



MONMOUTH COUNTY
Local Concept Development Study for Monmouth County Bridge S-32
on Rumson Road (CR520) over the Shrewsbury River
Borough of Rumson and Borough of Sea Bright

PUBLIC INFORMATION CENTER NO. 1
MEETING REPORT

DATE: Monday, February 27, 2012
TIME: 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. (Brief Presentation 7:00 p.m.)
LOCATION: Borough of Rumson Municipal Building, Council Room
80 E. River Road, Rumson, NJ
ATTENDEES: Sign-In Sheets available upon request

PURPOSE OF MEETING

The purpose of this Public Information Center Meeting is to introduce the project team, present the project status and schedule, and to obtain input from the general public regarding community issues and interests associated with County Bridge S-32 on Rumson Road over the Shrewsbury River.

MEETING SUMMARY

1. A total of 55 individuals attended the meeting as indicated on the Sign-In sheets and a total of 13 project team members were in attendance to present information and assist with public questions. The meeting was designed as an open house format with display boards providing bridge condition information and environmental screening. The project team members were available to answer questions. A Project Information Sheet and blank Monmouth County Comment Form were distributed to the general public upon sign-in to the meeting. The Comment Form could be completed and handed in at the meeting or could be faxed, emailed or mailed to Monmouth County.
2. At 7:00 p.m. Martine Culbertson, Community Involvement Facilitator began the presentation welcoming everyone on behalf of Monmouth County, and the cooperating agencies of North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority and the New Jersey Department of Transportation.
3. After introductions by the project team members and attendees, Jon Moren, Monmouth County Principal Engineer, Bridges, provided information on the existing Rumson Sea Bright Bridge S-32, which was built in the early 1950s and is nearing the end of its life. Due to the age, the maintenance and repairs are escalating and it is time to examine whether the bridge is in need of major rehabilitation or replacement.

4. Sarbjit Kahlon, Principal Environmental Planner from the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA) is the Program Manager for this Study. She explained that the project is currently in the Local Concept Development phase, which will define the purpose and need, develop

alternatives to meet those needs, and identify the Preferred Alternative for the next phases. If the No Build Alternative is not the preferred alternative, then, the project will move forward to the next phases of work: preliminary engineering and then to final design and construction. NJTPA will administer and oversee the project. Monmouth County will manage the project activities as the technical lead, working with the consultant team, led by Hardesty & Hanover (H&H). NJDOT will coordinate the environmental process.

5. Bruce Riegel, Hardesty& Hanover Deputy Project Manager presented information on the project status and photos showing the existing condition of the bridge.

(a) The project work commenced in November 2011. Field survey work is done and preliminary base mapping and environmental screenings have been completed. The project team is currently obtaining information on utility facilities in the project area and new traffic counts will be collected during the summer season to reflect seasonal traffic.

(b) Any transportation projects receiving Federal funding must follow the NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) process. When analyzing alternatives, the project team will look to avoid environmental resources and if not, then to minimize and provide any mitigation. The environmental resources include wetlands, sensitive areas, air, noise, hazardous or contaminated sites, parks, open space and cultural resources such as historic structures and facilities. Community involvement is part of the environmental process.

(c) Input is needed now from the stakeholders and the public in developing the Project Purpose and Need. Bruce then provided information on the project schedule, which is listed on the Project Information Handout and on the Power Point presentation which will be posted on the Monmouth County web site. The Concept Development Phase is scheduled to be completed by April 2013 with a preferred alternative.

6. The meeting was open for any questions or comments. The following questions and comments were noted:

• *Question:* Is the cost to repair the bridge ten million?

Response: No, the ten million is to provide only immediate repairs to keep it operational. Due to the continuing deterioration of the superstructure, the bridge may need to be load posted to limit the amount of weight it is able to support in the future. If the bridge were “load” posted it would limit its usage, especially by buses and trucks, requiring a detour route to be implemented.

• *Question:* Will there be more public meetings?

Response: Yes, the next Public Information Center Meeting will be around October 2012 to present the alternatives and the proposed preferred alternative. There will also be another Community Stakeholders Meeting in the late spring or early summer 2012.

• *Question:* Will the presentation be available for review after the meeting?

Response: Yes, it will be posted to the Monmouth County web site.

