

5. COORDINATION AND CONSULTATION

The lead agencies for the Route 52 Reconstruction Project are the U.S. Department of Transportation, FHWA, and NJDOT. The USACOE, USCG, and USFWS are cooperating agencies in the preparation of this FEIS.

5.1 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

5.1.1 Scoping Meetings and Public Hearings

Prior to the issuance of the DEIS, the public involvement program included the following activities:

- 1) Scoping (partnering) meetings were held on May 29, 1996 and December 11, 1997. Primarily county, state, and federal officials having a jurisdictional interest in the project, and officials of Somers Point and Ocean City attended these meetings.
- 2) On July 6, 1998, a Local Workshop Meeting was held at the Somers Point Municipal Building in Somers Point with local and county officials and local business representatives.
- 3) On August 11, 1998, the NJDOT made a presentation to the Greater Ocean City Chamber of Commerce. This presentation was held at the Somers Diner in Somers Point.
- 4) A Congestion Management Study Stakeholders Meeting was held on February 22, 1999 in Somers Point. The topic of this meeting was the Route 52 Widening CMS.
- 5) In July 1999, a newsletter describing the project and advertising the Public Information Center was mailed to everyone on the Route 52 mailing list, approximately 250 people.
- 6) On July 29, 1999, a meeting was held for the purpose of briefing local officials from the City of Somers Point, Ocean City and Atlantic and Cape May Counties prior to the Public Information Center held on August 12, 1999.

- 7) A Public Information Center was held on August 12, 1999 at the Ocean City Intermediate School to inform the public on the planned reconstruction of Route 52. Residents and business owners from Ocean City and Somers Point, the mayors and various officials of both cities, representatives from Atlantic and Cape May Counties and interested parties from nearby communities attended.
- 8) A meeting was held on September 21, 1999 with local citizens from the Palen Avenue citizens group of Ocean City.

Subsequent to the issuance of the DEIS, the following activities took place:

- 9) In October 2000, another newsletter was sent. This newsletter described the project and advertised the Public Information Center and Public Hearing scheduled for November 15, 2000 and was mailed to everyone on the Route 52 mailing list.
- 10) On November 15, 2000, a Public Information Center and Public Hearing took place at the Jordan Elementary School.
- 11) A meeting was held with the local officials of the City of Somers Point, the NJDOT and the project's consultant, Earth Tech. The proposed crosswalk and signalized intersection at Braddock Drive and various alternatives for the proposed lane configurations for MacArthur Boulevard were discussed.

5.1.2 Public Comments

The following is a summary of comments given by the public at the Public Hearing on November 15, 2000 at The Jordan Road Elementary School in Somers Point, NJ. A written transcript was made of all comments received at this hearing.

Public Comment	Response
1. Provide safe pedestrian crossing of MacArthur Boulevard.	1. A pedestrian crossing is proposed at Braddock Avenue (see section 3.1.8.2 in the FEIS).
2. Construct new entrance/exit ramps on Garden State Parkway for the use of CR 559 Mays Landing Road as an access to Ocean City.	2. Construction of a new entrance ramp will have excessive right of way and environmental impacts. For details, see section 3.6.2 of the FEIS
3. Provide signs on Garden State Parkway for traffic destined for Ocean City – all streets north of 15th Street use Exit 30 (Laurel Drive) and all streets south of 15th Street use Exit 25 (34 th Street Bridge). This will help to disperse traffic.	3. A request to provide appropriate signage has been submitted to the Garden State Parkway Authority.
4. Provide 175' horizontal clearance to allow for large barges to maneuver against currents at the Beach Thorofare (Bascule bridge will not provide sufficient horizontal clearance for maneuvering).	4. The preferred alternative eliminates the bascule bridge. Horizontal clearance exceeding the proposed 100 feet will be determined during final design.
5. Provide a barrier, planting or bushes along East Laurel Drive.	5. The preferred alternative proposes one lane in each direction and a center turning lane between Braddock Avenue and Route 9, and therefore, provides a wider space for planting along East Laurel Drive (see section 3 of the FEIS).
6. Provide convenient bus stops near the new intersection (Somers Point Circle) to allow public to use public transportation to Ocean City.	6. Coordination with NJ Transit regarding placement of bus stops will be done during final design and permitting.
7. Concern over traffic backup at intersection with Route 9.	7. Improved geometry and signal timing will result in a reduction of queue length at the intersection with Route 9. For details, see section 3.1.6 in the FEIS.
8. Address the issue that traffic queue on Par Drive entering MacArthur Boulevard will block Laurel Drive.	8. The preferred alternative proposes one lane in each direction and a center turning lane between Braddock Avenue and Route 9, and therefore, does not change existing conditions on Par Drive.
9. Concern with increased noise level from new roadway.	9. Noise mitigation measures are addressed in section 3.3.4 of the FEIS.

Public Comment	Response
10. Concern with cracks in foundation of homes due to increase traffic flow (Public requests that noise and vibration studies be performed).	10. Noise and vibration monitoring will be evaluated during final design and construction.
11. Project should be done in stages to minimize impact on community.	11. Every practical method will be utilized during construction to minimize impacts on the community.
12. Provide protected and continuous bicycle corridor that includes the Causeway and MacArthur Boulevard. There are Federal and State funds for these purposes.	12. The preferred alternative proposes continuous shoulders along the causeway for bicycle use.
13. Request to approve a plan that leaves the Information Center in its present location on the causeway.	13. Under the preferred alternative, the Visitor's Information Center will not be visible from the elevated causeway and therefore will lose its attractiveness to public access. In addition, Ocean City has expressed interest to relocate this center into the city itself to enhance its functionality and provide better service to visitors and the community.
14. Concern that widening MacArthur Boulevard will create physical and social barriers.	14. The proposed layout of MacArthur Boulevard was revised to provide only three lanes through the residential area (see section 3.1.8 of the FEIS). In addition, a crosswalk and traffic signal are proposed at the intersection at Braddock Drive. This improvement does not introduce physical or social barriers; however, it maintains community cohesion and provides a safer crossing of MacArthur Boulevard.

