

COLUMBIA TURNPIKE BRIDGE OVER THE BLACK BROOK LOCAL CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT STUDY

Borough of Florham Park, Morris County, New Jersey



Public Information Center #1 Meeting Summary

Date/Time: May 9, 2018, 6:00 PM

Location: Florham Park Borough Municipal Building
111 Ridgedale Avenue, Florham Park, NJ 07932

Attendees:	Richard Brundage	NJTPA – Project Manager
	Sascha Frimpong	NJTPA
	Meghan Paccione	Morris County
	Kenneth Burkhardt	McCormick Taylor – Project Manager
	Amy Sokalski	McCormick Taylor
	Walter Marks	McCormick Taylor
	Peter Berg	TranSystems
	Jeff Stiles	TranSystems
	Paul McEachen	RGA, Inc.
	John Winters, Jr.	Resident
	Unknown	Resident
	Steve Elias	Ely’s Tropical Fish
	Richard Davidson	Resident
	Christine Davidson	Resident

A Public Information Center was held for the Columbia Turnpike Bridge over Black Brook Local Concept Development (LCD) Study. The McCormick Taylor Project Manager, Ken Burkhardt, began the meeting with a brief introduction of the project team. The project team includes the following: Morris County (the project sponsor), North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT). The consultant team is being led by McCormick Taylor with the following subconsultants: Amercom Corp., RGA, Inc.; TranSystems; and Stokes Creative Group.

Mr. Burkhardt presented the Project Overview and Background for the Columbia Turnpike Bridge over Black Brook, which is located in Florham Park Borough, Morris County. The bridge was built in 1929 and is in need of rehabilitation or replacement. Morris County was selected by NJTPA as the recipient of funding for an LCD Study of the bridge. McCormick Taylor was selected as the consultant and the LCD Study was initiated in November 2017.

The Local Capital Project Delivery Program provides an opportunity to advance the project with public input and agency collaboration throughout the process. The LCD phase is the time to solicit input from the local officials to ensure that the project team understands all of the issues. Rich Brundage then gave a brief overview of the Local Capital Project Delivery Process, which includes the following 4 phases: Local Concept Development, Local Preliminary Engineering, Final Design/ROW Acquisition, and Construction. This process must be followed to obtain federal funding for the project. Mr. Brundage explained that the project has just begun the LCD Process. The data collection phase has been completed, which included project survey; evaluation of

COLUMBIA TURNPIKE BRIDGE OVER THE BLACK BROOK LOCAL CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT STUDY

Borough of Florham Park, Morris County, New Jersey



deficiencies; Environmental Screening Report; and summary of existing conditions in the Project Fact Sheet. The public outreach process has been initiated with this Local Officials Briefing. The project team is currently developing the Project Purpose and Need Statement, which will be finalized once input has been obtained from local officials, stakeholders and the public.

Mr. Burkhardt then provided information about the Columbia Turnpike Bridge, which was built in 1929 and widened in 1960. The bridge is 35' long with a roadway width of 45'-7" and 4'-11" sidewalks in each direction. The roadway is two (2) lanes in each direction with no outside shoulders, and the average annual daily traffic (AADT) is 33,840 vehicles per day. The bridge is in overall fair condition due to the condition of the superstructure, which has a rating of 5 out of 10. The bridge is functionally obsolete due to the substandard roadway width (no outside shoulders). The Sufficiency Rating of the bridge is 57.5 out of 100 based on the 17th Cycle Bridge Re-evaluation Report.

An Environmental Constraints Map was shown for the project, which depicts the extensive wetlands in close proximity to the bridge. These wetlands are of exceptional value and may contain Threatened & Endangered species such as bog turtles. The Samuel Ford Jr. Hammock Farm is located just east of the bridge and is listed on the New Jersey Register of Historic Places as well as the National Register of Historic Places. Although the building has since been removed, the site is still considered to be historic. There is a sewer pump station located west of the bridge, and Ely's Aquatic Farm is also located to the west. That property has a low elevation, and there are also flooding concerns. During the Alternatives Analysis, impacts to this property will be identified such as vibration and noise during construction. There is an office complex east of the bridge, and the Morristown Airport is located west of the bridge, near the Route 24 interchange.

Mr. Burkhardt explained that federally funded projects require National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documentation, including Section 106 consultation for cultural resources. The Environmental Screening Report has been completed and documents environmental resources within the project area. Development of the Preliminary Preferred Alternative (PPA) will try to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts to the identified environmental resources. The project team will coordinate with environmental permitting agencies throughout all phases of the project to ensure compliance with environmental regulations. Public outreach is also a key component of the NEPA process.

