

**NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
I-295/I-76/Rte 42 Interchange Reconstruction
Sixth Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Meeting
November 10, 2004 6pm -9pm
Bellmawr Senior Citizens Center**

MEETING MINUTES SUMMARY

CAC Meeting Attendees

Diane Garcia (Mt. Ephraim resident)
Richard Middleton (Bellmawr Baseball, Inc.)
Raymond Stanaitis (Gloucester City Resident)
Joseph Ciano (Bellmawr Public Works)
George Coleman (Bellmawr Sewer Department)
Robert Stokes (Mt. Ephraim Resident)
Harry Moore (Bellmawr Park Mutual Housing Corp.)
Robert Guerrieri (Diocese of Camden – Dept. of Real Estate)
Leonard Bandoch (Annunciation Church)
Bruce Huntsinger (Gloucester City Resident)
Florence Korostynski (Bellmawr Senior Citizen Association)
Dale Keith (Senior Citizens United Community Services of Camden, Inc.)
Joseph Bloomer (Bellmawr resident)
Charles Dougherty (Associate Director – DVRPC)

Project Team Attendees

Mike Russo, (NJ DOT)
Jody Barankin (NJDOT)
Nick Caiazza, (NJ DOT)
Bruce Riegel (NJ DOT)
Patricia Feliciano (NJ DOT)
Craig Johnson (Dewberry)
Ileana Ivanciu (Dewberry)
Miguel Gavino (Dewberry)
Patricia Saulino (Dewberry)

SUMMARY

Mike Russo of NJDOT opened the meeting by informing the group that he will no longer be the Project Manager for the Direct Connection project and introduced his replacement, Jody Barankin who is taking over as Project Manager. Mike then turned the meeting over to Craig Johnson, Dewberry's Project Manager for the Direct Connection Project who reviewed the five short listed alternatives for the group. Craig also informed the group of the Traffic Study simulation program which would be presented later in the evening by Miguel Gavino.

All attendees introduced themselves and stated their respective affiliations. Mr. Russo then turned the meeting over to Ms. Ileana Ivanciu of the Project Team.

- Ms. Ivanciu informed the CAC of the Environmental process and the concern of what will be impacted in this process for both the natural and built environment and proceeded to explain the various disciplines that will be investigated.
 - ◇ **Wetlands** – The LOI (Letter of Interpretation) process as required by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and the Army Corps of Engineers will verify the extent of the wetlands in the project area.
 - ◇ **Flood Plains** – Are known to exist based on FEMA's published data— lines were originally approximated and we will need to know exact locations. Hydraulic work is being performed and results will be available once the NJDOT and NJDEP review the data.
 - ◇ **Archaeological** – Investigations took place in the cemetery, the infield area of the interchange, the Bellmawr baseball fields and at Annunciation Church and yielded a collection of artifacts. The artifacts were of both historic and prehistoric dating. Prehistoric artifacts found in the area of Annunciation Church defines that prehistoric activities took place in this area. Discussions are ongoing as to whether or not the finds are significant and warrant further investigation. If so, we will go back to the field, continue investigation by collecting additional artifacts, and documenting the information.
 - ◇ **Historical** – For areas that could be directly or indirectly affected, we are evaluating buildings and existing structures 50 years and older which could be eligible under the National or State Preservation Act. Resources need to be documented and cataloged. A.D. Marble is doing the field survey and findings will be reviewed and submitted to the SHPO (State Historic Preservation Office). As soon as we have information, we will share it at the next meeting.

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- ◇ **Noise Impact** – Field surveys have been conducted to identify current levels of noise. Once the alternatives are in the final development stage, we will determine specific noise impacts and mitigation measures.
- ◇ **Balloon Test** – Conducted to provide the residents with a visualization of the height of the proposed roadway and noise walls (50-75’ for some alternatives near Browning Road) as it is important to understand how the highway will look. Different color balloons at various heights were flown to:
 - To determine how far you will be able to see the alternatives once they are built
 - The height and the distance from which they are visible
 - How the land will change
 - How it will impact properties in the project area
- Craig reviewed other highway projects in the area as follows:
 - Route 130 – Brooklawn Circle** – Preliminary design to begin in 2005—Relieve congestion in and around the circle
 - I-295 Pavement Rehabilitation** (MP 24 to MP 32)- Preliminary design of resurfacing roadway to commence Spring/Summer, 2005
 - I-295/Route 42 Missing Moves** – Final Design commencing end of year
 - Route 168 – Drainage** – Beginning Preliminary Design in early 2005 – Beaver Brook has become silted over the years
 - Route 168 – Benigno Boulevard** – Intersection improvements is in feasibility assessment
 - Route 168/I-295 Interchange** – Project just started feasibility assessment to address issues on both roadways.
- Craig then explained the next steps in the **Direct Connection Project**
 - ACTT Workshop – 3 day workshop (November 16-18) sponsored by FHWA
 - PIC to be held November 30 – Open House informal meeting
 - Finalize alternatives
 - Complete TES when alternatives are done (Summer, 2005)
 - Next round of outreach events/meetings – (end of Summer, 2005)

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- Miguel Gavino presented a computerized simulation of the project area delineating the traffic on the existing roadways vs. the traffic flow that will exist when the selected alternative is in place and the resulting traffic patterns--2004 vs. 2030. This demonstration was very well received by the group.
- Ileana Ivanciu showed a variety of photographs of the balloon tests conducted at various heights and delineating the five short listed alternatives from a visualization standpoint. Balloons were flown from the shoulder of I-295 northbound, behind the maintenance building on the cemetery property, on Browning Road, and at the ball fields all at heights corresponding to the particular alternative in order to determine the Area of Potential Effect (APE). Photo simulations will be forthcoming.

