



**Route 52 Causeway
Causeway Aesthetics/ Visitors Center Task Force
March 24, 2003**

Attendees:

Tony Marsella – NJDOT
Brenda Hammer – NJDOT

JD Austin – Somers Point
Sylvester Fryc – Michael Baker
Dan Reilly – Somers Point Council
Steven Hardegen – NJDEP
Greg Sykora – Somers Point Planning
Glen Schetelich – Hardesty & Hanover
Gus Bruno – Ocean City mayors Comm.
Mary Lou McDowell – Ocean City Mayors
Adv. & PC
Ahmed Qureshi – NJDOT
Michele Berenato – City of Ocean City
Georgia C. Arnold – Ocean City Comm. Dev.
Carol Beske – ACT Engineers
of Commerce

David Earl – NJDOT
Phil Cyr – NJDOT
Fred Gottemoeller-Rosales Gottemoeller & Assoc.
Raymond Fender – Bridgeport Plaza
Marshall Robert – Michael Baker
Wes Swain – Somers Point
Peggy Worthington – Bridgeport Plaza
John Walker – Somers Point Engineer
Matt Davidson – Ocean City Mayors Comm.
Barb Fender – Bridgeport Plaza

Dave Lambert – NJDOT
Mike Sidani – Michael Baker
Jay A. Gillian – Ocean City Tourism

Joann DeNescio – Ocean City Regional Chamber

PURPOSE OF MEETING

To report on and to discuss the resolution of the issues brought up during the Aesthetics Task Force Meetings held on January 28 & 29, 2003. The meeting concentrated on overall bridge aesthetics, Gateways to Ocean City and Somers Point and Visitor Center issues.

MEETING SUMMARY

Carol Beske welcomed everyone to the meeting. She asked attendees to introduce themselves, reviewed the purpose of the meeting and presented the agenda. (see attached)
Fred Gottemoeller began the presentation by briefly reviewing the progress made since the last aesthetics meetings. Fred presented the display boards to illustrate the proposed improvements; the following aesthetics areas were discussed:

BRIDGE AESTHETICS

Geometry & Span Arrangement

Fred explained that the design team has modified the bridge horizontal and vertical geometry of the bridge to eliminate the appearance of the kink and to provide a smooth curving bridge. The pier spacing will be optimized to provide a balance between cost economy and transparency that will improve thru-bridge visibility of the bay.

- o The group liked the "ribbon in space" effect resulting from the refined geometry and the widely spaced piers.
- o The possibility of haunches on the girders was brought up as a detail that will be finalized as design progresses.

Pier Configuration

Two pier options alternatives were presented, the first with straight octagonal shaped piers, and the second with fan shaped piers. Fred pointed out that each pier will most likely have a pile caps extending above the water level as shown on the display board.

- o The group seemed to favor the straight pier option over the fan shaped pier.

Bridge Lighting

Fred presented three options for lighting the bridge:

Option 1 –illustrated the necklace of lights appearance along the bridge that emphasizes the roadway lighting along with the rail lighting. NJDOT, however, expressed reservation for the use of rail lighting.

Option 2 –illustrated the directional cutoff lighting of the bridge roadway and a continuous lighting of the underside of deck.

Option 3 –illustrated the directional cutoff lighting of the bridge roadway and pier lighting.

- o The group preferred the necklace of lights (with the roadway lights visible) from Option 1 combined with the piers being lit from Option 3
- o Questioned cost of aesthetic bridge lighting, and maintenance of the railing lighting along the sidewalk.
- o Concern was expressed regarding the bridge lighting and its affect on the heron nesting. Mike Sidani explained that the lighting in the area adjacent to the heron rookeries will be addressed in a manner to minimize the impacts.

Bridge Railing

Two railing options were presented, the first with straight vertical rails and the second with traditional ornamental railing system.

- o A small majority preferred the traditional railing versus the contemporary.
- o Comment was made to make the railing/ barrier separating the bike/ pedestrian and roadway child proof.
- o DOT would maintain the railing after construction.

