



Meeting Summary

Time and Date: Saturday, March 19, 2011

Location: 27 Warren Street
Somerville, New Jersey

Project Name: **Concept Development and Feasibility Assessment of
Route 22 Sustainable Corridor, Long Term Improvements
Somerset County, New Jersey**

Purpose: **Public Information Meeting #2 (Design Charrette)**

Attendees (alphabetically by last name):

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation
Barry	Ableman	
Robert	Barth	
Marty	Caffrei	Basking Ridge
Kathy	Colline	
Chris	Corsini	
Bryan	Duggan	Bridgewater
Ciro	Espinosa	Somerville
Tom	Forsythe	
Jeff	Fouse	
Brian	Gallagher	Somerville
Mike	Kerwin	
Allen	Klirdyla	Bridgewater
Curtis	Kraut	
Andrew	Leven	
Carol	Monaco	Bridgewater
Steve	Peter	Somerville
Amy	Reilly	Somerville
Henry	Reynolds	The Reynolds Group
Pete	Ruggieri	Bound Brook
Susan	SmithPeter	Somerville
Neal	Zislin	Branchburg

Press		
Cheryl	Fenske	Bridgewater Patch
Frank	Mustac	
Jake	Remaly	Somerville

Somerset County		
Joseph	Fishinger	Project Manager
Walt	Lane	Deputy Project Manager
Bob	Bzik	
Patrick	Scaglione	Freeholder



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Consultant Project Team		
Michael	Soliman	Louis Berger
Alicia	Costa	Louis Berger
Naveen	Gumedelli	Louis Berger
Edgardo	Perez	Louis Berger
Hong	Sun	Louis Berger
Jenn	Grenier	PB
Tom	Pagani	PB
Cyd	Averill	Arch Street Communications
Ginger	Mold	Arch Street Communications

The second public meeting was held on Saturday, March 19, 2011 at the county offices at 27 Warren Street. The purpose of the meeting was to present to the community the work completed-to-date and get the community's input on problem areas, constraints, and potential improvements. The meeting format included opening remarks by Somerset County Freeholder, Mr. Patrick Scaglione, followed by a slide presentation, and the design charrette. The meeting was video recorded for public broadcasting by Somerville Television, VILLEtv. Presentation boards showing the traffic volume data, Levels of Service (LOS), crash data, environmental constraints, and short-term improvements were placed around the room for public viewing and discussion. Below is a summary description of the meeting.

- Joseph Fishinger, Traffic Engineer for Somerset County and Project Manager of the Study, greeted attendees and introduced Somerset County Freeholder Patrick Scaglione.
- Mr. Scaglione provided the opening remarks with a brief history of the traffic growth and the development of various sites within the county and its importance in shaping the county's goals and the Route 22 corridor.
- Mr. Scaglione stated that the County started working on the process of making improvements to the Route 22 corridor in 1999 with the Regional Center Vision Initiative. This identified Route 22 as a key roadway in the Regional Center that needed substantial improvements. After working with NJDOT and the Federal government to secure funding for improvements, NJDOT and the County identified first a series of, 'short' term improvements to address some of the immediate safety problems along the corridor.
- Mr. Scaglione discussed that the County assumed management of the long term improvements, adding increased public involvement to meet Somerset County's standards for planning projects. He stated that the meeting is an important part of this process, to determine long term improvements for the Route 22 corridor that will improve safety and reduce congestion into the future.
- Mr. Scaglione clarified that this study will take a fresh look at the corridor and that there were no preconceived notions of what the improvements will be that come out of this project. He encouraged all to help guide the County in the right



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- direction and asked for the public to help identify the problems and possible solutions.
- Mr. Fishinger introduced Michael Soliman, Project Manager with The Louis Berger Group.
 - Mr. Soliman presented a PowerPoint Presentation, explaining the purpose for the Study and work completed-to-date. He explained that the Study is currently in the concept development stage.
 - Mr. Soliman reviewed the:
 - Meeting Agenda
 - Introductions
 - Presentation
 - Design Charrette
 - Group Presentations
 - Q&A
 - Project Goals and Objectives
 - NJDOT Project Delivery Process
 - Public Involvement Plan
 - Traffic and Operational Conditions
 - Origin-Destination Summary
 - Crash Data
 - Commuter Survey Results
 - Corridor Issues & Constraints
 - Design Charrette Format
 - Select group note taker & presenter
 - Goals
 - Identify corridor issues
 - Identify potential improvements
 - Ground Rules for the Charrette
 - Group Presentations
 - After the PowerPoint presentation, the stakeholders broke up into groups at four tables. Each workgroup was provided maps of the corridor to mark problem areas and potential improvements. The workgroup discussions were facilitated by project team members. Each workgroup self-selected a volunteer to take notes and a presenter to report the group's ideas at the end.
 - Each workgroup spent approximately 90 minutes identifying specific problems and issues as well as suggesting possible improvements and solutions. Afterwards, the maps used in the discussion process were photographed and projected on the screen as each group leader reported their group's findings.
 - Commonalities emerged among the four groups (indicated in bold bullets), with related comments listed:



