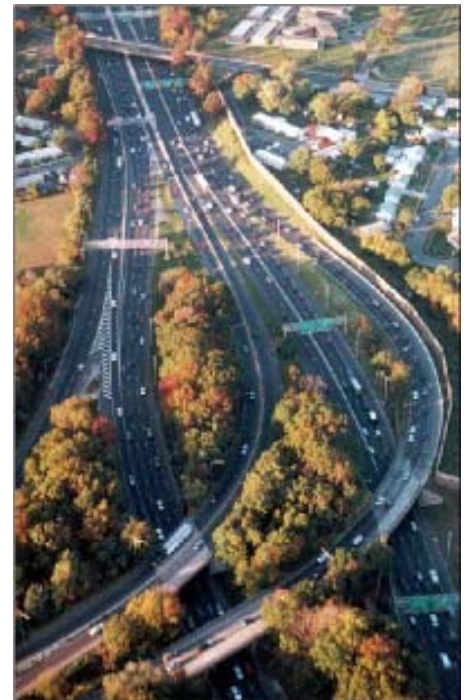
The New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) is pleased to report that significant preliminary environmental analysis and engineering work to address traffic safety, reduce congestion and improve the quality-of-life for New Jersey residents has been completed on the I-295/I-76/Route 42 Interchange Reconstruction Project.

At present, the roadway does not provide a direct connection for I-295 travelers through the interchange, thus requiring motorists to utilize a series of ramps to stay on the main I-295 roadway. Added traffic from motorists traveling on I-76 or Route 42 through the interchange exacerbates problems associated with significant weaving movements required for vehicles to advance along the I-295 route or to access Route 42. A new interchange design is expected to significantly reduce vehicle accidents, driver confusion and travel delays.

NJDOT is currently preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for this project. It uses an innovative partnering approach to engage local officials, agencies, travelers, residents and other stakeholders within the project area, including the key municipalities of Bellmawr, Mt. Ephraim and Gloucester City. Key concerns of the EIS include impacts on quality-of-life issues such as open space, historic resources, traffic access, mobility and noise.

There are approximately 16 potential initial alternative routes under consideration. Through innovative thinking, NJDOT is reviewing current alternatives so that each route will maximize engineering and environmental strategies resulting from the ongoing project studies. NJDOT is also considering the adaptive re-use of ramps to eliminate the need for some roadway flyovers and is also reviewing the opportunities and constraints for tunneling portions of the road.

Later this summer or fall, revised alternatives will be shortlisted for further study, based on recommendations of local stakeholders and the qualitative review of each alternative with specific evaluation criteria. Evaluation criteria for this project was formulated based on input from project specialists, engineers, environmentalists and local stakeholders.



Aerial view of the I-295/I-76/Route 42 Interchange.

Be Involved!

**Public Information Center
Late Spring/Early Summer 2003.**

**Review the initial alternatives.
Speak to the project team.
Offer comments/suggestions.**





Source: NJDEP Bureau of Geographic Information and Analysis, 1995-1997

Study Area

The I-295/I-76/Route 42 Interchange Reconstruction project study area is located within the Boroughs of Bellmawr, and Mount Ephraim and Gloucester City.

The study area includes I-295, beginning in the north at the Pennsylvania-Reading Railroad tracks to the south and ending at Creek Road. On I-76, the western limit of the study area is the Market Street Bridge over I-76. On Route 42, the project's eastern limit is the extension of Heller Road and Leaf Street, east of Windsor Creek Road.

While the proposed project is primarily focused upon the interchange of the three highways, the project study area encompasses a larger area than the interchange itself. This is necessary to ensure that all prudent and feasible alternatives and their potential impacts are examined in the project vicinity.

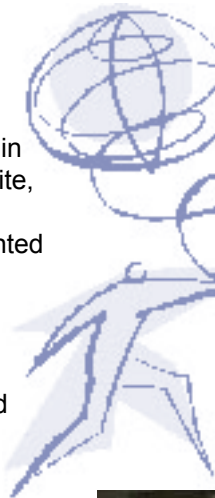
To learn more about the project and how you can be involved in the planning process, sign-up for future mailings and/or send comments to NJDOT, visit our project Web site at njdot.nj.gov and click on "In the Works".

Community Questionnaire Feedback

Public responses to the Community Input Sheet, a survey included in the first project newsletter, and downloadable from the project website, has provided NJDOT with insight into local community concerns. Thirty-one people filled out the Community Input Sheet and commented on environmental, community and maintenance issues and also suggested alternatives for further review by the project team.