Mr. Burkhardt then detailed the current status of the LCD Study. Numerous tasks were conducted during data collection including: project survey and base mapping; Environmental Screening Report; review of available documents and reports; identification of existing utilities; traffic counts; identification of substandard design features; hydrology and hydraulic analysis; preparation of Draft Project Fact Sheet; initiation of public outreach; and development of the Draft Purpose and Need Statement.

Mr. Burkhardt explained the importance of the Purpose and Need Statement, which is required for any project that requires NEPA documentation. The Purpose defines the problem to be

COLUMBIA TURNPIKE BRIDGE OVER THE BLACK BROOK LOCAL CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT STUDY

Borough of Florham Park, Morris County, New Jersey



solved, and the Project Need provides specific justification to support the project purpose. The final component are the Goals and Objectives, which include issues that should also be addressed in the project. Examples of these issues include bicycle/pedestrian compatibility and maintaining access to businesses during construction.

The Local Concept Development Study Phase is currently on an 18-month schedule with the following major milestones: Finalize Purpose and Need Statement in May 2018; development of alternatives in July 2018; selection of the PPA in November 2018; submission of the Draft LCD Report in March 2019; and completion of the LCD phase in June 2019. During the project, numerous public outreach meetings will be held around the major milestone dates. These meetings include: Local Officials Briefing, Stakeholders Meeting, and Public Information Center in Summer 2018 to present the conceptual alternatives; and the final Local Officials Briefing and Public Information Center in Fall 2018 to present the PPA.

The project website and social media information is as follows:

Website: www.columbiaturnpikebridge.com

Twitter: @Columbia_Bridge

Mr. Burkhardt stated that the PowerPoint presentation will be posted on the project website subsequent to the meeting.

Comments received from the meeting attendees are summarized below.

- Traffic is heavier on Columbia Turnpike EB during the AM Peak in the WB direction during the PM Peak. If lanes need to be closed during construction, it is recommended that at least 3 lanes remain open with a movable barrier.
- One attendee mentioned that there are two (2) large housing developments in the area that may be built within the next couple years. One (1) development is at the Honeywell site and one (1) is near Park Street. McCormick Taylor will attempt to obtain additional information from the Borough.
- One attendee asked how far downstream the hydrology & hydraulics (H&H) are analyzed. Mr. Burkhardt responded that alternatives will be designed so they don't impact anything upstream or downstream. It is likely the bridge opening will be similar to existing conditions. The alternatives will attempt to accommodate the 25-year storm. The roadway may be raised if needed to pass the 25-year storm. However, this is a bridge improvement project so we don't want the project limits to be expanded too far.
- One attendee mentioned that by year 2050, it is likely the floodplain will rise due to climate change. It is possible that the roadway near the bridge will need to shut down due to flooding. He stated that he wouldn't want the bridge to have to be replaced in the near future due to rising flood elevations. Mr. Burkhardt responded that the project would be designed to pass the 25-year storm, which would bring the bridge out of the floodplain.

COLUMBIA TURNPIKE BRIDGE OVER THE BLACK BROOK LOCAL CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT STUDY

Borough of Florham Park, Morris County, New Jersey



- Mr. Elias asked if the federal government would do anything about dredging Black Brook since there is a lot of silt. The team responded that the federal government would not dredge the brook as it is non-tidal and is not a navigable waterway.
- The group discussed overall traffic impacts during construction. It was noted that daily users would find other routes to avoid traffic backups. Mr. Burkhardt noted that the team will be evaluating the maintenance and protection of traffic (MPT) for each of the alternatives since the team is aware that only maintaining one (1) travel lane in each direction is not a feasible option. How to maintain traffic will be evaluated during the alternatives analysis phase.
- A discussion occurred between cultural resources subconsultant Paul McEachen, RGA, Inc., and Mr. Richard Davidson, President of the Historical Society of Florham Park and a member of the Florham Park Historic Preservation Commission. Mr. Davidson will be identified as a consulting/interested party during the Section 106 Process. Mr. Davidson provide detailed historical information regarding Samuel Ford Jr. Hammock property that occurs in the project area. While the property still remains, the Samuel Ford house was dismantled by a NJ preservation company and reconstructed in Indiana, where it still exists. Mr. Davidson will be a valuable source of historical information during preparation of upcoming cultural resources studies.