



**NORTH JERSEY TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AUTHORITY
LOCAL CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT (LCD) STUDY – FY 2018
PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ACTION PLAN (PIAP)**

**PICKET PLACE BRIDGE OVER
SOUTH BRANCH RARITAN RIVER**

Branchburg and Hillsborough Townships – Somerset Co.



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PROJECT OVERVIEW

Under the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA) 2018 Local Capital Project Delivery Program, Somerset County, the NJTPA and the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT), are advancing a study of alternatives to rehabilitate or replace the Picket Place Bridge located on the border of Branchburg and Hillsborough Townships. The Study is being conducted in response to the deterioration of the bridge's concrete substructure, as documented in biennial inspections of the bridge.

The subject Picket Place Bridge (Structure No. 18C0609) was built in 1979 and carries County Route 567 over the South Branch of Raritan River. The four-span bridge is comprised of simply-supported prestressed concrete I-beams with a reinforced concrete deck supported on reinforced concrete abutments and piers. The abutments are supported on steel piles whereas the hammerhead piers are supported on spread footings founded on rock. The bridge furnishes a 26' roadway wide accommodating a single lane in each direction of travel and negligible shoulders. A 5' wide sidewalk is also present on the bridge although sidewalks do not exist on either approach to the bridge.

Based on the conditions documented in the 16th Cycle Bridge Re-evaluation Survey Report, the bridge is classified as "Structurally Deficient" due to the poor condition of the substructure which exhibit large spalls with exposed rusted reinforcing steel, areas of unsound concrete extending into the bridge seats and wide vertical cracks in the pier stems and caps. Replacement or rehabilitation is required to bring the structure into conformance with current standards. It is also categorized as "Functionally Obsolete" due to its substandard deck geometry.

The existing Picket Place Bridge over the South Branch of Raritan River sits in a primarily agricultural setting. The bridge is located near the Neshanic Valley Golf Course and the Sourland Mountain Preserve. It connects Hillsborough and Branchburg Townships and provides connections to major roadways in the area including Route 202, Pleasant Run Road (C.R. 667) and Amwell Road (C.R. 514).

PURPOSE OF THE PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ACTION PLAN

The Public Involvement Action Plan (PIAP) is intended to serve as a framework to accomplish open, proactive and productive community and stakeholder discussions concerning the Local Concept Development (LCD) Study for Picket Place Bridge over the South Branch of Raritan River. Strategies and audiences identified during the Study for public involvement may be incorporated into subsequent Local Preliminary Engineering (LPE), Final Design/Right-of-Way (FD/ROW) and Construction (CON) phases.

The foundation for public outreach is set through the development and agreement upon the PIAP. The PIAP considers the varying communications needs of elected and local officials, residents, businesses, resource agencies and personnel, and other stakeholders and special interest groups located throughout the Study area. Through this process, specific goals, messages and deliverables will be matched with various audiences to ensure all are informed about the aspects of the Study that are most pertinent to them and/or their constituencies. Stakeholder feedback resulting from the PIAP will contribute to the overarching Picket Place Bridge LCD Study to evaluate the feasibility of rehabilitating or replacing the bridge.

PROJECT TEAM MEMBERS

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PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ACTION PLAN DEVELOPMENT

The PIAP summarizes a comprehensive effort to advance community awareness and participation and promote inclusivity. The document outlines the Project Team, program elements, and the proposed communication/information methods recommended for completion throughout the Study. The PIAP is a living document and it may be modified and amended as the project progresses.

All public involvement activities will adhere to Title VI and Environmental Justice (EJ) statutes and Federal Transportation Legislation establishing equal access to information and the decision-making process. Title VI and EJ statutes seeks to avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health, environmental, social and economic effects on minority and underserved populations.

This process will begin by gaining an understanding of local demographics and how these populations would access information related to the Study. The Project Team will consult with local officials to determine additional efforts needed to address any potential EJ concerns during the LCD Study such as language and mobility. All communications will be mailed to organizations that serve EJ populations.

Public Involvement Action Plan elements include the following:

- A. Stakeholder Coordination
- B. Resolution(s) of Support
- C. Digital Content Development
- D. Public Outreach Summary

A. Stakeholder Coordination

1. Stakeholder Database

The stakeholder distribution list includes a directory of identified, interested and affected parties. The list organizes stakeholder contact information for telephone calls, e-mails, or written correspondence.

Interested and affected stakeholders are anticipated to include:

Somerset County:

Elected Officials
Public Works Department
Engineering and Planning Divisions
Cultural & Heritage Commission
Transportation Division

Branchburg and Hillsborough Townships:

Elected Officials
Department of Public Works
Engineering Department
Land Use & Planning Department
Emergency Management (Police and Fire Departments)
School Board Members

Adjacent Property Owners

Federal / State Agencies:

NJTPA
FHWA-NJ Division
NJDOT-Bureau of Environmental Program Resources
NJDOT-Local Aid
NJDOT-Bicycle/Pedestrian Program
NJDEP-State Historic Preservation Office
NJDEP-Division of Land Use Regulation

2. Stakeholder Meetings

The LCD Study is the first phase of the NJTPA's Local Capital Project Delivery Program which is consistent with NJDOT's Project Delivery Process. It includes several key tasks: development of a Purpose and Need Statement; Alternatives Analysis; and selection of a Preliminary Preferred Alternative. Stakeholder meetings will occur at the end of these key tasks to vet the issues that matter most to the local community and will provide a forum to work with the local representatives in resolving concerns while also addressing the Purpose and Need of the project. Early and ongoing public involvement is intended to build trust and garner stakeholder support for the Study.

