



NORTH JERSEY TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AUTHORITY
LOCAL CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT STUDY
PUBLIC ACTION PLAN

FY 2017 LCD STUDY - VALLEY ROAD BRIDGE OVER THE PASSAIC RIVER

**Bernards Township, Somerset County, and Long Hill
Township, Morris County, New Jersey**

Last Revised: 03/20/2018

Table of Contents

PROJECT OVERVIEW.....	3
PURPOSE OF THE PUBLIC Action PLAN.....	3
PROJECT TEAM MEMBERS.....	3
Public Action Plan Development.....	4
A. STAKEHOLDER COORDINATION.....	5
1. Stakeholder Distribution List	5
2. Stakeholder Meetings.....	5
B. RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT.....	7
C. DIGITAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA.....	7
1. Project Website	7
2. Social Media Plan.....	7
D. PUBLIC OUTREACH SUMMARY.....	9
ATTACHMENTS	
A. STAKEHOLDER DISTRIBUTION LIST	

I. PROJECT OVERVIEW

The North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA), in coordination with the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT), Somerset County, and Morris County, is conducting a Local Concept Development Study for Valley Road (CR 512) Bridge over the Passaic River. This bi-county bridge connects Bernards Township in Somerset County and Long Hill Township in Morris County via Valley Road (CR 512).

Valley Road (CR 512) Bridge built in 1931, is considered in poor condition according to the current Bridge Inspection Report, 17th Cycle/ October 28, 2015. It is the interest of NJTPA, Somerset County, Morris County, and NJDOT to determine the appropriate improvement alternatives which will indicate whether a bridge rehabilitation or replacement is needed. The project goal is to emphasize the preservation of the existing roadway system and increase safety of the roadway for motorists and pedestrians. Valley Road serves as a regional arterial corridor connecting the communities of Long Hill, Bernards, Berkeley Heights and New Providence with major routes such as I-78 and I-287. Land use is primarily residential, with some commercial properties located near the bridge.

II. PURPOSE OF THE PUBLIC ACTION PLAN

The Public Action Plan (the Plan) is intended to serve as a framework to accomplish open, proactive and productive community and stakeholder discussions concerning the Local Concept Development Study for Valley Road (CR 512) Bridge over the Passaic River. Strategies and audiences identified during the study for the purpose of public involvement may be incorporated into subsequent Local Preliminary Engineering (LPE), Final Design/Right-of-Way (FD/ROW) and Construction (CON) phases.

The foundation for public outreach is set through the development and agreement upon the Public Action Plan. The Plan considers the varying communications needs of elected and local officials, residents, businesses, resource agencies and personnel, and other stakeholders and special interest groups located throughout the study area. Through this process, specific goals, messages, and deliverables will be matched with various audiences to ensure all are informed about the aspects of the study that are most pertinent to them and/or their constituencies. Stakeholder feedback resulting from the Plan will contribute to the overarching Valley Road (CR 512) Bridge Local Concept Development Study to evaluate the feasibility of rehabilitating or replacing the bridge.

III. PROJECT TEAM MEMBERS

NJTPA STAFF

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IV. Public Action Plan Development

The Public Action Plan summarizes a comprehensive effort to advance community awareness and participation and promote inclusivity. The document outlines the project team, program elements, and

the proposed communication/information methods recommended for completion throughout the study. The Plan is a living document and it may be modified and amended as the project progresses.

All public involvement activities will adhere to Title VI and Environmental Justice (EJ) statutes and Federal Transportation Legislation establishing equal access to information and the decision-making process. Title VI and EJ statutes seek to avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health, environmental, social and economic effects on minority and underserved populations.

This process will begin by gaining an understanding of local demographics and how these populations would access information related to the Study. The project team will consult with local officials to determine additional efforts needed to address any potential EJ concerns during the Local Concept Development Study such as language and mobility. All communications will be mailed to organizations that serve EJ populations. We may acquire time on the Long Hill and Bernards Township Committee Meeting agendas in the local municipal buildings to introduce and discuss the project.