At this point, the meeting was opened to group comments:

Harry Moore of Bellmawr Park Housing Corporation asked if the selected alternative would be identified by the next meeting. Ileana indicated that impacts of the five alternatives would be shown at the next meeting which will start the process to determine a preferred alternative.

Mike Russo explained that NJDOT with the exception of the traffic simulation program did not have much to show the group this evening but wanted to bring the group up to date nonetheless. He queried the group as to their feelings of coming to a meeting when there is not much substantive information to present. The group informally responded that they appreciate being kept informed and Ray Stanaitis, a Gloucester City resident and Robert Stokes, a Mt. Ephraim resident, said they do want to be kept informed of the project's process.

Harry Moore asked about the ability to obtain federal money as cost to complete the project rises in proportion to the economy. He continued that as the project timing is being pushed back and as transportation is not receiving the funding due to the war effort, the cost of this project could rise drastically.

Mike Russo indicated that funding for this project is secure as FHWA and NJDOT have committed to advancing the Direct Connection project and that timing for construction is holding steady. NJDOT is working hand in hand with the permitting agencies and we have tried to meet all the needs of the public to stay on course.

Chick Dougherty of DVRPC stated that a project of this magnitude takes years to complete. As the costs become better known, we will have the opportunity to program funding over a number of years. The federal transportation dollars for the current phase of work have been secured. The state and region are committed to funding this project with federal funds, though the state gas tax is another possible source of funding in the future.

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Ray Stanaitis asked about the prospect of the DRPA putting a light rail contiguous to the project and Mike Russo explained the three conceptual alignments that are being considered—two of which come through Direct Connection interchange and one which does not. Mike assured the group that nothing we are proposing will preclude PATCO's coming through. If necessary, minor adjustments could be made to accommodate the light rail. However, keep in mind that the DRPA studies are significantly behind our schedule.

Ray Stanaitis mentioned that the Philadelphia International Airport was doing runway(s) realignments and extensions whose traffic patterns may affect Bellmawr Park and the ambient noise level that may be added to the noise resulting from the Direct Connection construction. Mike Russo had not heard about the airport runway realignments but assured Mr. Stanaitis that models will be prepared illustrating ambient noise levels for all the alternatives in the Direct Connection project. Chick Dougherty of DVRPC will check on the alignment of the runways and how it may or may not affect Bellmawr residents.

Ileana and Mike assured the group that the project team has to examine the cumulative impacts and how they may or may not affect the area. Ileana added these checks will be part of the study together with other projects...some of which will improve general conditions while others will not.

Ileana went on to say that as soon as we have all the information and results of the project impact on the area, we will definitely come back to the CAC and share the results with them as well as the other agencies as we value peoples' comments. Dale Keith of Senior Citizens United Community Services of Camden said as a CAC member not only does he appreciate being kept informed about project news but he is also able to communicate the news to his constituents. He went on to say how informative he found the traffic study.

Mike said we will discuss scheduling in further detail at the PIC Open House. Currently, we are looking for construction to commence in 2009.

Nick Caiazza informed the group that the alternative's impacts will come at various stages and we will provide the results to the CAC as soon as we know how all five alternatives affect the project area. Ileana added that we want to review the CAC's input so that we are aware of the group's desires.

Diane Garcia, a Mt. Ephraim resident, liked the balloon test as it will help to illustrate to residents in the area the height and visualization of the various alternatives.

Ileana explained the way projects are developed—decisions are not made in a vacuum. Robert Stokes asked who makes the decisions. Ileana explained that a consensus of the public input is presented to the FHWA. Each and every comment is taken into consideration and we work together to weigh the advantages vs. disadvantages and together an informative decision will be made.

Bob Guerrieri of the Diocese of Camden said that it would be helpful to see a visualization of the alternative impacts and he looks forward to a simulation being developed.

Robert Stokes asked Miguel Gavino what time of day the traffic study was conducted and Miguel informed the group that it was done during both the morning and evening peak hours.

Miguel went on to speak about I-295/Route 42 Missing Moves Project and Craig Johnson cited the two boards for illustration and Ramp C which carries 2,500 cars/hour.

Harry Moore of Bellmawr Park Mutual Housing (BPMH) suggested that something be done in regard to the signage to alert trucks to slow down prior to the Creek Road Bridge going northbound and prior to Al-Jo's curve going southbound. Patricia Feliciano of NJDOT said the roadway had been repaved using a mix which should make the roadway less slippery. Mike Russo will discuss with Traffic Operations to see what can be done.

Chick Dougherty said that at Big Timber Creek, the speed limit reduces to 55 MPH. The group then discussed the suggestion that signage for speed reduction changes be posted sooner as currently, the signage comes up upon the drivers too late. The group suggested that electric overhead information signs such as "High Accident Area" have been very helpful on other highways. Mike Russo will meet with the Traffic Operations people and see how we can fix this in the immediate future.

Mike Russo asked the group if they felt that the Newsletter was a valuable tool and they responded in the affirmative. He explained that Newsletter – Volume 5 would be published in late spring with the next CAC and PIC being held in late summer, 2005.

Jody Barankin who has been with NJDOT for more than 15 years explained his previous experience with major interchanges similar in complexity to the Direct Connection project. As part of his new responsibilities, he understands the great impact this project has on the community and will work toward giving the group a more exact schedule for the project timeline.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:15 pm.

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We believe the foregoing record to be an accurate summary of the meeting and related decisions. We would appreciate notification of exceptions or corrections to these Minutes within five (5) working days of receipt. Without notification, we will consider these Minutes to be a record of fact.

Respectfully Submitted,

Patricia Saulino
Dewberry- Goodkind, Inc.