5.2 AGENCY COORDINATION

5.2.1 Partnering Workshops and Coordination Meetings

Coordination with other agencies was also an important part of the process. The following activities took place prior to the issuance of the DEIS to facilitate this coordination:

- 1) A Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an EIS on the Route 52 Reconstruction Project appeared in the Federal Register on October 24, 1996.
- 2) Two Partnering Workshops were conducted by the NJDOT in May 1996 and December 1997. Representatives from Ocean City, the City of Somers Point, Atlantic County, NJDOT, NJDEP, New Jersey Legislature, New Jersey Fish Game and Wildlife, FHWA,

USACOE, USFWS, NMFS, and the Ocean City Route 52 Advisory Committee participated in these two partnering workshops.

- 3) Regular interagency coordination meetings involving representatives of NJDEP, USACOE and other federal agencies such as USFWS and NMFS usually occur monthly. The Route 52 Reconstruction Project is one of the projects that have been discussed.
- 4) On January 9, 1998, a field meeting was held at the project study area with representatives of NJDOT and the NJSHPO to discuss and decide upon the Area of Potential Effects (APE) for the Historic Architecture TES.
- 5) A Green Acres meeting was held on January 21, 1999.
- 6) An All-Agency meeting was held on March 11, 1999 and was attended by representatives of NJDOT, NJDEP, FHWA, USACOE, USFWS, and USCG.
- 7) A workshop meeting of the mayors and other officials of Ocean City and Somers Point was held on July 29, 1999 to brief the local officials and public representatives in advance of the August 12, 1999 Public Information Center.

Subsequent to the issuance of the DEIS, the following activities took place:

- 8) A meeting was held on March 12, 2001 with the NJ Fish and Wildlife Service, the NJDOT, and the project consultant Earth Tech at the office of the NJDEP at 501 East State Street. Various details regarding proposed access for anglers and other recreational users were discussed.
- 9) A meeting was held on April 30, 2001 with the FHWA, the NJDOT, and the project's consultant Earth Tech.
- 10) A preliminary version of the FEIS was prepared and sent to the Cooperating Agencies (USACOE, USFWS, and USCG), as well as to NMFS, USEPA - Reg. II, and NJDEP for review and comments. Appendix C includes the response letters from these agencies. Table 5.2.2 includes the responses to significant comments received from these agencies.

5.2.2 Agency Comments

The following table summarizes the agency comments and the responses:

Agency Comment	Response
<i>US Fish and Wildlife Service</i>	<i>11/13/00</i>
1. Reconsider selecting Alternative 9A-1 as the preferred alternative.	1. The relative benefits and impacts of Alternative 9A-1 were reevaluated in comparison to those of Alternative 9-1. Alternative 9-1 remains the preferred alternative. See section 3.4.7 in the FEIS.
2. Alternative 9 requires dredging of benthic habitats, which may cause long-term indirect adverse effects, such as turbidity and substrate alteration.	2. Both Alternative 9 and 9A will result in impacts to benthic habitat during construction, and from the installation of support structures. Alternative 9 will temporarily disrupt limited areas of benthic habitat as a result of dredging, but will not cause a change in the substrate composition. These impacts will be temporary and involve only a relatively small area. It is anticipated that shellfish beds would be become reestablished after dredging disturbances end. See Section 3.4.7 of the FEIS.
3. USFWS comments on Preliminary DEIS from letter of September 21, 2000 were not addressed.	3. The DEIS was already in the process of being printed at the time this letter was received. The comments have been reiterated in the 11/13/00 letter and are being addressed here.
4. DEIS should provide information regarding traffic problems, stemming from bascule bridges, during previous emergency evacuations.	4. The USCG "Captain of the Port" (located in Philadelphia) maintains the authority for closing the Bascule bridges in case of emergency. The "Captain" will usually order the Bridge and the port to be closed at least 12 hours before an impending Hurricane. (marine advisories calling for vessels to return to port are issued at least 18 hours in advance).
5. Shifting the ICWW would increase the potential for wetland erosion along the north bank of Beach Thorofare.	5. The wetlands along the north bank of the ICWW will be protected by the fender system for the pier on that side of the channel. In addition, sheeting will be provided to further prevent sloughing.
6. Construction alternatives that satisfy the design considerations and further minimize wetland impacts should be identified.	6. Alternatives 7 and 8, with alignments offset to the west of the existing causeway, satisfy design considerations and minimize wetland impacts. However, they are not feasible as they have severe socioeconomic impacts in the form of property takes, change of land use, change in traffic patterns and introduction of visual blight in Ocean City.
7. Safety and design standards should be identified.	7. Safety and design standards will be in accordance with New Jersey DOT Highway and Bridge Design Standards.
8. Alt. 9A-1 would cost \$7 million less than Alt. 9-1.	8. The anticipated construction cost of Alternative 9-1 is \$11 million less than for Alternative 9A-1. Moreover, the estimated life cycle cost for Alternative 9-1 is \$17 million less for Alternative 9-1, compared to Alternative 9A-1. (FEIS, Table 2.1)

