ONLINE PUBLIC INFORMATION CENTER TRANSCRIPT
Route 9/35, Main Street Bridge

Slide 1 – Title Slide

Welcome to the online Public Information Center for the Route 9/35, Main Street Bridge project. The overall purpose of this project is to enhance safety and improve operations at the interchange. This Public Information Center is intended to share the progress to date on this project, and to solicit feedback from the public to enhance the project as it progresses through NJDOT's Project Delivery Process. Note the Project is in the Preliminary Engineering Phase.

Slide 2 – Presentation Overview

This presentation will begin with a discussion of the project's Purpose and Need, existing conditions, and the proposed improvements and how they will improve the operation of the highway. This presentation will additionally provide information on the project schedule and the NJDOT project delivery process.

Slide 3 – Project Location

The Route 9/35, Main Street Bridge Project is located in Middlesex County, mainly in South Amboy with a small portion in Sayreville (near Route 9/Main Street). The project limits extend from Route 9/Main Street to Route 9/35 at Structure No. 1208-153, which carries Route 9/35 northbound over Conrail. The project area includes commercial facilities and densely vegetated areas. Residential properties are also located adjacent to the Route 9 and Route 35 interchange. Additionally, the Saint Mary's Cemetery is located in the northwest quadrant of the Route 9 and Route 35 Interchange.

Slide 4 – Purpose and Need

The overall purpose of this project is to enhance safety and improve operations at the interchange of Route 9 and Route 35 from Route 9/Main Street to Route 9/35 at Structure No. 1208-153. The calculated safety score for this project segment is 7 and 10, depending on mile post location. The scale is based on 0 to 10 with 0 and 10 representing no crashes in the area and the worst score, respectively. A summary of crash data is presented for the years (2016 – 2021) for the project site.

Slide 5 – Existing Conditions

The Project area is between Structure No. 1208-153 (at the North Limit) and extends just south of the Loop Ramp entering Route 9/35 NB. There are (3) bridges within the project site: Main Street Overpass (1208-150), Washington Ave Overpass (1208-151), and Structure 1208-152 over an abandoned rail line. There are Two Lanes in each direction on the Mainline and are separated by a Concrete Median Barrier. Route 9 and Route 35 run north independently up to the Route 9 and Route 35 interchange where they merge and run north concurrently as Route 9/35 through to and beyond the northerly project limit. The ramp from Route 9 northbound to Route 9/35 northbound is known as the Loop Ramp, which is controlled by a yield sign. The interchange also provides access to Route 9 southbound from Route 9/35 southbound and to Washington Road from Route 9/35 northbound. The roadway within the project limit has inadequate stopping sight distance on both vertical and horizontal curves, substandard curve radius, narrow shoulder width, inadequate lengths for acceleration and deceleration lanes, and fails to meet the required minimum grades.

Slide 6- Existing Conditions (Cont.)

The (2) existing ramps have heavy truck usage and heavy traffic volumes. The Loop ramp has a tight

curvature with a minimum radius of 75 ft and a substandard Stopping Sight Distance. The Loop Ramp has virtually no acceleration lane and as such merging onto the NB Mainline is very difficult for motorists and in turn causes queuing along the Loop Ramp and backing up of traffic on Route 9 NB causing queues to idle in front of residents' homes frequently during the day. The existing exit ramp from 9/35 NB will be removed in order to provide an acceleration lane from the Loop Ramp to the mainline . On the SB side, the exit to Route 9 SB has a large volume of vehicles (more than a single-lane ramp can handle in the peak hours), a substandard radius (tight curvature) limited sight distance, and a substandard deceleration lane.

Slide 7 – Existing Conditions (Cont.)

Three (3) bridges are located within the project limits: Structure No. 1208-150, which carries Route 9/35 over Main Street; 1208-151, which carries Route 9/35 over Washington Avenue, and 1208-152, which carries Route 9/35 over an abandoned rail line. These bridges were originally constructed in the 1930s and are in fair to satisfactory condition with some deficiencies. The structures are in overall fair to satisfactory condition, with two of the three bridges (1208-150 and 1208-152) anticipated to be historically significant. Structure Nos. 1208-150 and 1208-151 also have substandard vertical clearance for the roadway underneath.

Slide 8 – Environmental Constraints

The project will utilize federal funds and will require an approved environmental document through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). It is anticipated that the environmental document for this project will be a Categorical Exclusion Document (CED). Several environmental technical studies are underway to support the CED, including Section 106 Consultation through the National Historic Preservation Act (NRHP), Section 4(f) Individual Evaluation, coordination with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), as well as Noise and Air studies.

As part of the Section 106 process, the New Jersey State Historic Preservation Office approved the Area of Potential Effects (APEs) for architecture and archeology. Additionally, as part of the Section 106 process, a Cultural Resource Report was prepared which identified Structure 1208-152 as being located within the Raritan River Railroad Historic District. Route 9/35 Bridge over Conrail is recommended as a NRHP eligible contributing element to the Raritan River Railroad Historic District (RRRRHD). Furthermore, Route 9/35 Interchange is recommended individually eligible for listing in the NRHP. The Cultural Resources Report findings indicate adverse effects to the NRHP RRRHD and Route 9/35 Interchange. Coordination with the SHPO is ongoing. Due to the adverse impact to NRHP, a Section 4(f) Individual Evaluation is anticipated.

A bat survey was conducted for all three bridges within the project limits. No bat indicators were observed during the visual surveys for Structure Nos. 1208-151 and 1208-150. Additionally, the emergence survey for Structure No. 1208-152 did not result in the positive observation of bats exiting any portion of the bridge. However, acoustic devices determined that there is potential habitat for the tricolored bat (a federally proposed endangered species) in the adjacent forested areas. Results of the bat survey were submitted to the USFWS NJ Field Office.