Health, safety and quality-of-life issues topped the list of concerns. Many respondents commented on the current congested roadway and the difficulty they have had with its effects, such as noise, pollution and high accident rates. Comments also included: "The traffic noise is unbearable", "Al-Jo's curve is a major concern...too many accidents happen in this area", "Can anything be done about the terrible exhaust fumes during the summer?"

Many respondents expressed a need for improvement in the area. "I must agree one hundred percent that the above interchange needs some kind of overhaul", "I-295 commuters cutting through our neighborhoods", "This is a great idea that will improve quality of life in Bellmawr...295/42 crossover is treacherous". Others simply requested additional information through future project updates and one respondent added, "Good luck with the project!"



Participants mark up maps during the Public Information Center held on April 24, 2002.

Community Involvement and Outreach



The first Partnering meeting was held December 10 and 11, 2001.

NJDOT believes that comprehensive public involvement is an important element in successful project development and is working to get input from residents and stakeholders within the project area, as well as elected officials, agency representatives and the general traveling public.

Public Information Centers

Public Information Centers (PIC) will be held at key milestones during the project. The initial PIC was held on April 24, 2002 and included displays of information in various formats, short presentations and question and answer sessions. Participants also marked up maps and submitted written comments. The next PIC will be held in late spring/early summer 2003 and will be similar in nature, in addition to providing opportunities for feedback on current alternatives and making recommendations for possible new alternatives.

The Community Advisory Committee

The Community Advisory Committee (CAC) has been established to gather input from community representatives, help reconcile various community interests and assist in setting priorities, in addition to planning outreach activities.

Three CAC meetings have already been held to approve a draft purpose and need statement and discuss alternatives. It is anticipated that three to four additional CAC meetings will be held, each linked to specific milestones. The CAC may also address other issues and concerns raised by the

community and supplement the meeting schedule, as appropriate.

Local Officials Briefing

Local Officials Briefings (LOB) have been conducted as an additional method of gaining input into the project and keeping officials apprised of project progress. Three LOBs have been held to date, and additional meetings will be scheduled. Representatives from the study area have been involved in these briefings, including the Mayors of Bellmawr, Gloucester City and Mt. Ephraim.

Partnering Meetings

Partnering meetings are an important element in streamlining the project process and fostering open communication and trust between the project team and regulatory agencies.

To date, one partnering meeting has been held to update agencies on the project, identify potential project issues/problems, identify possible solutions, gain personal insight into the project environs, reach agreement on mutual expectations and project objectives and adopt a formal commitment to work cooperatively. Participation included representatives from the Federal Highway Administration New Jersey Office, New Jersey Transit, New Jersey Department of Transportation, local planning representatives and local elected officials as well as others.

Agency Meetings

In addition to large group meetings, NJDOT has conducted small group meetings with decision-making bodies, such as the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission.

In responding to the needs of the project, NJDOT has made presentations to specific agencies such as the Delaware River Port Authority to update them on the project, in addition to receiving input.

Agency Coordination Meetings

The project team has held a number of Agency Coordination Meetings (ACM) to ensure that all decision-making authorities receive parallel information about the project and also to ensure that any changes to the project scope, timeline or approach are transmitted in a manner that provides sufficient time to respond in a coordinated and proactive manner. To date, five ACMs have been held with representatives from the Army Corps of Engineers, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and the United States Environmental Protection Agency among others.

Environmental Streamlining

This project will require several environmental permits. The environmental streamlining process provides a mechanism for the project team to partner with the involved state and federal permitting agencies. This process also ensures that tasks such as data collection and reporting meet the requirements of the multiple agencies. This approach was designed specifically for this project and has already been adapted on other NJDOT projects.

Benefits of the approach include reducing duplicate reports, early identification of program elements that may require more study and a project-focused approach that ensures that there are no surprises among permitting agencies at the end of the planning process.

Environmental Impact Statement

Project Schedule:

- Develop Alternatives (2002 - 2003)
- Draft Environmental Impact Statement (2002 - 2004)
- Final Environmental Impact Statement (2005)
- Design (2004 - 2008)
- Construction (2008 - 2010)

All schedules are subject to available funding.

Public meetings and other opportunities for input will be provided throughout the process.

Get Involved!

Here's how you can contact us:



Call:
Patricia Feliciano, Community Relations
(609) 530-2110



E-Mail:
fix.295@dot.state.nj.us



Write:
NJDOT - Communications Office
P.O. Box 600, Trenton, NJ 08625



Visit the Web site at:
njdot.nj.gov and click on "In the Works"

**NJDOT
Project Planning and Development
P.O. Box 600
Trenton, NJ 08625**