



ARORA and ASSOCIATES, P.C.
Consulting Engineers
3120 Princeton Pike, 3rd Floor, Lawrenceville, NJ 08648
Tel: (609) 844-1111 • Fax: (609) 844-9799
e-mail: ARORA@arorapc.com • <http://www.arorapc.com>

MEMORANDUM

From: Eric Yermack
To: File
Date: April 22, 2002
Re: Route 70 over Manasquan River
Final Scope Development
Community Relations
Officials Briefing

On Wednesday, April 17, 2002, at 10:00 AM, in the Borough of Brielle Municipal Building, the New Jersey Department of Transportation held an Officials Briefing to inform the public officials from the surrounding municipalities of the status of the Route 70 over Manasquan River project.

The meeting was opened by Mr. Bill Cochran, NJDOT's Community Relations Manager. Mr Cochran asked everyone present to introduce themselves and then gave a brief overview of the Department's community outreach efforts to date. Mr. Cochran then asked Mr. Mark Dietrich, NJDOT's Project Manager, to outline the status of the project. Mr. Dietrich explained that the project was now in the Final Scope Development phase and that the Department was moving forward with a 40 foot high fixed bridge with a grade separation at the intersection of Route 70 and River Road/Riviera Drive. This alternative was the recommended alternative from the Feasibility Assessment. Mr. Dietrich explained that the configuration of the project being presented was essentially the same as previously shown to the public during Feasibility Assessment, except for a change to the ramp configuration south of Route 70 in Brick Township. The design consultant Arora and Associates, P.C. extended the ramps to the west in order to move an acceleration lane off the bridge structure. This results in a significant reduction in the bridge width. The meeting participants were then given a chance to ask questions about the project.

A number of people spoke and expressed their concerns about the project. Among the concerns expressed were the amount of Right of Way that would be acquired, the noise and pollution impacts that the project would have, the appearance of a large bridge structure, the change in the traffic patterns in the project area, and the impact that the project would have on property values near Route 70. People also expressed concern that the correct alternatives may not have been studied, including a suggestion to evaluate a tunnel option.

Mr. Dietrich said that the project was being funded with 100% federal funds. Therefore, FHWA has full oversight on the project. It is an FHWA and NJDOT goal to eliminate movable bridges and to

replace them with fixed bridges that best address the needs of the public. These decisions are made considering many factors including the flow of vehicular, pedestrian and marine traffic. It was also noted that the FHWA would like to have public support for the project.

The Department has determined that the bridge can not be rehabilitated, and that a replacement structure is needed. It was also determined during the Feasibility Assessment that the best alignment for the Route 70 crossing over the Manasquan River was immediately to the south of the existing bridge. The first half of the bridge would be constructed to the south, the existing bridge could then be demolished and then the second half of the bridge could be constructed at the location of the existing bridge. This alignment and staging scheme would maintain two lanes of traffic in each direction throughout construction and have the least Right of Way impacts.

During Feasibility Assessment a Navigational Survey was conducted to determine the heights of the vessels that use the Manasquan River and where they are berthed. It was determined that 97% of the current marine traffic would be unaffected if a 40 foot high fixed bridge were constructed. The Coast Guard has also concurred with the 40 foot high recommendation. However, their concurrence is subject to a future review as the project is advanced. During Feasibility Assessment a 27 foot high movable bridge and a 40 foot high fixed bridge were considered as the best alternatives. A 100 year life cycle cost analysis was performed to compare: a 40 foot high fixed bridge with a grade separated crossing at River Road/Riviera Drive; a 40 foot high fixed bridge with an at grade crossing at River Road/Riviera Drive; a 27 foot high movable bridge with an at grade crossing at River Road/Riviera Drive; and a 27 foot high movable bridge with a grade separated crossing at River Road/Riviera Drive. Both the 27 foot high and 40 foot high bridges would have vertical profiles, which would be too steep to safely accommodate the existing signalized at grade crossing at River Road/Riviera Drive. Therefore, a grade separated crossing is desirable. While the initial construction costs of all the alternatives studied are not radically different, the user costs and operating costs of the movable bridge alternatives are far higher making the movable bridge alternatives prohibitively costly. Therefore, the recommendation of the Feasibility Assessment was that a 40 foot high fixed bridge with a grade separated crossing at River Road/Riviera Drive should be the Initially Preferred Alternative and further developed in Final Scope Development.

There was a discussion about the operation of the movable bridge and what could be done to minimize the openings. It was noted that the movable bridge is not being operated in accordance with the rules of the Coast Guard. Vessels are supposed to lower their antennae and masts if possible in order to go under the bridge. This is not being done, and the bridge operator is opening the bridge on demand. It was suggested that the Coast Guard be notified so that the bridge operator could be instructed to open the bridge only when necessary. The bridge openings could also be put on a schedule. This would eliminate the constant opening and closing of the bridge during the summer months, alleviate the traffic problems and minimize the future wear on the movable bridge mechanisms. This would require a change in the Coast Guard's operating policy for this bridge, but it should not be a problem to get it approved. Another idea was to automate the bridge opening mechanism. Through the use of modern technology it might be possible to have the bridge receive a signal to trigger an opening when a large vessel approaches. It was also suggested that the operating

costs of a movable bridge could be further lowered if the bridge were automated and monitored by an operator stationed at Shark River.

A question was asked if the Department had tried to contact the marina owners to see if larger vessels could be berthed at marinas downstream and smaller vessels could be switched to the upstream berths. Mr. Dietrich said that the marina owners had been contacted, but they had not responded to the Department on this suggestion.

While there were a number of comments in opposition to the proposed project, which were voiced by the officials and citizens representing groups in the surrounding municipalities, there was a supporting comment from the Mayor of Brick Township. The Mayor stated that the Route 70 dualization project also had opposition when it was first proposed, but there is no doubt that the dualization project was for the greater good of the area. Since the bridge is in need of replacement and there is funding for it, the proposed project must move forward and it will also be for the greater good of the entire area.

Shortly thereafter, the meeting was concluded at 12:00 PM. The Department will hold two (2) upcoming Public Information Centers in the communities on the east and west sides of the Manasquan River. The intent of these meetings will be to present the proposed project to the public.

C: M. Dietrich – NJDOT
B. Cochran – NJDOT
N. Khambhati - Arora
J. Romano - Arora
L. Wang - Arora
D. Yacovino - Arora