• *Question:* Will a huge fixed bridge be considered?

Response: Yes. Once the Purpose and Need Statement is defined, the project team will look at various alternatives and determine which best meets the Purpose and Needs of the project to become the preliminary preferred alternative.

- *Question:* Does the Fed not want to fund a movable bridge?

Response: The Federal process requires that all alternatives be considered. A decision matrix will be developed to compare the alternatives to see which best suits the Purpose and Need. Where feasible, the FHWA regulations prefer to replace a movable bridge with a fixed bridge. Movable bridges are funded and constructed where they are determined to be the preferred alternative. Due to the increased operational costs of movable bridges verses fixed bridges, fixed bridges are usually the most cost effective alternative and also result in minimal travel disruption to the motoring public.

- *Comment:* The West Park neighborhood is very sensitive to any re-alignment of the bridge, which would put it closer to the homes along the old Rumson Road alignment. Not opposed to a new bridge if in need of replacement, but opposed to high, large or out of scale with the surrounding community.

- *Comment:* There is a high amount of pedestrians and bicycles crossing the bridge. Everyone uses it due to limited parking in Sea Bright to access the beaches in summer season and all year to walk to school and church.

- *Question:* What type of rehabilitation would be done?

Response: Anything may be possible. It's too early in the process to determine what would be done. The purpose of this meeting is to identify the problems and needs. Based upon the purpose and need statement, alternatives such as rehabilitation will be analyzed and evaluated.

- *Question:* Is there a budget for the project, is there funding for it to be constructed?

Response: There is funding in place for the Concept Development phase only. Future funding will be programmed once it is determined what the preliminary preferred alternative is selected.

- *Question:* Who makes the final decision on what bridge?

Response: NJTPA and the County will work together to reach a concurrence among the permitting agencies on the alternative which best meets the needs of the project, whether that is the no build, a major rehabilitation or the type of replacement. Monmouth County is the owner and operator of the bridge and as such makes the final decision on the bridge rehab or replacement that complies with NJTPA and NJDOT provide the funding and oversight to ensure that Federal Funding can be used to fund the design, ROW acquisition and construction costs. NJTPA and the County will look to reach a concurrence among the permitting agencies, along with public input, on the alternative which best meets the needs of the project that complies with the FHWA process, whether that is the no build, a major rehabilitation or the type of replacement.

- *Question:* Can the community override the resolution of support if not in agreement with the preferred alternative from the agencies?

Response: It is a Monmouth County bridge so the County has responsibility and jurisdiction, however in order to obtain funding, it will require the cooperating agencies to work together to find a preliminary preferred alternative, which the communities will hopefully support. This process of sharing information and obtaining input from the public is to develop improvements, which meet the needs of the communities and would result in a solution with a positive outcome. As part of this process, municipal resolutions of support for the preferred alternative will be sought.

- *Question:* What is the status of the Oceanic Bridge?

Response: Monmouth County has received comments from FHWA and is advancing the scoping process. The NEPA documentation is to be submitted. The County is in favor of replacement of a movable bridge, but must comply with the NEPA steps to obtain the funding needed.

- *Question:* Will the traffic survey be done in the summer?

Response: Traffic counts will be done in June with the start of summer recreational period but also while schools are still in session.

Additional Comment: Consider taking traffic counts in August; July and August are peak. Living in Rumson, it can take two to three bridge openings to travel over the bridge. It backs up to Avenue of Two Rivers.

- *Comment/Question:* Traffic needs to flow all the time. How does the plan deal with unexpected changes needed to the budget?

Response: The project schedule, status, and budget is regularly monitored. Changes would be evaluated and funding programmed such as construction change orders can be implemented if justified and approved.

Additional Comment: Projects that are federally funded require justification of the work done in each phase.

- *Question:* Is this project 100% Federally funded?

Response: The North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA) is given 80 million dollars to allocate to projects within its region for transportation improvements. This bridge project is one of four pilot projects selected for the new Local Concept Development program using Federal funds.

- *Question:* Is it possible to consider less bridge openings to help with the high volume of traffic in summer time?

Response: U.S. Coast Guard controls and sets the bridge opening schedules. Currently it is scheduled to open every half hour. The project team will coordinate with the U.S. Coast Guard to achieve an optimal balance between marine and vehicular traffic.