Public Action Plan elements include the following:

- A. Stakeholder Coordination
- B. Resolution(s) of Support
- C. Digital and Social Media
- D. Public Outreach Summary

Stakeholder Coordination

Stakeholder Distribution List

The stakeholder distribution list includes a directory of interested and affected parties (Attachment A). The list organizes stakeholder contact information for telephone calls, e-mails, or written correspondence.

Interested and affected stakeholders are anticipated to include:

- Morris County Elected Officials, Engineers and Planners
- Somerset County Elected Officials, Engineers and Planners
- Bernards Township and Long Hill Township Local Officials
- Federal and State Agencies
- Morris County Parks
- First Responders
- Civic and Cultural Organizations
- School District Officials
- Private Residential Property Owners
- Local Businesses

Target organizations that serve EJ populations are anticipated to include:

- Long Hill Township Community Center
- Senior Citizens Club of Long Hill Township
- Millington Baptist Church
- Basking Ridge Community Center

- County College of Morris
- Bernards Township Community Center
- Plainfield Health Center

Stakeholder Meetings

The Local Concept Development Study is the first phase of the NJTPA's Local Capital Project Delivery Program and is consistent with NJDOT's Project Delivery Process. It includes several key phases: development of a Purpose & Need statement; Alternatives Analysis; and selection of a Preliminary Preferred Alternative. Stakeholder meetings will occur at the end of these key phases to vet the transportation issues that matter most to the local area and will provide a forum to work with the local communities in resolving concerns while also meeting the needs of the project. Early and ongoing public involvement is intended to build trust and garner stakeholder support for the study.

The project team will work with Morris and Somerset Counties in the advertisement of public meetings and assist with any press release or media requests. Media block advertisements may be posted in The Daily Record, The Jersey Journal or other newspapers serving Morris and Somerset Counties.

Local Officials Briefings

In an effort to facilitate a convenient exchange with officials, it is anticipated three (3) briefings will be arranged with local officials. Each briefing may be held directly in advance of the Community Stakeholders Meetings and or the Public Information Center to provide officials with the latest information regarding the project prior to meeting with the public. Comment cards will be collected, compiled and summarized for project team review. For this effort, additional coordination by phone, mail and e-mail will occur on an as-needed basis.

Community Stakeholder Meetings

Local businesses, area schools and first responders will be asked to assist the project team in identifying local issues, constraints and opportunities related to the Study. Police, fire and EMS personnel will provide information concerning local travel, commuting, school busing, and service and delivery patterns. Comment cards will be collected, compiled and summarized for project team review.

Public Information Centers

Public Information Centers will be held to present project information clearly and concisely to the public. It is anticipated the PIC locations will be ADA compliant, and the PICs will be held late-afternoon/early evening to accommodate local work schedules. All Project materials presented at Public Information Centers will be approved through the project team prior to the meetings. Comment cards will be collected, compiled and summarized for project team review.

<u>Purpose and Need:</u>		
The Purpose and Need statement outlines the identified transportation problem and the need for a solution while establishing the objectives of the project.		
Public Meeting Type	Proposed Timeframe	Audience and Agenda:
Local Officials Briefing (may be held directly in advance of Community Stakeholders and/or Public Information Centers)	Spring 2018	Local and Elected Officials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present project status and schedule • Review goals and objectives • Identify issues and concerns • Obtain input on the Project Purpose and Need Statement
Community Stakeholders Meeting	Spring 2018	First Responders, Schools, Local Businesses: (Same agenda)
Public Information Center	Spring 2018	Open to the Public: (Same agenda)