Agency Comment	Response
<i>New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife</i>	<i>11/16/00</i>
1. No exception is taken to Alternative 9-1.	1. Alternative 9-1 is the Preferred Alternative.
2. Diamondback Terrapins need to be addressed for Causeway Option 3, if this Option is chosen.	2. Causeway Option 1 (viaduct on structure) is the Preferred Alternative.
3. A clear and concise description of angler access with drawings/designs should be consolidated into one section and included in the FEIS.	3. A full description with drawings depicting the access for recreational users has been incorporated into the FEIS.(Sect. 3.6.2.1 and Figures 3.6-1 and 3.6-2.)
4. The proposed fishing pier in Somers Point should extend further out into Ship Channel.	4. The feasibility of extending the fishing pier further into Ship Channel will be determined during final design.
5. An additional fishing pier should be added on the south side of Ship Channel.	5. Due to safety concerns and access restrictions, an additional fishing pier on the south side of Ship Channel will not be provided.
6. Access should be created to the island between Ship Channel and Elbow Thorofare.	6. Due to safety, liability, and access restrictions, access will not be provided to the island between Ship Channel and Elbow Thorofare.
7. Parking at the parking lot on the island between Elbow Thorofare and Rainbow Channel should be increased.	7. The number of parking spaces for the proposed parking area under the causeway at this location has been increased from 16 to 30 spaces. (Sec. 3.6.4 and Fig. 3.6-2
8. Option B for Information Center should be chosen, and parking should be increased at Information Center.	8. The City of Ocean City has expressed their intention to move the Information Center into Ocean City (Option C). However, the parking area for the Information Center will be maintained and enlarged for the benefit of recreational users.
9. Fishing access off both sides of the structure should be provided where the viaduct crosses Rainbow Channel and Elbow Thorofare, and fishing at these areas and must not be restricted.	9. Currently, anglers may not legally access for fishing off of the structures spanning Rainbow Channel and Elbow Thorofare. Accordingly, the project neither reduces nor restricts access in this regard. However, we will consider adding bump-outs for recreational purpose to the proposed sidewalk over Rainbow Channel during Final Design.
10. The viaduct should be lowered over Elbow Thorofare and Rainbow Channel to accommodate anglers.	10. The elevation of the viaduct must be raised so that it is above the elevation of the 100-year flood, in order that the causeway will function effectively as an evacuation route. It cannot be lowered to accommodate recreational users.
11. Portions of existing bridges, over Elbow Thorofare and Rainbow Channel, should remain.	11. The existing bridges are in extremely poor condition, and it would be prohibitively costly to continue to maintain these structures. Further, the presence of these structures would continue to expose the NJDOT to legal liabilities.
12. Walkways should lead to terminal fishing areas near or under the causeway at the edges of all of the islands. Detailed design of walkways, paths, bulkheads, etc. needs to be included.	12. Additional graphics depicting the walkways and access to recreational areas have been incorporated into the FEIS (Fig. 3.4-2). Detailed designs for the walkways, paths, and bulkheads shall be prepared in the design phase of the project.

Agency Comment	Response
<i>New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Historic Preservation Office</i>	11/15/00
1. Establish recordation of World War Memorial Bridge as per Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) standards.	1. Recordation of the bridge according to HAER standards is one of the mitigation measures proposed in the FEIS.
2. Reuse or market components of World War Memorial Bridge.	2. Efforts for marketing of the bridge components will continue up to the time when specifications for the demolition contract must be finalized. Reuse of a portion of the approach span as a fishing pier has been considered and was found not to be feasible.
3. Provide interpretive displays of World War Memorial Bridge.	3. An interpretive display will be produced as a supplement to the HAER recordation.
4. Place visual displays of World War Memorial Bridge on Gulf Station property.	4. The interpretive display will be in the nature of a large signboard and it will be placed at the Gulf Station property.
5. Convert north viaduct approach of World War Memorial Bridge into a recreational/fishing pier.	5. It is not economically feasible to convert a portion of the bridge into a recreational/fishing pier. Further, such a facility would expose the NJDOT to additional legal liabilities. However, the FEIS proposes that a low-level timber recreation/fishing pier and a parking lot would be built at the site of the World War Memorial Bridge, with an interpretive display mounted on a large signboard.
6. Incorporate architectural components and details of World War Memorial Bridge into new bridge.	6. Replicating the architectural components and details of the World War Memorial bridge is not feasible, as they are obsolete, substandard, and do not comply with current safety standards. Further, they would clash visually with the smooth lines of the proposed new structures and viaduct. However, the causeway designer will take into consideration the project setting, including the historic nature of the existing bridge, when developing the architectural details of the new structure.
7. Specify architectural finishes for edge walls of proposed new bridge structures.	7. The Preferred Alternative proposes that the causeway be built entirely on structure. The option with edge walls has been eliminated.
8. Provide plantings along edge walls of proposed new bridge structures.	8. The Preferred Alternative proposes that the causeway be built entirely on structure, with no edge walls.
9. Use longest spans feasible.	9. The use of the longest spans feasible is a proposed as a mitigation measure.
10. Landscape bridge touchdown areas.	10. Aesthetically pleasing landscaping will be incorporated into the plans for the touchdown areas in both Somers Point and Ocean City, in the design phase of the project.

Agency Comment	Response
11. NJDOT must submit an Application for Project Authorization Under the New Jersey Register of Historic Places Act.	11. All the mitigation measures have been incorporated in a Memorandum of Agreement that has been signed by NJDOT, the NJSHPO and the FHWA (Appendix B). Further, the Application for Project Authorization under the New Jersey Register of Historic Places Act will be submitted to the Historic Preservation Office during final design.
<i>New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection</i>	<i>12/5/00</i>
1. Either Alternative 9 or 9A would be acceptable. While Alternative 9 requires dredging/minor island loss, the environmental impacts are not expected to be significant.	1. Alternative 9 is the Preferred Alternative.
2. Causeway Option 3 (embankment with side slopes), is not readily acceptable.	2. Causeway Option 1 (viaduct on structure) is part of the Preferred Alternative. Option 3 has been eliminated as a viable option.
3. A clear and concise description of angler access with drawings/designs should be consolidated into one section and included in the FEIS.	3. A full description with drawings depicting the access for recreational users has been incorporated into the FEIS. (Sect. 3.6.2.1 and Figures 3.6-1 and 3.6-2.)
4. The proposed fishing pier in Somers Point should extend further out into Ship Channel.	4. The feasibility of extending the fishing pier further into Ship Channel will be determined during final design.
5. An additional fishing pier should be added on the south side of Ship Channel.	5. Due to safety concerns and access restrictions, an additional fishing pier on the south side of Ship Channel will not be provided.
6. Access should be created to the island between Ship Channel and Elbow Thorofare.	6. Due to safety, liability, and access restrictions, access will not be provided to the island between Ship Channel and Elbow Thorofare.
7. Parking at the parking lot on the island between Elbow Thorofare and Rainbow Channel should be increased.	7. The number of parking spaces for the proposed parking area under the causeway at this location has been increased from 16 to 30 spaces.
8. Option B for Information Center should be chosen, and parking should be increased at Information Center.	8. The City of Ocean City has expressed their intention to move the Information Center into Ocean City (Option C). However, the parking area for the Information Center will be maintained and enlarged for the benefit of recreational users.
9. Fishing access off both sides of the structure should be provided where the viaduct crosses Rainbow Channel and Elbow Thorofare, and fishing at these areas and must not be restricted.	9. Currently, anglers may not legally access for fishing off of the structures spanning Rainbow Channel and Elbow Thorofare. Accordingly, the project neither reduces nor restricts access in this regard.

