

**I-295/I-76/Rt 42 Interchange Reconstruction
New Jersey Department of Transportation
1st Public Information Center
Bellmawr, NJ
Wednesday April 24, 2002
3:00 PM–8:30 PM**

Summary of the Meeting

Introduction

A total of 43 members of the public and 5 public officials attended the first Public Information Center conducted for this project. The Center was advertised and held in two sessions, with the first beginning at 3PM and the second at 6PM. During both sessions, attendees were invited to review boards and handouts, as well as review maps of the project area and offer suggestions on potential roadway improvements. A formal presentation on the project was made at each session by Bill Beans, New Jersey Department of Transportation Project Manager. This was followed by an informal question and answer period, after which each session was adjourned. Copies of the presentation can be found at <http://www.state.nj.us/dot/roads/rt295/meetings.html>.

Comments and questions generally fell into the following broad categories:

- Traffic and congestion
- Roadway issues
- Property issues
- Public information
- Other

The following is a summary of some of the key points made by the public (with responses by the NJDOT Project Team, where appropriate).

Traffic and Congestion

- Traffic has grown significantly in the past 5-10 years. It is expected to continue to grow as the development of South Jersey continues.
- Traffic headed for Atlantic City and the Jersey Shore cause major tie-ups on the weekend
- The route is a major commuter route into Philadelphia.
- By-pass traffic avoiding the intersection use local street in the surrounding communities causing secondary congestion and degrading the local quality of life.
- There is a lot of truck traffic at the intersection of Benigno Boulevard and Route 168, causing accidents and congestion. This traffic is a local diversion partially due to the lack of a direct connection between I-295 and Rt 42. The NJDOT

Project Team replied that the “Missing Moves” project, a separate study looking at I-295 / Rt. 42 connections may address this problem This I-295/I-76/Rt 42 interchange project is an \$80 million project in which the alternatives are still being developed. The I-295 / Rt. 42 Missing Moves project is a \$20 million project scheduled to start design next year, with construction occurring 2-3 years following design.

- There is a lot of congestion along Benigno Boulevard by Industrial Road and at the intersection of Routes 42 and 55. Will this project alleviate this congestion? (The NJDOT Project Team noted that this would be considered as part of this study.)
- I-295 is congested due in part to the lane changes that vehicles must do to reach connecting roads. Can the connections be reconfigured to mitigate some of the congestion on I-295? (The NJDOT Project Team responded that this will be a major consideration of our study process.)
- Route 42 creates congestion that extends to Al Jo’s curve. (The NJDOT Project Team responded that this project will hopefully eliminate the combination of high volumes and low design speeds at this location).

Roadway Issues

- There was concern that the highway might be moved closer to the Mt Ephraim community and through the wooded area.
- There was a desire to use a quiet roadway material, whether that’s concrete or blacktop.
- A question was raised if Benigno Boulevard or Rt. 42 would be connected to the Turnpike? (The NJDOT Project Team noted that such a connection was considered as part of an earlier study, but is not being considered here, since it does not solve the interchange congestion problems. Fixing the I-295 /Rt. 42 / I-76 interchange will relieve a lot of congestion on local roads and improve local quality of life.)
- There was a concern that NJDOT would choose to impact homeowners rather than affect the Camden Diocese’s cemetery.
- Can Little Timber Creek be restored to its pre-Al-Jo’s curve state? (The NJDOT Project Team said that the study will look to minimize additional impacts to the environment, as well as explore various options for wetland restoration.)
- Are there short-term roadway improvements that can be made? (The NJDOT Project Team noted that some short-term improvements have already been made, while others, including signing, can be made. In addition, the Missing Moves study will also create short-term improvements.)
- There was a concern that there should be contingency improvement plans if funding availability changes.
- A question arose questioning if the Missing Moves project is be built on landfills and if so does this present a hazardous situation. (The NJDOT Project Team noted that at present the preferred alternative would be on landfills. Compaction testing and settlement platforms are currently being examined. Impacts are also being studied to determine any hazard involved. There would be no excavation and a

section of the landfill would be capped. All landfill construction must meet NJDEP approval.)

- The concern was raised that Route 55 should have been built with two lanes in each direction, rather than one, in order to accommodate the traffic that now exists.
- The concern was raised that a connection from I-295 to the New Jersey Turnpike should be built.
- The concern was raised that sound barriers should be completed along I-295. Other residents complained about the waste of money they felt the placement of sound walls was.
- Was light rail considered for this project? (The NJDOT Project Team noted that an earlier study reviewed this option, but it did not solve the operational and safety conditions in the I-295/I-76/Rt 42 interchange.)
- A question was raised how does the NJDOT assess traffic conditions in the interchange? (The NJDOT Project Team said that it is examining both traffic volume counts and aerial videotape that traces vehicle-driving patterns through the interchange.)
- The comment was made that emergency call boxes need to be available to motorists in obvious, well-marked places. Motorists need to know where they are when they report disabled vehicles.

Property Issues

- If a new highway configuration requires private property, how will NJDOT address this? (The NJDOT Project Team noted that during the EIS process any impact on private property would be identified. They also noted that specific right-of-way compensation questions would be addressed by specific representatives within the department.)

Public Information

- When will the alternatives be shown to the public? (The NJDOT Project Team stated that the process for developing alternatives that will be reviewed in the Environmental Impact Statement will include soliciting input from local elected officials, a soon-to-be-created Community Advisory Committee, and the general public. Meetings with all these groups will be conducted over the next year.)
- Will newsletters be distributed? How often? (The NJDOT Project Team just published their first newsletter. Subsequent issues will be published around significant milestones. All issues will be mailed out to our mailing list and will be available on the web site.)

Other

- How much of this project is funded with federal money? (The NJDOT Project Team stated that as the project progresses, there will be a better understanding of the federal funding share.)

- How will mass transit along Routes 42 and 55 be included and will this project incorporate any mass transit? (The NJDOT Project Team stated that it will review transit options with NJ Transit and PATCO prior to a final determination.)
- There was a concern about the number of motorists who cut through the Mt. Ephraim community to reach Route 42. There are many children in the area.