



MONMOUTH COUNTY
Local Concept Development Study for Monmouth County Route 537
Gravel Hill Road to NJ Route 33 Business
Township of Freehold and Borough of Freehold

PUBLIC INFORMATION CENTER SUMMARY
MEETING REPORT

DATE: Tuesday, April 24, 2012
TIME: 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. (Brief Presentation 7:00 p.m.)
LOCATION: Township of Freehold, Freehold Township Senior Center
116 Jackson Mills Road, Freehold, NJ

PURPOSE OF MEETING

The purpose of this Public Information Center Meeting was to inform the general public of the physical and operational condition of the CR 537 corridor within the study area and to solicit public input and comment towards the development of the project purpose and need.

MEETING SUMMARY

1. A total of 10 individuals attended the meeting as indicated on the Sign-In Sheets and a total of 12 (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 aerials maps of the CR537 project study area, environmental screening and the Local Concept Development process flow chart. 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 brief presentation welcoming attendees 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, Daria Jakimowska, Monmouth County Chief Engineer, Traffic Design, provided information on the corridor, which has retail, hospital, restaurants, school and residential traffic. Due to increased congestion, access and safety issues, this project was developed in attempt to address the traffic and pedestrian concerns in this section of Route 537.

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. The flow chart indicates next steps (see Power Point presentation, to be posted on Monmouth County web site). 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 intersections along the corridor.
 - (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.
 - (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) Bruce noted the key operational issues and significant crash data at certain intersections:
 - 62 crashes at Stillwell Corner Rd and Wemrock Rd (mainly rear-end)
 - Photos showing areas where pedestrians are walking along roadway with no sidewalks
 - 123 crashes rear-end and side-swipes in vicinity of Trotters Way.
 - 95 crashes (rear-end) on RT 537 westbound on bridge over Route 9
 - 170 crashes (mainly rear-end) at Route 9 Northbound Access ramps to Route 537
 - (d) Bruce provided information on the project schedule, as listed on the Project Information Handout and on the Power Point presentation, to be posted on the Monmouth County web site. The Concept Development Phase is scheduled to be completed by April 2013 with a preferred alternative. Input is needed now from the stakeholders and the public in developing the Project Purpose and Need from which alternatives for improvements to the corridor can be created.
6. The meeting was opened for any questions or comments from attendees. The following questions and comments were noted:
 - *Question:* Will the presentation be available to review after the meeting?
 - Response:* Yes, it will be posted to the Monmouth County web site.
 - *Comment:* Mount Corner Shopping Center and Raceway Mall have traffic congestion and there is the need for bicycle and pedestrian connections.
 - *Comment:* Route 9 and Stillwell Road has severe back-ups with commuters trying to get to work.

- *Comment:* Gravel Hill Road signal should help with cars being able to enter and exit Route 537 with the gaps due to the signal.

- *Comment:* There are multiple speed limit zones within the study area, could it be uniform? It may help with amount of conflicts.

Response: The project team will examine the speed limits and signal phasing at each intersection.

- *Comment:* Can the signal progression be improved?

Response: The side streets give timing to the main roadway of 537, however traffic signals have some responsiveness and there is pre-emptive control of the traffic signals for emergency service providers (police, fire, ambulances). The project team will examine if any improvements developed could enhance the current responsiveness of signals.

- *Comment:* At the hospital (CentraState), the non-signalized entrance is designated for one way in, however cars go in and out creating havoc rather than going to signal.

Response: The project team will re-examine the car patterns and ambulance access at the hospital for safe traffic flow to and from CR537.

- *Comment:* Standardize signal and provide overhead signage where helpful to direct motorists.

Response: The project team will examine signage within the project study area.

7. On behalf of Monmouth County and the project team, Daria Jakimowska thanked everyone for attending the meeting and providing comments. She 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 attendees 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.

Any one interested in becoming a member of the Community Stakeholders Group, should provide their 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 and a general public meeting will be held in the future to present the alternatives and the preferred alternative.

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.

Martine Culbertson
Route 537 Community Involvement Facilitator