Tree clearing is required for the project and a schedule for tree clearing will be established with the NJDEP before construction. Coordination with NJDEP to determine tree mitigation under the No Net Loss Compensatory Reforestation Act is ongoing. There is a potential for involvement with regulated material or contaminated sites due to historic fill and the railroad property.

Due to the State Open Water impacted by the loop ramp, there will be two NJDEP Permits required for

the project.

Slide 9 – Project Overview

This slide shows the proposed project. The proposed Mainline alignment is shifted to the east to allow extra width for the proposed two-lane Ramp E (Route 9 SB) and to avoid impacts to the private properties along the west side, including the St Mary's cemetery. The proposed two-lane Ramp E becomes Route 9 SB Mainline lanes and Main Street becomes a stopped condition as it merges onto Route 9 SB. The existing loop ramp is replaced with a larger loop ramp that increases storage capacity and has its own exclusive exit lane from Route 9 NB. The new loop ramp has a standard acceleration lane as it merges onto Route 35 NB. The exit ramp to Washington Avenue is removed from Route 9/35 NB. With this ramp closure, traffic will use Raritan Street or Catherine Street to access Washington Avenue. The bridges at Main Street and Washington Avenue are replaced with new bridges and Structure 1208-152 will be removed and backfilled with embankment fill. There are (7) proposed retaining walls to minimize impacts to adjacent properties. A proposed noise wall will be located along the loop ramp on top of the retaining wall and also along Route 9/35 NB from the new Main Street Bridge to the Active Rail overpass bridge (Structure 1208-153) on top of its retaining wall

The project also includes two proposed cantilever sign structures, new guide rail, areas of new sidewalks, and the construction of three bio-retention basins to comply with NJDEP Stormwater Management (SWM) Rules. Partial right-of-way takings, as well as permanent and temporary easements, are anticipated for this project.

Slide 10 – Northbound Ramp/Loop Ramp

The existing loop ramp will be replaced with a larger loop ramp (RAMP F) , which will enhance storage capacity and include its own dedicated exit lane from Route 9 NB. The new loop ramp will feature a standard acceleration lane as it merges onto Route 35 NB. The exit ramp leading to Washington Avenue will be eliminated from Route 9/35 NB. In addition, the existing bridge at Main Street will be replaced with a new bridge that will provide standard vertical clearance over Main Street. The proposed abutments will be positioned further back to ensure optimal visibility and accommodate a proposed sidewalk. Furthermore, two drainage basins are proposed in the vicinity of the loop ramp. The proposed noise walls will be located along the loop ramp on top of the retaining wall.

Slide 11 – Northbound Ramp/Ramp E

The proposed two-lane Ramp E (Route 9 SB Mainline lanes) will continue with two lanes and Main Street becomes a stopped condition as it merges onto Route 9 SB. A Proposed retaining wall helps to avoid impacts to the adjacent cemetery.

Slide 12 – Northern Limit of Project

The proposed work stops before the active rail bridge (1208-153) and the proposed NB right shoulder tapers out just south of the bridge. On the SB side, a proposed standard single-lane deceleration lane is provided that opens up to two lanes at the Washington Ave overpass for Ramp E. Proposed retaining walls are on both sides of the Mainline, the north side also has a noise wall located on top of the retaining wall. A proposed drainage basin is proposed as indicated. The orange area indicates paving and the proposed walls in these areas are built to accommodate a future widening of Route 9/35.

Slide 13 – Construction Staging

The construction of the project will occur in two main phases. In Stage 1, the traffic on Route 9/35 will be redirected to the west side, while the construction of the widened Route 9/35 will take place on the East

side. Once Stage 1 is finished, the traffic will be shifted to the newly constructed eastern section of the roadway, and the remaining construction on the west side will commence. Throughout the process, there will be several short-term stages before and after each phase to install necessary traffic devices and facilitate the traffic shift. Furthermore, Ramp E, Ramp F, and Main Street will have overnight detours implemented as part of the project to install traffic control devices for different phases. The detours may also occur during the removal of the existing bridge, the installation of new bridge beams, and traffic shift operations. It is important to note that there are no long-term detours planned for this project.

Slide 14 – Pedestrian Accommodation During Construction

Pedestrian access will be available on Washington Avenue during the construction period. A 4-foot pedestrian path will be established on Washington Avenue, with Construction Barriers on both sides . A temporary crosswalk will be equipped with temporary lighting on the south side of the Washington Bridge, while pedestrians on the north side will be able to use the existing crosswalk at Cedar Street.

Slide 15 – Project Schedule

The project's Final Design Phase is estimated to be completed in May 2027. Construction is expected to commence in July 2027, with a 33-month construction duration.

Slide 16 – Project Delivery Process

The Project Delivery Process is comprised of four distinct phases. The initial phase, known as Concept Development, has already been completed for this project, and a preliminary preferred Alternative has been chosen. Subsequently, the project moved on to Preliminary Engineering, which is the current phase, where the Preliminary Preferred Alternative has progressed to the point where approval for any required design exceptions, as well as the environmental document, can be obtained. The final phase in the design process is the Final Design, during which all necessary permits are acquired, the right of way is obtained, and the construction documents are finalized. Following the Final Design, the project proceeds to Construction. Currently, the project is approaching the completion of the Preliminary Engineering Phase.

Slide 17 – Public Feedback

If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, please fill out the website survey form or contact the NJDOT Office of Community Relations by June 28, 2024. Details are provided on this slide. Thank you for your interest in this project and for taking the time to view this presentation!