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I-95/SCUDDER FALLS BRIDGE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW
Comment Period for 500-Plus-Page Document Set to End February 4, 2010;
Commission to Host Open House/Public Hearing at Two Locations in January

NEW HOPE, PA – The Environmental Assessment document for the I-95/Scudder Falls Bridge Improvement Project is being made available for public review on the Internet and at six viewing locations in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, the Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission announced today.

The release of the 561-page document – the Environmental Assessment (EA)/Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation – is the next major step in a planning and review process that began in January 2003 with the signing of a project memorandum of agreement (MOA) by the Commission and the Pennsylvania and New Jersey Departments of Transportation. The MOA authorized the Commission to conduct environmental studies and preliminary designs to address congestion and safety problems at the bridge.

The bridge is the most heavily travelled span among the 20 bridges in the DRJTBC inventory and it operates at the worst level of service (a federal highway classification called LOS F) during peak travel periods. The bridge's 1950s design does not meet today's standards and it does not have the structural capacity to accommodate future traffic conditions. The lack of shoulders and the proximity of adjoining interchanges at both ends of the bridge exacerbate its safety and capacity shortcomings.

The proposed project area would extend 4.4 miles along I-95 – from the Route 332 interchange in Bucks County, Pa. to the Bear Tavern Road interchange in Mercer County, N.J. It would be the largest single construction project in the Commission's nearly 75-year history. The work would include a complete replacement of the existing four-lane Scudder Falls Bridge over the Delaware River. Project elements also would include reconfiguration of the Taylorsville Road Interchange and the reconstruction and reconfiguration of the Route 29 interchange through the use of roundabouts. The project also includes highway widening on the Pennsylvania side of the bridge.

Public Comment Period to Begin

Today's publication and availability of the project's Environmental Assessment launches a public review and comment period that will last until February 4, 2010.

The easiest way for area residents, motorists or other interested parties to review the document is to go to the Web site – www.scudderfallsbridge.com -- the Commission created in October 2003 to keep the public informed of project developments.

Copies of the document also will be available for viewing at the following six locations:

- Lower Makefield Township Municipal Building, 1100 Edgewood Road, Yardley, PA. 19067;
- Ewing Township's Municipal Clerk's Office, 2 Jake Garzio Drive, Ewing, N.J. 08628;
- The Yardley-Makefield branch of the Bucks County Free Library, 1080 Edgewood Road, Lower Makefield Township, PA .19067;
- The Mercer County Library – Ewing Branch, 61 Scotch Road Ewing, N.J. 08628;
- The DRJTBC's Administration Building at 110 Wood & Grove Streets Morrisville, PA. 19067; and
- PennDOT District 6, 7000 Geerdes Boulevard, King of Prussia, PA. 19406.

Motorists, residents, and other concerned parties who wish to provide comment on the document may utilize one of the following options no later than the end of the comment period on February 4, 2010:

- E-mail – ScudderfallsbridgeEAcomments@hntb.com
- In writing by conventional mail – Address the envelope to Kevin Skeels, Senior Program Area Manager, Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission, 110 Wood and Grove Streets, Morrisville, PA. 19067.
- Attend the public hearing/open house – which is scheduled to be held at two different locations on successive dates. The open house will consist of project displays and information and the availability of project personnel to answer questions; the public hearing is for making official comment. (Due to anticipated high attendance volumes, speakers may be subject to time limitations. Those with more extensive comments should provide copies of written testimony.)
 - January 19, 2010, Villa Victory Academy, 376 West Upper Ferry Road, Ewing N.J. Open house will be at 5 p.m., followed by the public hearing from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.
 - January 20, 2010, Sheraton Bucks County Hotel, 400 Oxford Valley Road, Langhorne, PA. Open house will be at 5 p.m., followed by the public hearing from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

EA Background and Preferred Alternative

The Environmental Assessment (EA) the Commission prepared for the project underwent extensive review by the departments of transportation in New Jersey and Pennsylvania and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The document also was reviewed by federal and state environmental resource and regulatory agencies with regard to project findings, assessments and mitigation for a number of environmental considerations within the project limits including historical and archeological resources, threatened and endangered species, and wetlands, among others.

The FHWA was the agency ultimately responsible for reviewing the EA and determining acceptability so that it may be distributed for public examination and comment during a comment period that would include an Open House/Public Hearing.

Announcements about the availability of the EA and details about the open house/public hearing are being made through the project Web site (www.scudderfallsbridge.com), a newsletter to project stakeholders, this press release, and advertisements in local newspaper outlets.

The Commission and its project consultants examined a wide variety of improvement options for each of the four segments of the I-95/Scudder Falls project. All of the options were aired at open houses, municipal meetings and stakeholder group sessions.

The Preferred Alternative consists of the following:

- Widen I-95 in Pennsylvania from PA 332 to the inside by adding one travel lane in each direction through utilization of the current grass median along that roadway stretch.
- Reconfigure the Taylorsville Road Interchange in Lower Makefield Twp., Pa. by eliminating the existing eastern southbound off-ramp from I-95 and combining it with the existing western southbound off-ramp. All other existing ramps at the interchange -- the northbound off-ramp, the two northbound on-ramps, and the southbound on-ramp -- would be retained with minor alignment modifications. This segment option also includes a variety of other improvements, including modifications to I-95 acceleration and deceleration lanes to improve traffic safety and flow in the interchange area.
- Replace the existing outdated four-lane Scudder Falls Bridge with an entirely new structure on the upstream side with overlapping of the current bridge footprint. The new structure would have five lanes northbound (three for through traffic and two for auxiliary entry/exit travel) and four travel lanes southbound (three for through traffic and one for auxiliary entry/exit). The recommended option also calls for full inside and outside roadway shoulders. The addition of a bicycle and pedestrian facility on the southbound side of the bridge is being considered; a decision will be made during final design, when costs are refined and cost reasonableness can be determined.
- Reconstruct and reconfigure the Route 29 interchange through the use of roundabouts. This option would avoid traffic signals, resulting in a folded diamond interchange with two roundabout intersections at the ramps with I-95. Bypasses for NJ Route 29 northbound and southbound traffic would be retained and improved acceleration and deceleration lanes will be provided on to I-95. The stop-sign at the southbound I-95 on-ramp will be eliminated as will the existing I-95 on-ramp from NJ Route 175 (Upper River Road).

For more information, individuals should access the project Web site or call the project hotline telephone number – also established in October 2003 – at 1-800-879-0849.

About the Commission

The Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission was formed by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the State of New Jersey in 1934. It operates seven toll bridges and 13 toll-supported bridges, two of which are pedestrian-only spans. The Commission's jurisdiction extends along the Delaware River from the Philadelphia-Bucks County line north to the New Jersey/New York border. Its bridges carried more than 140 million cars and trucks in 2008. For more information about the Commission and its various initiatives to deliver safer and more convenient bridge travel for its customers, please see: www.drjtbc.org.

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