



## COUNTY OF HUDSON / COUNTY OF ESSEX

### Local Concept Development Study for the Clay Street Bridge over the Passaic River in the Borough of East Newark, Hudson County, NJ and the City of Newark, Essex County, NJ

#### PUBLIC INFORMATION CENTER MEETING

#### SUMMARY REPORT

DATE: Wednesday, June 24, 2015  
TIME: 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.  
LOCATION: Community Room, Studebaker Lofts  
368 Broad Street, Newark, NJ

#### PURPOSE OF MEETING

The purpose of this public meeting is to inform the public of the conceptual alternatives and to solicit public input and comment on the proposed Preliminary Preferred Alternative (PPA) for the Hudson County/Essex County Clay Street Bridge. (PIC Project Information Update Handout attached).

#### MEETING SUMMARY

1. A total of twenty-five (25) individuals attended the Public Information Center (PIC) meeting in the City of Newark from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Thirteen (13) project team and agency members were in attendance. Twelve (12) individuals are listed on the Sign-In Sheet for the PIC Meeting, representing City Officials, businesses, local residents, and general public. An additional individual did stop by the meeting with an individual that did sign-in, but didn't wish to include their name, and left before the presentation.
2. The meeting was conducted as an open house with display boards providing project information for viewing by the general public and to provide reference in addressing any questions from the public. Project Team members were in attendance to present information and assist with questions from the community stakeholders and general public.
3. Two handouts were available at the sign-in table: (1) PIC Project Information Update Handout and (2) a blank PIC Comment Form distributed to the general public upon sign-in to the meeting. The Comment Form could be completed to hand in at the meeting or could be faxed, emailed or mailed to either Hudson County Project Manager, Joseph Glembocki, P.E. or to Essex County Project Manager, Luis Rodriguez (Handouts attached). The PIC Notice was also available in Spanish. Both the English and Spanish versions are posted on the project web site. ([www.claystbridge.com](http://www.claystbridge.com), under Community Outreach).

4. The project display boards used to share information during the open house included:

- Aerial map of the Clay Street Bridge and project study area
- Environmental screening map indicating constraints
- Renderings of each of the proposed Conceptual Alternatives
- Alternatives Analysis Matrix indicating the Preliminary Preferred Alternative
- Local Project Delivery Program Process Chart

5. One Comment Form was received at the evening PIC meeting (see attached).

6. A u-shape of rectangular tables and chairs were available for seating to view the PowerPoint presentation, which was provided at 6:30pm. After introductions from the Project Team, John Lane, Hudson County Planner welcomed everyone on behalf of the County and provided the following:

The Clay Street Bridge is shared structure between Hudson County and Essex County and is over 100 years old. The need to study the bridge is due to structural deficiencies that will require either a major rehabilitation or replacement. The purpose of this study is to identify how to improve the existing bridge. The costs are too great for Hudson County and Essex County, so it requires Federal funding. This Local Concept Development Study is the first step to the bridge improvements. Hudson County filed an application with the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA) who is overseeing this phase of the project. Obtaining community input is important to decide what improvements are needed for the bridge. Once a preliminary preferred alternative is decided, then NJDOT Local Aid would administer the project for the design and construction phases with the Counties using Federal funding.

7. Bruce Riegel, Hardesty & Hanover Project Manager, presented the project status and schedule with PowerPoint presentation slides. The project information included the bridge condition with data and photos.

- (a) Bruce referred to the Project Information Update. On the backside is the project schedule with milestones and the community involvement steps that have occurred and those to be met.
- (b) The Concept Development Phase is anticipated to be completed by October 2015.
- (c) Bruce shared information on the data collection, the Purpose and Need Statement, community outreach meetings held to date and the environmental process. If no significant impacts are determined, then a Categorical Exclusion (CE) document would be implemented according to NEPA requirements. The Power Point presentation will be posted to the project web site after the PIC meetings are held.

8. Robert Piel (Environmental Specialist, Amy S. Greene Consultants, Inc.) provided information on the environmental resource screening using the environmental constraints map.

- (a) There are no wetlands, however the entire area is within a 100 year floodplain.
- (b) There is also a regulated riparian zone adjacent to the Passaic River.
- (c) In addition, the project area is mapped as a possible urban nesting habitat for the state endangered species, Peregrine Falcon. Further investigation will be needed prior to construction to determine if the species is nesting in the area. The project area is also foraging habitat for the Peregrine Falcon. Unless the Peregrine Falcon is nesting on the bridge (which is not likely) the only constraints anticipated are timing restrictions during construction.