Agency Comment	Response
10. The viaduct should be lowered over Elbow Thorofare and Rainbow Channel to accommodate anglers.	10. The elevation of the viaduct must be raised so that it is above the elevation of the 100-year flood, in order that the causeway will function effectively as an evacuation route. It cannot be lowered to accommodate recreational users.
11. Portions of existing bridges, over Elbow Thorofare and Rainbow Channel, should remain.	11. The existing bridges are in extremely poor condition, and it would be prohibitively costly to continue to maintain these structures. Further, the presence of these structures would continue to expose the NJDOT to legal liabilities.
12. Walkways should lead to terminal fishing areas near or under the causeway at the edges of all of the islands. Detailed design of walkways, paths, bulkheads, etc. needs to be included.	12. Additional graphics depicting the walkways, and access to recreational areas have been incorporated into the FEIS (Fig. 3.4-2). Detailed designs for the walkways, paths, and bulkheads shall be prepared in the design phase of the project.
13. Establish recordation of World War Memorial Bridge as per Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) standards.	13. Establish recordation of the bridge according to HAER standards is one of the mitigation measures proposed in the FEIS.
14. Reuse or market components of World War Memorial Bridge.	14. Efforts for marketing of the bridge components will continue up to the time when specifications for the demolition contract must be finalized. Reuse of a portion of the approach span as a fishing pier has been considered but found to be not feasible.
15. Provide interpretive displays for the World War Memorial Bridge.	15. An interpretive display will be produced as a supplement to the HAER recordation.
16. Place visual displays of World War Memorial Bridge on Gulf Station property.	16. The interpretive display will be in the nature of a large signboard and it will be placed at the Gulf Station property
17. Convert north viaduct approach of World War Memorial Bridge into a recreational/fishing pier.	17. It is not economically feasible to convert a portion of the bridge into a recreational/fishing pier. Further, such a facility would expose the NJDOT to additional legal liabilities. However, the FEIS proposes that a low-level timber recreation/fishing pier and a parking lot would be built at the site of the World War Memorial Bridge, with an interpretive display mounted on a large signboard.
18. Incorporate architectural components and details of World War Memorial Bridge into new bridge.	18. Replicating the architectural components and details of the World War Memorial bridge is not feasible, as they are obsolete, substandard, and do not comply with current safety standards. Further, they would clash visually with the smooth lines of the proposed new structures and viaduct.
19. Specify architectural finishes for edge walls of proposed new bridge structures.	19. Causeway Option 2, which proposes building a portion of the causeway on embankment fill with edge walls, The Preferred Alternative proposes that the causeway is built entirely on structure. The option with edge walls has been eliminated.

Agency Comment	Response
20. Provide plantings along edge walls of proposed new bridge structures.	20. The Preferred Alternative proposes that the causeway be built entirely on structure, with no edge walls.
21. Use longest spans feasible.	21. The DEIS states that the use of the longest spans feasible is a proposed mitigation measure.
22. Landscape bridge touchdown areas.	22. Aesthetically pleasing landscaping will be incorporated into the plans for the touchdown areas in both Somers Point and Ocean City, in the design phase of the project.
23. NJDOT must submit an Application for Project Authorization Under the New Jersey Register of Historic Places Act.	23. All the mitigation measures have been incorporated in a Memorandum of Agreement that has been signed by NJDOT, the NJSHPO and the FHWA (Appendix B). Further, the Application for Project Authorization under the New Jersey Register of Historic Places Act will be submitted to the Historic Preservation Office.
24. The build alternative selected would be required to minimize the impact to parkland and parkland taken must be replaced.	24. The Preferred Alternative includes bridges with causeway entirely on viaduct structure, minimizing the impacts to parkland. Areas to replace the parkland taken by the project have been identified in section 3.6.4 of the FEIS.
25. Public access to parkland must be maintained, and should be improved.	25. Public access to recreational areas will be maintained and improved, as described in the FEIS.
<i>South Jersey Transportation Planning Organization</i>	<i>10/31/00</i>
1. An Ocean City/Ninth Street Corridor Study is currently being conducted.	1. NJDOT has contacted the South Jersey Transportation Planning Organization and coordinated the project to take into account the findings of the study.
<i>City of Somers Point</i>	<i>12/1/00</i>
1. Widening MacArthur Boulevard to five lanes will adversely affect Somers Point businesses.	1. The widening of MacArthur Boulevard has been studied again. The build alternative that is now acceptable to the City has three lanes between Route 9 and Braddock Ave. and five lanes between Braddock Ave. and Route 585. This widening and the reconfiguration of the Route 52/Mays Landing intersection will improve traffic flow in the vicinity of Somers Point businesses; enhancing the ability of persons to reach adjacent stores and businesses, and improving access for drive-by traffic.
2. Widening MacArthur Boulevard to five lanes will create an unsafe condition for pedestrians crossing the road.	2. Installation of a traffic signal and a crosswalk are proposed at the intersection of Braddock Drive and MacArthur Boulevard to provide a safe pedestrian crossing. (FEIS, Section 3.1.8.2.)

