

**IV. OTHER PROPOSED ACTIONS
IN THE VICINITY OF THE
UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS
CONNECTOR**

I. OTHER PROPOSED ACTIONS IN THE VICINITY OF THE UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS CONNECTOR PROJECT

A. Federal and State Funded/Supported Projects

Joseph G. Minish Passaic River Waterfront Park and Historic Area

The Passaic River waterfront in the Newark CBD is proposed for revitalization as a waterfront urban park by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACOE) under the Streambank Restoration legislation authorized by the U.S. Congress in 1992.

Referred to as the Joseph G. Minish Passaic River Waterfront Park and Historic Area, the project is located in the lower valley of the Passaic River, in the City of Newark. The project encompasses approximately two miles of the west bank and extends along the eastside of Route 21 between Bridge and Brill Streets. The project will provide environmental and aesthetic improvements to the surrounding area, and will protect the western streambank of the Passaic River from tidal storms and erosion. The project involves the provision of recreational facilities and landscaping, which will include a pedestrian promenade along the waterfront with a median planting strip and a bicycle path.

Four major entry points to the park are planned. The first entrance is located at the north end of the project at Bridge Street, and will include a planting area with a kiosk. The second entrance, at Center Street, will include seating, a fountain plaza, a boat entrance, and a pedestrian bridge to a Newark – Elizabeth Rail Link station and the New Jersey Performing Arts Center. The third entrance, located at the site of the existing fire training center on Raymond Boulevard, will feature a plaza, concession stands, open lawn areas, and historical features. The south end of the park will serve as the fourth entrance, with an open recreational area, ball fields, and educational center with information on shore protection and tidal wetlands.

No cumulative environmental impacts are anticipated between this project and the University Heights Connector project that would require further regulatory review or mitigation.

Reconstruction of Six NJ Transit Morris and Essex Line Bridges

This NJDOT sponsored project includes six crossings of the Morris and Essex Line. The project entails removing or replacing these crossings. Final scope development for this effort is to begin mid/late 2002. The issuance of a Categorical Exclusion Document for the project is expected in early 2004, and construction would begin in late 2005. The six crossings, all located between Orange Street and Seventh Avenue, are all located within a half-mile of the University Heights Connector. A seventh crossing replacement, where First Street runs over the Morris and Essex Line, is under design within the NJDOT.

Route 21 Roadway and Intersection Improvements Project

This project is located in the City of Newark, and extends through the city's CBD between Green Street on the south and Passaic Street on the north.

The project consists of intersection improvements, resurfacing, roadway realignment, road widening, and signing and traffic safety improvements. The design of the 2.1-mile section of Route 21 is classified as a Transportation System Management project.

The addition of one lane in each direction at individual intersections is intended to improve intersection operations and reduce delays. Because of the short distance between intersections, the extra lanes will be continuous and will function as an auxiliary lane to prevent mid-block congestion that would be created if the lanes were eliminated between intersections. Traffic signals will be removed from four of the existing 16 signalized intersections, since they are not needed and result in congestion. Most of the proposed roadway construction will occur within the existing highway right-of-way. However, due to the roadway realignment and widening, additional right-of-way and easements will be required.

In general, the following roadway and intersection improvements are proposed:

- Three through lanes are proposed on both sides of Route 21 from north of Green Street to Passaic Street. A 12-foot side shoulder will be provided along Route 21 northbound from north of Cherry Street to Bridge Street. The northbound left turn lane at Clay Street will be relocated via Clark and Passaic Streets. The southbound left turn lane at Clay Street will be replaced with a new ramp at Spring Street.
- To accommodate the proposed widening and realignment of Route 21 at milepost 3.3, the NJ Transit Bridge will be reconstructed to accommodate the proposed six lanes for Route 21 and the Route I-280 exit ramp. The existing bridge span will be lengthened with new abutments and superstructure. The increased lateral clearance for the bridge over Route 21 will also provide for an acceleration lane for the Route I-280 exit ramp to Route 21 southbound.
- To facilitate vehicular flow along Route 21, several changes to local side street travel directions are proposed.

The Route 21 and University Heights Connector projects are not anticipated to result in any cumulative environmental impacts that would require further environmental regulatory review or mitigation. The two projects can be constructed independently, with little, if any, construction coordination.

B. Local/Private Development Projects

Several major projects are proposed or recently completed in Newark. The most significant of these is a multiple use sports-oriented development within the CBD. The proposal includes an indoor arena, a stadium, office buildings, a television studio, a hotel, and stores and restaurants. The facility is expected to be the new home of the New Jersey Nets, as well as other sports activities and franchise teams. The facility is expected to be completed in 2003.

The recent completion of the New Jersey Performing Arts Center and the Riverfront Stadium indicate that there is a positive attitude toward new construction in Newark. If the proposed sports arena were built, additional office, hotel, and entertainment development would likely follow.

In addition, the following projects are either planned or proposed in the City of Newark outside of the University Heights Connector project area:

Newark City Subway Modernization Project. NJ Transit is planning to replace the existing subway fleet and to rehabilitate other elements of the system. Likely project components include upgrading of electrification, rehabilitation of some stations to improve accessibility, ventilation improvements, and replacement of the light rail vehicle maintenance facility.

Public Service Electric and Gas (PSE&G). PSE&G proposes to construct 750,000 square feet of office space between Center Street and City Dock Street, east of the Legal Center.

Linpro/Mack Development. Linpro/Mack Development proposes to construct 675,000 square feet of office space at the northeast corner of Route 21 and Raymond Boulevard.

Rutgers University Law School Expansion. Plans call for the expansion of the Rutgers Law School in the area between Washington Street and New Street.

The development projects described above are either planned or proposed independently of the University Heights Connector project, and are not anticipated to be directly impacted by the proposed project, nor are these projects anticipated to impact the proposed project. The transportation projects are being implemented to remedy existing facility design deficiencies, reduce existing local traffic congestion, accommodate future traffic, and to improve overall traffic safety. As a result, no cumulative impacts are anticipated that would require further environmental and regulatory review or mitigation.