<u>Alternatives Analysis:</u>		
An Alternatives Analysis will be developed with the goal of meeting the Project Purpose and Need Statement and satisfying project objectives while minimizing environmental impacts.		
Public Meeting Type	Proposed Timeframe	Audience and Agenda:
Local Officials Briefing (may be held directly in advance of Community Stakeholders and/or Public Information Centers)	Summer 2018	Local and Elected Officials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain feedback and refinements to proposed alternatives • Discuss any impacts that the alternatives and any potential detour may have on local residents and businesses
Community Stakeholders Meeting	Summer 2018	First Responders, Schools Local Businesses: (Same agenda)
Public Information Center	Summer 2018	Open to the Public: (Same agenda)

<u>Preliminary Preferred Alternative (PPA):</u>		
Selection of a PPA will be made based on extensive, qualitative impact assessments and presented to the stakeholders for review and acceptance.		
Public Meeting Type	Proposed Timeframe	Audience and Agenda
Local Officials Briefing (may be held directly in advance of Public Information Centers)	Fall 2018	Local and Elected Officials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gain feedback and approval on the PPA • Discuss next steps/timeline for the project
Public Information Center	Fall 2018	Open to the Public: (Same agenda)

Resolution of Support

At the end of the Local Concept Development Study, McCormick Taylor will work with NJTPA to request a Resolution of Support for the PPA from the local municipalities. If necessary, Somerset and Morris Counties will also be requested to provide a Resolution of Support for the Project. The project team will introduce the requirements for obtaining Resolutions of Support for the PPA early in the process and provide sample language for local municipalities to consider when drafting resolutions.

Digital and Social Media

Project Website

A project specific website will be created to communicate project news and informational updates to the public. The website will include the project overview, draft purpose and need statement, FAQ's (*Frequently Asked Questions*), community outreach efforts, maps, photos, contact information, project timeline and helpful links as needed and approved by the Project team. Content will be strengthened with the addition of project-focused handouts such as visually appealing fact sheets that can be easily downloaded. Additionally, the website will serve as an opportunity for the public to submit comments and questions to the Project team. All comments will be documented, and responses will be approved by the Project team.

The project website is a mainstay information tool. Updates to content, images, navigation, and other elements will occur throughout the project as warranted. The focus may shift to project updates including any potential completion “milestones” and alerts regarding next steps and potential impacts on motorists during construction.

For ease of use, the project team will provide website links to the network of project stakeholders. These stakeholders will be encouraged to share this information on their respective websites and with their stakeholder networks through newsletters, e-mail blasts, social sharing, and other means as their communications systems allow. McCormick Taylor will work with our partner, Stokes Creative Group, to design, host and maintain the website. The website will include several pages such as Home, About the Project, and Community Outreach. Development of the website is set to begin in early January 2018.

Google Analytics

Google Analytics will be installed on the project website to help analyze visitor traffic and identify the project audience and their needs. Data will be collected and presented to the project team on a monthly basis as an agenda item at the status project meetings. These monthly reports will equip the team with data to understand and improve the effectiveness of the website.

Social Media Plan and Twitter Account

A Social Media Plan will be established to communicate meeting announcement alerts and project information. Short project updates and links to the project website will be sent out using a project specific Twitter account. Tweets will also be posted on the website. It is anticipated that Tweets will be disseminated three to five times per week, or as project activities dictate. Review of Twitter activity will be as an agenda item at the status project meetings. For Twitter comments, a protocol will be

developed by the Project team for providing review and response as approved via the status meeting's agenda item. Please see separate Project Social Media Plan for all social media task items and proposed content approval procedures.

Project Branding

The Public Action Plan will also establish graphic design standards and design templates for each of the project's communications tools. Graphic design standards maintain the overall visual and design consistency across all communications materials.

Design elements and templates are anticipated to include:

- Website layout and design
- Templates for meetings materials; including handouts, sign-in sheets, comment cards, name tags and plans displays
- PowerPoint slide backgrounds

Public Outreach Summary

McCormick Taylor will prepare a summary document for inclusion in the study. This summary will include a list of participating stakeholders, a summary of all comments and feedback provided, describe outreach activities, and an assessment of the results. Meeting materials, handouts and displays will be attached to the report appendix, along with meeting minutes documented during the project.

V. Attachments