Agency Comment	Response
3. Widening MacArthur Boulevard to five lanes will not facilitate the flow of summer traffic.	3. Traffic studies and modeling indicate that widening MacArthur Boulevard and reconfiguring the intersection of Route 52/Mays Landing Road (CR559) will eliminate a bottleneck situation and improve traffic flow. It is noted that it is not a goal of the project to reduce the volume of traffic along the boulevard.
4. The business owners have specific needs that have been ignored at previous hearings.	4. The concerns of the business owners have been heeded by the NJDOT, and numerous alterations to the conceptual design have been incorporated to accommodate these needs. For example, lane configurations on Mays Landing Road have been modified to accommodate the Circle Liquors store and other businesses in that location. Further, a second entrance to the Circle Liquors store was added to improve access to that business.
5. Most residents along MacArthur Boulevard are opposed to the widening of the road.	5. Comments of the residents have been heeded. The widening scheme now proposed keeps three lanes in the primarily residential area between Route 9 and Braddock Ave.
<i>U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 2</i>	
1. The “Purpose and Need” section of the DEIS does not provide rationale for the need to improve end point curves to accommodate a specific design speed.	1. The “Purpose and Need” section (section 1.5.1) does state that the “Substandard horizontal and vertical curves on the present causeway cannot support acceptable speed limits.” The specific design criteria are cited in section 2.3 of the DEIS/FEIS and reference the NJDOT standard bridge and highway details.
2. The “Purpose and Need” section of the DEIS does not provide rationale for the assertion that Route 52 must serve as an evacuation route.	2. The “Purpose and Need” section includes Figure 1.4-1 entitled “Alternative Routes to Ocean City”. This graphic depicts the routes going out of Ocean City. Route 52 is the only major route going directly from Ocean City to the mainland and, hence, is the primary evacuation route. Further, Route 52 is designated as an evacuation route by the Atlantic County Emergency Evacuation Group and the Cape May Emergency Evacuation Group under the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) guidelines and with conjunction of the NJ State Police. It is listed in the Evacuation Annex of the Atlantic County Emergency Plan and the Cape May County Plan.

Agency Comment	Response
3. The “Purpose and Need” section of the DEIS does not provide rationale for continuing to allow access to fishing areas adjacent to the roadway.	3. Continued access to the fishing areas adjacent to the roadway is not a direct need of the project. However, such a project must endeavor to comply with the goals established by the cooperating agencies and other stakeholders. These goals were established at partnering meetings and are discussed in section 1.5.3 “Project Goals” of the DEIS. One of the goals stated in this section is to maintain recreational access to islands traversed by the causeway.
4. The “Purpose and Need” section of the DEIS makes no mention of the need to realign the Ship Channel and ICWW, which appears in contradiction with the objective to avoid or minimize any shift in these alignments stated on page I-20 of the DEIS.	4. Every effort to minimize the need to realign Ship Channel and the ICWW was expended, while balancing this objective against the other numerous constraints and environmental considerations affecting this project. Compliance has been achieved by minimizing this impact.
5. DEIS does not clearly establish the need to realign the channels, or the relationship between this realignment and the vertical clearance of the bridges.	5. In order to maintain the touchdown points and the bridge gradients, it is necessary to realign the channels in order to achieve the required vertical clearance of 55-ft. (See Section 2.5 in the FEIS.)
6. The DEIS does not make a clear case for the need to achieve 99% marine traffic passage without an opening.	6. The need to achieve 99% marine traffic passage is based on the need to maintain Route 52 as an uninterrupted evacuation route and reduce delays during the peak season. Further, the additional cost to construct, maintain and operate a bascule bridge over the ICWW is quite substantial.
7. Alternatives should have been brought forward which lengthen the bridge further into Ocean City, achieving the required vertical clearance without the need to realign the ICWW. If these alternatives were considered, but rejected, then they should be more completely discussed in the DEIS.	7. Alternatives 7 and 8, with alignments offset to the west of the existing causeway, satisfy design considerations and do not require the realignment of the ICWW. However, they are not feasible as they have severe socioeconomic impacts in the form of property takes, change of land use, change in traffic patterns and introduction of visual blight in Ocean City.
8. An option for the disposition of the Information Center should be chosen that avoids impacts to submerged aquatic vegetation. The FEIS should discuss this area in greater detail and discuss the potential for indirect impacts.	8. The Preferred Alternative (9-1) avoids direct impacts to submerged aquatic vegetation. Indirect impacts to water quality, including those during construction, were discussed at length in Section 3.4.4.2 of the DEIS.
9. The FEIS should discuss the impacts to all jurisdictional waters of the U.S.	9. The impact to open waters caused by the placement of piers and piles for the preferred alternative is discussed in section 3.4.5 in the FEIS.

Agency Comment	Response
10. The FEIS should discuss the plans for disposal of dredged material and the indirect impacts resulting from this disposal.	10. Plans for disposal of dredged material are discussed in section 3.9.4 of the FEIS. The specific disposal site area will be determined in the design phase of the project. Direct impacts from dredging and mitigation are also discussed in section 3.9.4. Indirect impacts on wetlands and mitigation are addressed in section 3.4.5 of the FEIS.
11. The wetlands impacts and mitigation sections of the FEIS should contain a more detailed discussion of the mitigation strategies for the various wetland types, including tidal emergent wetlands, upland wetlands, and mudflats, which must all be mitigated on an in-kind basis.	11. The Preferred Alternative (9-1) chosen has the least amount of direct wetland impact and only minor additional shading impacts. There are ample areas available to mitigate the small areas that are impacted on an in-kind basis. Areas of replacement wetlands are identified in the FEIS in section 3.4.5.
12. The FEIS must demonstrate that this project comes from a Long Range Plan and Transportation Improvement Program, or include a project level conformity analysis.	12. Air quality modeling was re-addressed for conformity to the Long Range Plan and Transportation Improvement Program (see section 3.2.2 in the FEIS).
13. The assumptions used for the Mobile 5a-h Model are incorrect. The modeling should be revised to reflect this change.	13. Emission calculations using 92%/8% centralized/decentralized were compared to calculations done using 70%/30% centralized/decentralized. The CO emissions for 7%/30% versus 92%/8% I&M increased by 3% or less and, therefore, did not warrant MOBILE 5a-H remodeling.
14. The DEIS did not mention compliance with the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA). The FEIS should contain a detailed discussion about the applicability of the CZMA and the State CZMA for the project.	14. Section 3.4.4 of the FEIS denotes conformance with the NJDEP rules on Coastal Zone Management in the preparation of the conceptual design and evaluation of various options based on the Conditionally Acceptable Pretreatment Methods for Stormwater. Further, the DEIS was prepared in close coordination with the DEP, and no exceptions were forthcoming. Conformance with the CZMA and State Rules on Coastal Management will be addressed further, when an application is submitted to the DEP for the Waterfront Development Permit.
15. The FEIS should discuss the indirect impact of dredging of the ICWW and the Ship Channel on shellfish beds and wetlands on the Rainbow Islands.	15. No dredging is proposed in Ship Channel. The extent of dredging required for the ICWW is minor, and will need little or no maintenance dredging. Section 3.4.4 of the DEIS discusses the direct impacts of dredging. No indirect impacts are anticipated for either wetlands or shellfish habitat as a result of dredging.