- (d) There are several known contaminated sites (hazardous waste sites) within the project area originating from the long term use of the area for industrial manufacturing. There are also several records of spills in the project area and of existing and abandoned underground storage tanks. Based on the Environmental Data Resources report the contaminated areas have been cleaned up, removed or capped.
- (e) The Passaic River itself is mapped as a contaminant site, possibly with dioxin, and if disturbance of the bottom sediments is proposed, further testing and evaluation of the sediments will be necessary.
- (f) As a bridge project, there will be permits required by the Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Coast Guard and New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection for any improvements to the Clay Street Bridge. Rob will assist the project team with environmental permits related to each alternative developed.

9. Amy Sokalski, McCormick Taylor Traffic Engineer, presented information via display boards of each of the Conceptual Alternatives developed and listed on the Alternatives Analysis Matrix (display board and matrix handout distributed at meeting). The concepts and written descriptions of each will be posted to the project web site once the PIC meetings are held.

- (a) The options examined range from replacing the bridge to the north, to the south and rehabilitating the existing bridge and keeping it in service as a vehicular or pedestrian bridge; or replacing the bridge on the existing alignment with a low or high level fixed bridge; or replacing it with a movable bridge structure.
- (b) Conceptual Alternatives were dismissed mainly due to significant right-of-way property and/or environmental impacts.
- (c) Selection of a movable bridge verses a fixed bridge is due to the recommendations submitted by the Harbor Operations Committee (HOC) to not restrict future commercial marine traffic access of the Passaic River.
- (d) The Concept identified as the proposed Preliminary Preferred Alternative (PPA) is Concept 3C, a complete replacement bridge on existing alignment with a movable bridge over a 100' wide waterway channel on the Passaic River.

10. Bob Supino, Hardesty & Hanover Bridge Engineer, provided information on the different types of movable bridge structures for consideration with images mounted on a display board.

- (a) The options are a vertical lift structure similar to the Stickel Bridge, or a single or double leaf bascule bridge. During the preliminary design phase further engineering analysis would be done to assist in determining the type of movable structure.
- (b) The counter weights for a bascule bridge that allow the openings of the bridge are either located below the structure or above the structure. There a number factors for consideration in this determination, which would be analyzed during the preliminary design phase of the project.

11. Bruce Riegel provided additional information via the Power Point presentation slides, to discuss the conceptual alternatives, comparison matrix, and the proposed Preliminary Preferred Alternative (PPA).

- (a) If nothing was done which is the No Build Alternative, the existing bridge would continue to deteriorate and require load posting (limiting use by trucks and buses) and would eventually

result in closure of the bridge. There are maintenance contracts being advanced now by Essex County to address current critical needs and prevent load posting of the bridge.

- (b) Two additional variations of the Conceptual Alternatives were developed since the Community Stakeholders Meetings were held in October, 2014, due to input from an Inter-Agency Meeting (included US Coast Guard, US Army Corps of Engineers and the US EPA) and a presentation to the Harbor Operations Committee (HOC), which resulted in recommendations to consider conceptual variations of a higher level (135 feet over Mean High Water) fixed bridge and movable bridge with a wider (100 feet vs. 75 feet) channel.
- (c) Based upon the community stakeholders meetings, the agency meetings held, and comments received at the outreach and coordination meetings, the PPA recommended is Concept 3C, a complete replacement bridge on existing alignment with a movable bridge over a 100' wide waterway channel on the Passaic River.
- (d) The cost of the proposed bridge replacement is estimated at 70 million.
- (e) The next steps are the PIC Meetings, and after the 30-day comment period resolutions of support will be needed by the Borough of East Newark, City of Newark, Hudson County Freeholders and Essex County Freeholders. The Project Team will also ask the Towns of Harrison and Kearny for resolutions if they would like to support the project with resolutions as well.

12. Below are the questions and comments shared by attendees (City officials, representatives of civic, social service, Rutgers University, business owners, residents and general public) during and after the presentation as follows:

- a. *Question:* Was an environmental study done? Is the document available? Is it on web site?

*Response:* The Local Concept Development phase includes environmental screening and documentation. The recommendation following the NEPA process is for this bridge project to be a categorical exclusion rather than an environmental assessment. The environmental screening map is posted to the web site and additional documentation could be posted if interested. The Resolutions of support will be asked of the municipalities and the Counties. The Federal and State agencies will then review the findings. The project will then apply for Federal funding for the next step called Preliminary Engineering when environmental studies will be conducted to complete the Categorical Exclusion Documentation.