The Project Team will work with Somerset County (including Hillsborough and Branchburg Townships) in the advertisement of public meetings and assist with any press release or media requests. Legal notice advertisements will be posted in newspapers serving Somerset County, including the Courier News and The Star Ledger.

3. Local Officials Meetings

To facilitate a convenient exchange with local officials, it is anticipated that a total of two (2) meetings will be arranged with Hillsborough and Branchburg Townships. Each meeting may be held directly in advance of the Community Stakeholders Meeting and or the Public Information Center to provide local officials with the latest information regarding the project prior to meeting with the public. For this effort, additional coordination by phone, mail and e-mail will occur on an as-needed basis.

4. Community Stakeholder Meetings

Local businesses, area schools and first responders will be asked to assist the Project Team in identifying local issues, constraints and opportunities related to the Study. It is anticipated that Police, fire and EMS personnel (in addition to school personnel) will provide information concerning local travel, commuting, school busing, response times, service and delivery patterns. Comment cards will be collected, compiled and summarized for Project Team review. Two stakeholder meetings will be held for this project.

5. Public Information Centers

Public Information Centers (PICs) will be held to present project information clearly and concisely to the public. It is anticipated the PIC locations will be ADA compliant, and the PICs will be held late-afternoon/early evening to accommodate local work schedules. All project materials presented at PICs will be approved through the Project Team prior to the meetings. Comment cards will be collected, compiled and summarized for Project Team review. Two PICs will be held for this project.

The following rubric outlines the agenda for all anticipated project-related meetings and is subject to change.

Purpose and Need:		
The Purpose and Need Statement will outline the identified transportation problem and the need for a solution while establishing the objectives of the project.		
Meeting Type	Proposed Timeframe	Audience and Agenda
Local Officials Meeting	January 2019	Local and Elected Officials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present project status and schedule • Review goals and objectives • Identify issues and concerns
Community Stakeholders Meeting	May 2019	First Responders, Schools, Local Businesses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present project status and schedule • Review goals and objectives • Identify issues and concerns • Obtain input on the Purpose and Need Statement
Public Information Center	May 2019	Open to the Public: (Same agenda)

Preliminary Preferred Alternative (PPA): Selection of a PPA will be made based on extensive, quantitative and qualitative impact assessments and presented to the stakeholders and public for review and acceptance.		
Meeting Type	Proposed Timeframe	Audience and Agenda
Local Officials Meeting	July 2019	Local and Elected Officials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gain feedback and approval on the PPA • Discuss next steps/timeline for the project
Community Stakeholders Meeting	September 2019	First Responders, Schools, Local Businesses: <i>(Same agenda)</i>
Public Information Center	September 2019	Open to the Public: <i>(Same agenda)</i>

B. Resolution(s) of Support

Near the conclusion of the Concept Development Study, after the PPA has been determined, the Project Team will request Resolutions of Support from the local municipalities impacted by the proposed action. A Resolution of Support is typically obtained after the Alternative Analysis phase when a proposed plan of action has been identified.

C. Digital Content Development

1. Project Website

A project specific website will be created to communicate project news and informational updates to the public. The website will include the project overview, draft Purpose and Need Statement, FAQ's (*Frequently Asked Questions*), community outreach efforts, maps, photos, contact information, project timeline and helpful links as needed and approved by the Project Team. Content will be strengthened with the addition of project-focused handouts such as visually appealing fact sheets that can be easily downloaded. Additionally, the website will serve as an opportunity for the public to submit comments and questions to the Project Team. All comments will be documented, and responses will be approved by the Project Team.

The project website is a mainstay information tool. Updates to content, images, navigation, and other elements will occur throughout the project as warranted. The focus may shift to project updates including any potential completion milestones and alerts regarding next steps and potential impacts on motorists during construction.

For ease of use, the Project Team will provide website links to the network of project stakeholders. These stakeholders will be encouraged to share this information on their respective websites and with their stakeholder networks through newsletters, e-mail blasts, social sharing, and other means as their communications systems allow. Stokes Creative Group, Inc. will design, host and maintain the website. The website will include several pages such as Home, About the Project, and Community Outreach.

Please visit <https://www.picketplacebridge.com/> to view the project website.

2. Google Analytics (tentative)

Google Analytics will be installed on the project website to help analyze visitor traffic and identify the project audience and their needs. Data will be collected and presented to the Project Team monthly as an agenda item at the status project meetings. These monthly reports will equip the team with data to understand and improve the effectiveness of the website.

3. Project Branding

Graphic design standards and templates for each of the project’s communications tools will maintain visual consistency.

Design elements and templates are anticipated to include:

- Website layout and design
- Templates for meetings materials; including handouts, sign-in sheets, comment cards, name tags and displays
- PowerPoint slide backgrounds

D. Public Outreach Summary

The results of the LCD Study will be documented in the LCD Report. This report will summarize the data gathered, the public outreach outlined above, alternatives evaluated, and the Preliminary Preferred Alternative selected via the LCD Process. This summary will include a list of participating stakeholders, a summary of all comments and feedback provided, describe outreach activities, and an assessment of the results. Meeting materials, handouts and displays will be attached to the report appendix, along with meeting minutes documented during the LCD Phase.