ACTION ITEMS -Bridge Aesthetics

Things to decide/refine prior to the public information center:

- Decide on haunches and adjust illustrations accordingly
- Streamline plan view of pile caps to make them more attractive
- Refine pier illustrations to better differentiate choice
- Develop a lighting Option 4 which shows the combination described above
- Make traditional railing design more transparent and develop preliminary cost compared to contemporary
- Make railing/barrier separating the bike/ pedestrian and roadway child proof

SOMERS POINT GATEWAY

Fred presented exhibit boards depicting the proposed improvements to the Somers Point Gateway area. The improvements included: meandering sidewalks with landscaping berms and median along MacArthur Blvd., proposed landscaping improvements in the area of Somers Point intersection, proposed picnic and parking area in front of Somers Mansion.

Everyone seemed to be in favor the ideas as presented, Somers Point attendees were very pleased with the way NJDOT and the designer addressed the comments brought up in previous meetings.

The ensuing discussion involved the following:

- o The Diner representative was concerned that the area around Somers Mansion be suitably maintained so that it does not become an eyesore affecting the appearance of his business.
- o The SHPO representative was concerned that we called the proposed small building along Shore Road a "gazebo". He apparently feels that would not be appropriate given the period of the mansion.
- o The roadway lighting should not be placed in the median in order to avoid an inconsistency with the lighting on the next section south.
- o A Somers Point representative raised the possibility of underground utilities. Designer will obtain a cost estimate for relocating utilities underground.
- o Question was raised by Somers Point as to whether their proposed plan for connecting Shore Rd. with MacArthur Blvd. can be accommodated by the Route 52 project. The question involved specifically the potential for adding a traffic signal at their proposed connector road in lieu of a signal at Braddock Drive M. Sidani explained that Baker and NJDOT will take the improvements proposed by Somers Point into consideration after the town presents an approved plan by resolution of their improvements. At that point, the design team, if necessary, will adjust the plans in order to minimize the rework at the MacArthur Blvd. tie in. Somers Point hopes to have a resolution by September of 2003.
- o After meeting with the residential community represented by Jon Austin on March 25th two items of concern were discussed. The southbound roadway will be as much as 25' closer to homes because of the median and left turn lanes. Homeowners are not sure that the new planting will compensate for that.

ACTION ITEMS -Somers Point Gateway

Things to decide/refine prior to the public information center:

- Contact the City to determine their preferences regarding the type of roadway lighting along MacArthur Blvd.
- Finalize Somers Point plan with Shore Road/ Mac Arthur Blvd./ Braddock Dr. and Route 52 plans.
- Confirm the residents' opinion about the boulevard type median.
- NJDOT and the city should prepare an agreement about how the landscape maintenance would be handled.
- Estimate the incremental cost of placing the existing overhead utilities underground.
- Possible overlook on boardwalk under bridge for viewing sunset/fishing.
- Security issues under bridge, bike path and walkways need to be addressed.

OCEAN CITY GATEWAY

Fred presented exhibit boards depicting the proposed improvements to the Ocean City Gateway area. The improvements included: 6' sidewalk on the SB side of bridge from Bay Ave. to the Visitor Center, landscaping terraces along the SB retaining wall, proposed parking layout along the connecting road from Palen Ave. to Pleasure Ave, pedestrian screen with mural along the multi-use sidewalk on the NB side.

Fred and Mike Sidani described the reason for the proposed acquisition of the end condo unit. The main reason for the acquisition of the end unit was the anticipated loss of quality of life as a result of the proximity of the proposed bridge to the condo unit (at about 7 ft. from travel lanes). Mike added that this also allowed for an addition of the 6' sidewalk on the SB side and the landscaping terrace along the condo unit which is favored by Ocean City.

The ensuing discussion involved the following:

- o Mr. & Mrs. Fender, the owners of condo unit expressed their dissatisfaction with the proposed acquisition of their condo unit. It was stated that they don't feel the proposed bridge will negatively affect their quality of life.
- o There was a request for a pedestrian/noise/headlight screen on the southbound side as well as the northbound side.
- o The City indicated that they have contacted an artist about working on the pedestrian screen and wall design.

ACTION ITEMS – Ocean City Gateway

Things to decide/refine prior to the public information center:

- Decide on the position of the sidewalk
- Decide on the acquisition of the condo unit
- Reconfigure the Palen/Pleasure connection and parking
- Decide on the presence of a pedestrian barrier on the southbound side
- Management agreement between Ocean City and DOT for maintaining the landscaped areas.

VISITOR CENTER

Since there were no unresolved issues regarding the Visitor Center, it was not discussed in detail. The design of the Visitor Center is advancing as presented in the previous task force meeting.