Agency Comment	Response
16. The DEIS failed to discuss indirect and cumulative impacts on water quality, wetlands and other waters of the U.S., socioeconomics and land use, including the removal of the old causeway and construction of the new one.	16. Section 3.10 of the FEIS summarizes the Indirect and Cumulative impacts that were discussed in the DEIS. Section 3.4.4 of the DEIS does address the impacts to surface water quality during construction of the new causeway. Section 3.4.7 of the DEIS discusses short-term impacts to finfish migratory pathways during construction, and to finfish habitat through displacement as a result of the removal of the existing structure. Further, this section also discusses possible mitigation measures. The impacts on soils from removal of the existing structures and construction of the new causeway are discussed in section 3.4.1 of the DEIS. There are no other indirect or cumulative effects anticipated as a result of the proposed project since the project will not change development, drainage patterns or traffic patterns.
17. The FEIS must contain an analysis of all past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions undertaken by both federal and nonfederal agencies, which focuses on affected resources and communities.	17. Coordination among federal and nonfederal agencies is documented in section 3.5 in the FEIS.
City of Ocean City	12/7/00
1. Exception was taken to the statement on page III-169 of the DEIS which reads “Zoning is considered to have a negative impact on the investment and economic growth in the central area (3 rd Street to 15 th Street).”	1. This sentence appears to have been misstated in the DEIS. This statement has been modified in the FEIS. See Section 3.6.3.3 under “Potential for Induced Development”.
2. The DEIS indicates that a cul-de-sac at the end of Palen Avenue is more favorable.	2. The DEIS notes that both a cul-de-sac at the end of Palen Avenue and a through street from Palen Avenue to Pleasure Avenue were considered, but that a through street is expected to have relatively less impact on residents and is the preferred option in the FEIS.
3. There is concern regarding loss of visibility of the Information Center. The viability of relocating the Visitor’s Information Center should be discussed.	3. Relocation of the Information Center is fully viable under the Preferred Alternative. The parking lot for the center will remain, and access maintained to it for the benefit of recreational users.
4. The Preferred Alternative would result in the loss of the existing dredged material disposal area.	4. The dredged material disposal area resides primarily on State-owned property. There is no outstanding agreement or permit in existence that entitles the City to the use of this property. It is incumbent upon the City to find an alternative disposal site. Accordingly, no compensation is warranted.
5. The 100-year flood elevation shown in the DEIS does not correspond with the 1984 FEMA maps.	5. The reference and graphics for the 100-year flood elevation have been modified to correspond correctly with the 1984 FEMA maps in the FEIS.
6. The NJDOT should consider increasing the elevation of 9 th Street to improve access during times of high tide and storm conditions.	6. The disposition of the Ocean City streets beyond the limits of the project is beyond the jurisdiction and responsibility of the NJDOT.

Agency Comment	Response
<i>National Marine Fisheries Service</i>	<i>12/27/00</i>
1. Provided all dredging complies with the conditions of the Biological Opinion, issued November 26, 1996 and modified on May 25, 1999, further consultation with National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) will not be necessary.	1. The realignment of the ICWW will require dredging in Beach Thorofores and will be done in full compliance with the Biological Opinion issued by NMFS.
2. Alternative 9A-1 is the least damaging alternative, and should be designated as the Preferred Alternative.	2. After additional analysis and evaluation of potential impacts, it was determined that Alternative 9-1 is preferable to Alternative 9A-1. Alternative 9-1 is the option which fulfills the purpose and needs of the project while balancing the project goals, taking into consideration the interests of the many and various stakeholders in the project. (See Section 2.5 in the FEIS)
3. The lead federal agency must consult with NMFS in accordance with section 305(b)(2) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act for any federal action that may adversely affect essential fish habitat (EFH). A separate EFH Assessment must be prepared and submitted to the NMFS.	3. An essential fish habitat assessment has been prepared and submitted to the NMFS.
4. After the EFH assessment has been received and reviewed, the NMFS will send a letter with the conservation recommendations. The federal agency should respond to NMFS within 30 days.	4. The conservation recommendations have been received and a response has been incorporated into the FEIS (Sections 3.4.7 and 3.4.9).
5. The federal action agency's EFH assessment, the NMFS conservation recommendations, and the federal action agency's response are to be included in the FEIS.	5. The EFH assessment, the NMFS's conservation recommendations, and the written response have been included in the FEIS (Sections 3.4.7 and 3.4.9).
<i>United States Coast Guard</i>	<i>12/12/00</i>
1. The clearances for the proposed structures appear adequate, but that a final determination will not be forthcoming until a public notice has been issued, and any objections have been cleared up.	1. Noted. No action required at this time.
2. A complete listing of all adjacent property owners, commercial businesses located adjacent to the project area, and commercial waterway users must be included in the submission for the application for a bridge permit.	2. We intend to comply fully with the requirements and stipulations for the bridge permit application, including the list of persons and businesses described.

