



MEETING DATE: April 24, 2003
TIME: 3:30 PM (4/23) and 3:00 PM (4/24)
LOCATION: Somers Point Municipal Building
PURPOSE: Route 52 Public Officials Briefings

ATTENDEES:

David Lambert (NJDOT), Anthony Marsella (NJDOT), Marshall Robert (Baker), Mike Sidani (Baker), Bill Felix (Baker), Carol Beske (ACT), Mayor Carl D'Adamo, E. Corson, Harvey Smith (Council), Patrick Bingham (Council), Dan Reilly (Council), John Walsh (Council), David Parker (Council), Carol L. DeGrassi (City Clerk), Wes Swain (Administrator).

MEETING SUMMARY:

Representatives from NJDOT, Michael Baker Jr. Inc. and ACT Engineers, Inc. met with Somers Point officials in Council Chambers on April 24 to brief them on the particulars of the Route 52 Causeway Replacement Project. These briefings were held to advise local officials about the details of the project that would be presented to the general public at a May 28, 2003 Public Information Center.

Overview: The NJDOT Project Manager and Baker provided an illustrative review of work progress to date; including minor shifts in the alignment of the roadway, scenic enhancements along the Causeway and beyond the Ocean City and Somers Point touchdown points, the Rte. 52 circle elimination, public outreach efforts, pertinent environmental issues and the construction schedule.

Plan Updates: Baker summarized adjustments that had been made to the plan since the last Community Partnering Team (CPT) meeting held on March 26, 2003. The most significant changes involved:

- 1.) Shifting of the sidewalk/bikepath from the northbound to the southbound side of the Causeway. This shift would result in one continuous sidewalk from Somers Point to Ocean City that passes through the Visitor Center.
- 2.) Elimination of dedicated right turn ramps and tightening of radii on all four legs of the intersection that replaces the circle. This results in a Bike/ped friendly intersection.
- 3.) Potential acquisition of the Chinese Restaurant and the implications for additional parking and improved exposure to the Somers Mansion. In response to questions regarding the acquisition of the referenced parcel, it was clarified that it is needed to eliminate substandard access, provide overflow parking, improve exposure to Somers mansion and could be used as a staging area during construction.
- 4.) Bikeway/walkway realignments that will occur at the Somers Point touchdown to tie into the realigned Causeway sidewalk.

Environmental Issues – Baker discussed minor design adjustments to the IPA to avoid endangered species impacts as well as steps taken to minimize impacts to both maritime channels.

- 1.) An easterly alignment shift at the Visitor Center to avoid impacts on the Coastal Heron nesting habitats.
- 2.) Compressed construction schedules to avoid impacts upon migratory fish and bird breeding periods
- 3.) Malibu Beach Restoration to provide combined mitigation solutions.
- 4.) A Section 208 modification is needed to provide sewer service to the new Visitors Center.
- 5.) Relocation of parking lot on Rainbow Island from underneath the bridge to an area just adjacent to the bridge to address homeland security measures.

Public Involvement - Baker summarized the efforts being taken in both Ocean City and Somers Point to encourage the general public to attend the two Public Information Meetings (May 20 and May 28):

- 1.) DOT approved press releases that have been distributed to the administrative offices of both communities. These agencies, in turn, will post public meeting announcements in area newspapers and public cable TV channels.
- 2.) Individual residential notices have been printed and mailed to residents within 200 ft. of the project.
- 3.) NJDOT website has been updated to contain a notice of the May 20 and May 28 public meetings. The public is encouraged to provide comments.

Maintenance of Traffic during Construction:

- 1.) NJDOT will provide regular traffic advisories on its website.
- 2.) Construction will be minimal during the tourist season. During the construction season, it can occur around the clock.
- 3.) With the exception of occasional minimal closings, NJDOT will maintain two lanes of traffic in each direction during construction in peak season and one lane in each direction during off-peak season.
- 4.) There could be minimal closings of the highway for no more than 1-2 hours at a time, during night hours (i.e. to hoist beams, etc.).
- 5.) Businesses will have advance notice of any closures.
- 6.) Marine traffic for large vessels along Ship Channel and Beach Thorofare (ICWW) will be restricted between 30-60 days in the off-peak season during construction, as it will be necessary to relocate the channels and demolish the old bridge. Large vessels must relocate during this period if they are to reach the open sea.

Lighting/Railings/Pier Configuration – Baker presented various options that are under consideration for the lighting, railings and pier configuration of the causeway. For the lighting, a fourth option is also under consideration but was not part of the PowerPoint presentation. NJDOT encouraged all participants to offer their suggestions on the lighting/railing options.

NJDOT and Baker fielded several questions about the location of sidewalks, bike paths, access to marina parking, access to boat and fishing ramps and enhancements to MacArthur Boulevard. One issue that was raised relates to the improvements needed to deal with traffic circulation problems at the Goll Ave./Shore Road intersection. A traffic signal may need to be added at either NJ Avenue or Somers Avenue, and these options will be discussed with the City in upcoming weeks.

The presentation was generally well received by the audience.