- b. *Question:* Does the type of bridge for replacement have historical status?

*Response:* If a determination is made that the existing bridge is to be replaced, the historic status of the old bridge does not apply to the replacement bridge for this project.

- c. *Question:* Will there be consideration for aesthetic treatments if a new bridge is constructed?

*Response:* During the next phases of preliminary engineering and final design, the project team will look at options for the appearance of the new structure given its proximity to historic structures in this area of the City (Thread Works). The project team will coordinate with the City of Newark and Borough of East Newark to provide a design such as lighting and sidewalks similar to what exists. There will also be stakeholder and public meetings during the design phases for input on aesthetic elements.

- d. *Question:* What kind of boat traffic is there?  
*Response:* Currently, there is no commercial marine traffic; however there have been dredging vessels that required bridge openings and the EPA clean up effort is not finished, so there may be some vessels in future for that project. Rowing boats occasionally do travel through this area of the Passaic River from boat launches north of the bridge.
- e. *Question:* Why would the clearance be 15 feet for a fixed bridge?  
*Response:* The 15' clearance is based upon the Union Avenue low-level fixed bridge that was constructed further north on the Passaic River.
- f. *Question:* How long would a new bridge last and did designers anticipate how long it could last?  
*Response:* Yes, the proposed bridge replacement structure is anticipated to last 75 to 100 years.
- g. *Question:* Can the bridge be in operation during construction?  
*Response:* The bridge will be shut down during the estimated 2.5 to 3 years construction duration. Given the type of bridge structure and movable swing bridge, it's not possible to stage the construction to provide vehicular or pedestrian movements.
- h. *Question:* Have you considered public transit or a water taxi for use during construction to help with traffic and pedestrian crossing?  
*Response:* During the next phases of preliminary engineering and final design, the project team will look at options for traffic mitigation. The project team will coordinate with NJ Transit and examine options to address pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular traffic anticipated during construction.
- i. *Comment/Question:* If pedestrians can't cross the Clay Street Bridge, walking to Bridge Street is a long way if they are walking to the stores on Passaic Avenue (Shop Rite and other stores). Could you please look at some type of temp crossing or public transit when the bridge is closed and better crosswalks than what is there today?  
*Response:* As part of the project, for safety and improved pedestrian and bicycle mobility, sidewalks and shoulders are proposed for the new bridge. In addition the approach roadways on each side will have improvements such as striping, lighting and crosswalks indicated better than what exists currently. During design, the project team will coordinate with the municipalities and NJ Transit to address alternative pedestrian bridge crossing access during construction.
- j. *Question:* What is the cost and how is it funded?  
*Response:* The cost of the preliminary preferred alternative (PPA) is an estimated \$70 million. Federal tax dollars would be used for funding. *The cost is listed as a slide in the Power Point presentation.*
- k. *Question:* Will the Route 280, Route 21 project be going on at the same time as this Clay Street Bridge project?  
*Response:* The NJDOT Route 280, Route 21 Interchange Improvements Project is currently being advertised for construction. It will be completed well before the Clay Street Bridge project. There are some maintenance improvements that will be happening to the Clay Street Bridge to address electrical issues due to age and impacts from prior severe storm damage.

13. At end of presentation, attendees were encouraged to take copies of the handouts to share information with others. An email notice will be sent once the web site is available at: [www.claystbridge.com](http://www.claystbridge.com). The 30-day comment period ends as of Friday, July 24, 2015 for comments on the conceptual alternatives and the PPA. The next step will be to ask for resolutions of support from the municipalities and the Counties, which will be part of the LCD final documentation in addition to any public comments received.

14. One PIC Comment Form was received at the evening meeting session in the Community Room at Studebaker Lofts in the City of Newark in addition to the one received in the afternoon session. No additional PIC Comment Forms have been received after the PIC meetings within the 30-day comment period to date. The PIC Tracking List and Comments received to date are attached. Any responses to PIC comments received would be written and distributed by Hudson County and Essex County.

15. Sarbjit Kahlon, NJTPA Project Manager and Nick Salvante, on behalf of Essex County, thanked attendees for their input and taking time to attend the public meeting. The PIC open house evening session was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

We believe the foregoing to be an accurate summary of discussions and related decisions. We would appreciate notification of exceptions or corrections to the minutes within three (3) working days of receipt. Without notification, these minutes will be considered to be record of fact.

NJTPA Hudson County/Essex County Clay Street Bridge Project Team