Agency Comment	Response
<i>NJDEP – Land Use Regulation Program</i>	<i>12/12/00</i>
1. Alternative 9A and causeway Option 1 would have the least adverse impacts to fish and wildlife resources.	1. Both Alternative 9 and 9A will result in impacts to benthic habitat during construction, and from the installation of support structures. Alternative 9 will temporarily disrupt limited areas of benthic habitat as a result of dredging, but will not change the substrate composition. These impacts will be temporary and involve only a relatively very small area. It is anticipated that shellfish beds would be become reestablished after dredging.
<i>U.S. Department of the Interior</i>	<i>1/03/01</i>
1. DEIS should provide information regarding traffic problems, stemming from bascule bridges, during previous emergency evacuations.	1. The USCG "Captain of the Port" (located in Philadelphia) maintains the authority for closing the Bascule bridges in case of emergency. The "Captain" will usually order the Bridge and the port to be closed at least 12 hours before an impending Hurricane. (marine advisories calling for vessels to return to port are issued at least 18 hours in advance).
2. Shifting the ICWW would increase the potential for wetland erosion along the north bank of Beach Thorofare.	2. The wetlands along the north bank of the ICWW will be protected by the fender system for the pier on that side of the channel. In addition, sheeting will be provided to further prevent sloughing.
3. Construction alternatives that satisfy the design considerations and further minimize wetland impacts should be identified.	3. Alternatives 7 and 8, with alignments offset to the west of the existing causeway, satisfy design considerations and minimize wetland impacts. However, they are not feasible as they have severe socioeconomic impacts in the form of property takes, change of land use, change in traffic patterns and introduction of visual blight in Ocean City.
4. Safety and design standards should be identified.	4. Safety and design standards will be in accordance with New Jersey DOT Highway and Bridge Design Standards.
5. Alternative 9A-1 would cost \$7 million less than Alternative 9-1.	5. The anticipated construction cost of Alternative 9-1 is \$11 million less than for Alternative 9A-1. Moreover, the estimated life cycle cost for Alternative 9-1 is \$17 million less for Alternative 9-1, compared to Alternative 9A-1. (FEIS, Table 2.1)
6. The Department strongly recommends that the FHWA and NJDOT reconsider selecting Alternative 9A-1 as the preferred alternative.	6. After additional analysis and evaluation of potential impacts, it was determined that Alternative 9-1 is preferable to Alternative 9A-1. Alternative 9-1 is the option which fulfills the purpose and needs of the project while balancing the project goals, taking into consideration the interests of the many and various stakeholders in the project. (See Section 2.5 in the FEIS)

Agency Comment	Response
<i>Army Corps of Engineers, Philadelphia District</i>	1/16/01
1. Pages III-231 and III-232 of the DEIS discuss disposal of material in the middle of Rainbow Island for Alternative 9, Options 2 and 3, but it is not clear exactly where this material would be placed or whether additional wetlands would be impacted.	1. The pages of the DEIS referenced indicate that, under Alternative 9 with causeway Option 2 or 3, the dredged material would be used as fill for the raised embankment area supporting the causeway to be constructed on Rainbow Island. However, this dredged material would be stockpiled in the 20-meter (66-foot) wide area directly east of the existing roadway, until it could be used during construction of the raised embankment. These paragraphs will be modified in the FEIS for clarity. It is noteworthy that Options 2 and 3 are no longer under consideration for inclusion with the preferred alternative.
2. The DEIS discusses off-site disposal of “drained” material for Alternative 9, Option 1, but does not provide information about where the material would be drained and the specific site of disposal.	2. Plans for dewatering dredged material are discussed in section 3.9.4 of the FEIS.
3. Disposal sites should be identified for use during the initial dredging and for future maintenance dredging.	3. Plans for disposal of dredged material are discussed in section 3.9.4 of the FEIS. The specific disposal site area will be determined in the design phase of the project.
4. Supporting technical documentation addressing the need for maintenance dredging should be provided in the FEIS.	4. Supporting technical documentation indicates that maintenance dredging will not be required for Alternative 9-1, which is discussed in section 3.9.5 of the FEIS.
5. Consideration must be given to the resource agency comments in the processing of the Department of the Army permit. Accordingly, outstanding issues with the U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service should be given serious consideration in the FEIS.	5. The Department has resolved all outstanding issues with the U.S. Coast Guard and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service prior to the issuance of the FEIS.
6. Issuance of the Department of the Army permit will require documentation of compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. The Endangered Species Act was not referenced in the Summary section under the required Federal Actions in the DEIS.	6. The DEIS/FEIS clearly documents compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Section 3.4.9 of the DEIS discusses Threatened and Endangered Species at length. Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act has been added to the list of Federal Actions in the Summary portion of the FEIS.

