



COUNTY OF UNION

Local Concept Development Study for South Front Street Bridge over the Elizabeth River, City of Elizabeth, Union County, NJ

PUBLIC INFORMATION CENTER MEETING SUMMARY REPORT

DATE: Wednesday, April 2, 2014
TIME: 4:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.
LOCATION: City Hall, Council Chambers
50 Winfield Scott Plaza, Elizabeth, NJ

PURPOSE OF MEETING

The purpose of this public meeting is to introduce the project team, present the project status and schedule, and to obtain input from the general public on the community interests associated with the South Front Street Bridge in developing the project purpose and need.

MEETING SUMMARY

1. A total of 24 individuals attended the Public Information Center (PIC) meeting; 12 project team members were in attendance and thirteen individuals are listed on the Sign-In Sheets for the PIC Meeting, including one project team member, three Public Works City representatives and a total of 9 individuals from the general public representing businesses, organizations, residents, and City Planning Board.
2. The meeting was designed as an open house format 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 Handout and (2) 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 the Union County Project Manager, Paul J. Leso, P.E. (Handouts attached). The handouts are also now posted on the project web site. (www.southfrontstbridge.com, under Community Outreach)

4. The project display boards used to provide information during the open house included: (1) aerial map of project study area indicating the deficiencies (2) environmental screening map indicating constraints (3) cultural resources map showing historic properties in the area (4) Local Project Delivery Program Process and (5) Local Concept Development Phase – Process Flowchart

5. One completed Stakeholder Survey was received at the meeting. The organization has been added to the Community Stakeholders list and Project Portfolios were given to the two representatives.

6. A screen presentation area was available with seating for viewing the PowerPoint presentation, which was presented at 2:30pm. After introductions from the Project Team, Paul Leso, Union County Project Manager, provided an overview of the project noting the following:

- a. The need to study the bridge and reason for the closure of the bridge for more than three years, is due to structural deficiencies. The purpose of this study is to identify what improvements are needed along with the rehabilitation or replacement of the existing bridge.
- b. An application was filed with the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA) who is overseeing this phase of the project. The costs are too great for the County so it requires Federal funding. This Local Concept Development Study is the first step to the bridge improvements.
- c. It is very important to get input from the community stakeholders and the public to decide what improvements are needed for the bridge since the citizens, business owners and local officials are the ones who would be using this bridge along with the associated improvements.
- d. Once an alternative is decided, then NJDOT Local Aid would administer the project for the design and construction phases with the County using Federal funding.

7. Bruce Riegel, Hardesty & Hanover Project Manager, then presented the project information, status and schedule with PowerPoint presentation slides. Robert Piel (Environmental Specialist, Amy S. Greene Consultants, Inc.) provided information on the environmental resource screening using the display map of environmental screening and Glenn Modica (Cultural Resources Specialist, Richard Grubb & Associates, Inc.) presented information on the cultural resources screening using a display map showing an aerial of the project area with the historic sites indicated. The PIC PowerPoint presentation and the display maps are available on the project web site (www.southfrontstbridge.com, under Community Outreach).

8. Below are the comments shared by attendees (local residents, business owners, representatives of civic, social service, historic preservation and cultural organizations, and general public) during the Q&A at the end of the brief presentation and during the open house, noted by Project Team members as follows:

- a. The bridge is closed at an angle, not fully open position above the river; the depth of the water is deeper to the north than to the south side due to shoals at the curve.
- b. The input from the Community will help Union County and the agencies understand how the bridge is used and what are the improvements needed which best meet the City's interests.
- c. Examine the marine vessels needed to fight fires in the area; NY City fireboat access up the Elizabeth River and Union County marine police patrol the Elizabeth River.

- d. Bridge needs to be restored and at least a clearance similar to First Street Bridge.
 - e. Consider public launching area for canoes and kayaks - Boat Basin, LLC receives many inquiries from people interested in putting in their canoes and kayaks into the river at their facility; need to see why not at City marina – due to fee or other reasons? Behind mall in City of Elizabeth may be ramp for canoes and kayaks.
 - f. Examine access to water for fire trucks and emergency vehicles along Elizabeth River rather than at City marina in Arthur Kill Park on the Arthur Kill.
 - g. In past there were two marine railways – current status to review with City and Conrail
 - h. Continue coordination with the Goethals Bridge replacement project and Port Authority both for traffic and where the bike and pedestrian connections will be.
 - i. Confirm actual height of the utility lines above the river near the South Front South Street Bridge and if that clearance is an issue.
 - j. When bridge was open traffic mainly weekdays up till 5 pm and very little on weekends; once closed, it's very quiet on the south side.
 - k. Contact Union County Police Marine Unit to learn more about the boats that travel on the Elizabeth River.
 - l. Bridge serves as another way to walk or drive between the neighborhoods of Elizabethport and the businesses; 2 miles to go around.
9. At end of presentation, attendees were encouraged to take copies of the handouts to share information with others. An email notice would be sent once the web site is available at: www.southfrontstbridge.com. The 30-day comment period ends as of Friday, May 2, 2014 for the purpose and need. The next public meeting would be in the fall 2014 to present the project Purpose and Need Statement and proposed conceptual alternatives for the bridge.
10. No PIC Comment Forms were written and received at the meeting. One email containing written comments was received prior to the PIC and one completed PIC Comment Form was received via email after the PIC. The PIC Tracking List and Comments received to date are attached. Any responses to PIC comments received would be written and distributed by Union County.
11. The majority of the attendees expressed their appreciation to Project Team members for the opportunity to review and comment on the project. The PIC open house was adjourned at 7:00 p.m.