• *Comment:* As a biker, I would like to see safe bike lanes and it could cut down on the traffic trying to get to the beaches in the summer time. It presently is not safe to bike, too scared with traffic unless do it at 5 or 6 a.m. Terrified to go out on bike in the traffic. Drive to area near bridge in Rumson and park. Alternative parking such as a church or other areas should be explored.

• *Comment:* The traffic issue isn't local, it's the increasing amount of regional car traffic going to the beach causing congestion, especially when Sandy Hook Park closes.

- *Question:* Is West Park protected as a Green Acres parcel?

Response: Yes, any impacts to West Park will follow the open acres process for approval. The project team will evaluate alternatives seeking to avoid, minimize or mitigate the impacts. It is part of the environmental screening for the project and there is a display board indicating all the environmental and cultural resources identified in the project study area.

- *Question:* How do we protect our interests?

Response: Active participation. Provide input on the purpose and needs of the project in writing on the Comment Form or can submit a letter to the Monmouth County Engineer, Joseph Ettore, to share your interests, thoughts on what the problems are and what you would like to see for improvements. In addition to the general public meetings, there are also Community Stakeholder Meetings with representation from businesses, civic organizations, schools, hospitals and local officials from Rumson, Sea Bright and the adjacent communities. The project team would also like neighborhood and residential representation. If interested, please provide your name to Inkyung Englehart, Monmouth County Project Coordinator at the Sign-In Table.

- *Question:* Will it be a rehab or replace in kind?

Response: It's too early in the process to determine extent of the bridge improvements. That is an outcome of the LCD process. This PIC meeting is to solicit comments from the public to identify the problems and what needs to be repaired or replaced. Based upon the purpose and need statement, alternatives such as rehabilitation or replacement will to be analyzed and evaluated with the solution that best fits the purpose and need selected.

- *Question:* How much more likely will it be a drawbridge than a fixed high span bridge?

Response: It's too early in the process to determine the bridge type. The purpose of this meeting is to identify the problems and needs. Once there is a defined purpose and need statement, then alternatives such as rehab or replace will be analyzed and if to be replaced, what type is best. There are a number of aspects, which must be considered. The repairs may provide 30 years of service life where replacing the bridge would provide 75 years. Cost, constructability and environmental considerations will also be analyzed to determine which option best meets the project purpose and need.

- *Question:* Will the Oceanic Bridge be replaced before this bridge?

Response: Monmouth County would prefer to have the Oceanic Bridge project advanced first and would not want both in construction at the same time. The projects are independent of each other.

- *Question:* What is the significant difference between the old and new process?

Response: The difference is in the development of the alternatives analysis. The old process would identify alternatives and then conduct the environmental process on all alternatives, where the new process is integrated so during concept development the determination of the environmental process is in step with the determination of the preliminary preferred alternative. As such, more engineering data is made available during this Concept Development phase to assist in developing the matrix to analyze the alternatives more efficiently and cost effectively.

- *Question:* Is this information posted online?

Response: The Power Point Presentation will be posted on the Monmouth County web site.

- *Question/Comment:* In examining an alignment north of the existing bridge, how much impact could there be to the neighborhood? Living on Rumson Road, we are opposed to moving the bridge closer to our homes and the park is actively used by families in the neighborhood.

Response: The study will conduct a park analysis, historic and cultural resource analysis and would look to minimize negative impacts to public park areas and right-of-way access to properties.

7. On behalf of Monmouth County and the project team, Jon Moren thanked everyone for attending the meeting and providing comments. He noted that project Team members would continue to be available near the display boards should anyone have additional questions in looking at the information presented in the photos and the newsprint on the wall.

8. In closing the presentation, Martine encouraged anyone to submit their comments or any additional questions after the PIC meeting on the blank Comment Form or if in letter to the attention of the County Engineer, Joseph Ettore.

If interested in becoming a member of the Community Stakeholders Group, please provide your contact information to Inkyung Englehart. The next Community Stakeholders Meeting No. 2 will be held to obtain input for various alternatives developed to meet the Purpose and Need Statement.

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, these minutes will be considered to be record of fact.

Bridge S32 LCD Study Project Team