Agency Comment	Response
Army Corps of Engineers, Philadelphia District	4/25/02
<p>1. Section 3.1 (“Traffic and Transportation”) should have a discussion of navigation issues, such as bridge clearances and the sharp turn in the proposed relocated Federal channel. Under your preferred alternative, northbound vessels would make a sharp right turn, facing the end of the new sheet pile wall almost head-on. We would like to know if hydrographic surveys support a gentler curve to transition from the existing channel to the new alignment. Would a more gradual curve require additional dredging, or do existing depths in this area meet or exceed six feet? As previously stated, relocation of the ICWW will require Corps of Engineers approval. The approval process starts with a letter formally requesting this relocation and explaining the need for it. The Corps of Engineers would then coordinate navigation and boat safety issues with the U.S. Coast Guard.</p>	<p>1. FEIS Section 2.3 (Design Criteria), page II-2 discusses navigational issues. The geometry of the ICWW channel realignment was proposed to allow vessels (barges) up to 300 feet long to clear the structure before making a turn. A gentler curvature is curtailed by the location of Cowpens Island to the south. However, this is only a preliminary design. It provides a concept that addresses vessel needs and we believe will work. But we will refine the design and consider making the curve more gentle in final design. The dredge quantity will be better determined at that time and may slightly increase or decrease. A survey of vessel types using the channel and the ACE Publication EM 1110-2-1611 were used as a guide in developing the conceptual plans.</p>
<p>2. In Section 3.4.5, page III-39, Figure 3.4.1 shows the horizontal clearance between piers (at the channel) to be about 45 meters for the fixed bridge, and about 50 meters for the bascule bridge. However, the drawings in Appendix D show the clearance to be about 80 meters for the fixed bridge and 30 meters for the bascule. All other piers are about 25 meters apart.</p>	<p>2. The precise location of piers for either the fixed bridge option (Alt 9) or bascule bridge option (Alt 9A) is to be determined during final design. Both alternatives propose a minimum of 30.48 meters (100 ft) horizontal clearance. The location of piers and size shown in figure 3.4.1 is approximate. The figure is modified to better approximate the locations of piers as shown in the drawings in Appendix D.</p>
<p>3. In Section 3.4.5, page III-40, the referenced tables should be included in the FEIS. In the DEIS, Tables 3.4-3, 3.4-4 and 3.4-6 all show the same impacts to wetlands and open waters for Alternatives 9 and 9A. Based on Figure 3.4.1, this would not be the case.</p>	<p>3. Impact to wetlands in Alternative 9 and Alternative 9A are the same. Impact to open water in Alternative 9A is larger by approximately 950 sm due to the larger piers required for a bascule bridge. This difference was not reflected in table 3.4-6 of the DEIS. Section 3.4.5, page III-40 of the FEIS reflects this difference.</p>
<p>4. The proposed wetland compensation (“mitigation”) site shown on Figure 3.4.2, page III-41, is the same area proposed for dewatering of dredged material. There should be an explanation of how the timing of dewatering could be completed, and the material removed, prior to construction in wetlands, so that construction of the wetland compensation could commence in a timely fashion. In the Corps’ permit process, this office normally requires wetland compensation to be completed prior to or concurrent with wetland impacts.</p>	<p>4. The area for dewatering dredged material may require approximately 20% of the total area proposed for wetland mitigation on the north (east) side of the causeway. The timing for the dewatering and construction of wetland compensation can be done in stages so that the wetland mitigation could commence with the initiation of the causeway construction.</p>

5.2.3 Correspondence Received Subsequent to Issuance of the DEIS

Key letters of federal, state, county, and local government agencies that responded to requests for information or comments during the environmental study process are provided in Appendix B of the DEIS. These letters are summarized in tabular form in Section 5.2.4 of the DEIS. Subsequent to the issuance of the DEIS, the following relevant project correspondence was sent: (See Appendix “C”)

DATE:	FROM:	TO:	COMMENTS:
5/13/02	NJ Department of Environmental Protection, Office of Coastal Planning & Program Coordination	New Jersey Department of Transportation	Comments on the March 2002 PFEIS.
5/08/02	NJ Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Parks & Forestry, Historic Preservation Office	NJ Department of Environmental Protection, Office of Coastal Planning & Program Coordination	Comments on the March 2002 PFEIS.
4/29/02	U.S. Department of Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service	New Jersey Department of Transportation	Comments on the March 2002 PFEIS.
4/26/02	National Marine Fisheries Service	New Jersey Department of Transportation	Comments on the March 2002 PFEIS.
4/25/02	Army Corps of Engineers, Philadelphia District	New Jersey Department of Transportation	Comments on the March 2002 PFEIS.
4/09/02	United States Coast Guard	New Jersey Department of Transportation	Comments on the March 2002 PFEIS.
3/06/02	Federal Highway Administration	New Jersey Department of Transportation	Comments on the March 2002 PFEIS.
02/07/02	New Jersey Department of Transportation	New Jersey Department of Transportation	Memorandum of a meeting held with NJDEP and NJF&W discussing Angler Access.
01/18/02	National Marine Fisheries Service	New Jersey Department of Transportation	Comments on the December 2001 Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) report.
5/30/2001	City of Somers Point	New Jersey Department of Transportation	Resolution 87 of 2001 to support for Alternative 9-1 and the widening of MacArthur Boulevard to 3 lanes through residential areas and 5 lanes through the commercial zone.
3/26/01	New Jersey Department of Transportation	City of Somers Point Municipal Services	Proposed crosswalk at Braddock Drive and alternative MacArthur Boulevard configuration – Re: Resolution No.174

DATE:	FROM:	TO:	COMMENTS:
1/31/01	Somers Point Board of Education	City of Somers Point Municipal Services	Formal Motion in support of the City of Somers Point Resolution 174 of 2000
1/16/01	Army Corps of Engineers, Philadelphia District	New Jersey Department of Transportation	Comments on the August 2000 DEIS.
1/11/01	City of Somers Point	New Jersey Department of Transportation	Resolution 174 of 2000 to rescind support for the widening of MacArthur Boulevard to 5 lanes.
1/3/01	U.S. Department of Interior	New Jersey Department of Transportation	Comments on the August 2000 DEIS.
12/27/00	National Marine Fisheries Service	New Jersey Department of Transportation	Comments on the August 2000 DEIS.
12/12/00	NJ Department of Environmental Protection, Land Use Regulation Program	New Jersey Department of Transportation	Comments on the August 2000 DEIS.
12/12/00	United States Coast Guard	New Jersey Department of Transportation	Comments on the August 2000 DEIS.
12/8/00	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	New Jersey Department of Transportation	Comments on the August 2000 DEIS.
12/7/00	City of Ocean City	New Jersey Department of Transportation	Comments on the August 2000 DEIS.
12/5/00	NJ Department of Environmental Protection	New Jersey Department of Transportation	Comments on the August 2000 DEIS.
12/1/00	City of Somers Point	New Jersey Department of Transportation	Comments on the August 2000 DEIS.
11/16/00	NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife	New Jersey Department of Transportation	Comments on the August 2000 DEIS.
11/15/00	NJ Department of Environmental Protection	New Jersey Department of Transportation	Comments on the August 2000 DEIS.
11/13/00	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	New Jersey Department of Transportation	Comments on the August 2000 DEIS.
10/31/00	South Jersey Transportation Planning Organization	New Jersey Department of Transportation	Comments on the August 2000 DEIS.
9/21/00	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	New Jersey Department of Transportation	Response to NJDOT letter dated August 19, 2000 regarding selection of Preferred Alternative.