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- **Median strip businesses should be relocated**
- **Need for acceleration and deceleration lanes**
 - Access to driveways and businesses along the entire corridor was cited as dangerous
 - Merge issues with high speeds from I-287 merging to Route 22
 - Merge issues on Route 22 eastbound at the state police station
 - Shoulders could be used for accel/decel lanes and striped
 - Too many short merges due to multiple access points and local roads
- **Route 22 is used to make connections between 202/206 and I-287**
 - Route 22 should be for local traffic and businesses
 - Congestion would be reduced on Route 22 if the thru traffic was eliminated.
 - Channel traffic away from Route 22, providing access between 202/206 (north and south) to I-287
- **Signage must be improved**
 - To the Bridgewater Commons Mall
 - To I-287
 - Improve signage for high volume destinations along with signage for alternate routes
- **Access Management is needed**
 - Too many driveways
 - Very short acceleration/deceleration lanes to driveways and street connections
 - Weaves across several lanes to go from street or driveway to left exits or vice versa.
- While one of the groups reported that they thought pedestrian/bike access on Route 22 was a non-issue, in part due to the existing land uses, three of the groups stated a need to look at safe pedestrian access. Suggestions for pedestrian access:
 - Behind the businesses (on eastbound Route 22)
 - From Bridge Street and Prince Rodgers to Library and Vo-Tech
 - From Red Bull Inn to Diner
 - To Mall – possible bridge or underpass
 - From KFC to Somerville High School
 - From Bridge St. area (pedestrian paths are difficult especially in snowy weather; this diverts pedestrians to Rte. 22)
- A formal question and answer session followed the group presentations. Some statements included:
 - Conducting a survey/questionnaire on the concepts selected
 - Provide access via a shuttle



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- Access from 202/206 to I-287
- Widening roadway could be an issue
- Ms. Grenier explained to the meeting attendees that the ideas and concepts discussed at the meeting will be reviewed by the project team. She stated that many common issues and improvement ideas were discussed, which is critical in building consensus. Once the concepts are evaluated for engineering, constraints and environmental issues, another public meeting will be held to discuss the concepts at a more detailed level.
- Mr. Fisinger thanked participants for their input. He noted that the project team is scheduling Focus Group meetings to elicit feedback from additional stakeholders and that a project newsletter will be forthcoming.
- Freeholder Scaglione closed the meeting by thanking everyone for their participation and encouraging everyone to stay involved in the process.

A complete list of the issues and improvements identified by each group is attached as an appendix to this summary.



APPENDIX

* Group notes appear as written by the participants

GROUP # 1

Constraints:

1. Too many accidents due to median strip, commercial ingress and egress
2. Businesses in median strip
3. U-Turns
4. Lack of acceleration methods
5. Choke points outside Rte. 22 corridor
6. Potential impact of Rte. 22 changes on other roadways
7. Drivers access Rte. 22 because they can not readily connect between 202/206 and I-287 South.
8. Signage
9. Flooding
10. Bike paths, pedestrian walkways considered non-issue
11. Some members of the group considered current Rte. 22 traffic flow is now satisfactory
12. Movement from Rte. 22 to 202 South needs an engineering solution

Solutions:

1. Create new pathway from corporate center to Somerville Circle through Raritan Valley Country Club
2. Channel people away from Rte. 22 by providing access between 206/202 (north and south) to I-287 South. Now many drivers on Rte. 22 that do not want to be there.
3. Fix merge issues near State Police station
4. Close down commercial buildings in median strip (eminent domain)
5. Rationalize entrance egress onto Rte. 22 from commercial office parks, etc. Use part of the to-be empty median strip to reconfigure Rte. 22 without diminishing existing set back. –First priority: *Mountain to Grove*. Second priority: *Grove to Gaston*
6. Acceleration lanes at specific points
7. Clear signage to Bridgewater Mall
8. Eliminate left turn off Grove, redirect access to Rte. 22 East through Ivanhoe
9. Preserve existing setbacks and height restrictions
10. Sidewalk on Foothill Road overpass

GROUP #2

Concerns:

1. On-ramp to Rte. 22 eastbound Commons Way ramp
 - o Traffic merge and weaving
 - o Conflict with traffic entering from Buffalo Wild Wings/Albers
 - o Left lane (fast lane) entrance and exit conflicts
2. Speed – I-287 to Rte. 22
3. Multiple driveway access –
 - o Consolidate driveways and reduce the number of access points
4. Signage for Bridgewater Commons (and other major destinations)
 - o Make the sign more explicit - clearer designation of which exits to take



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5. Eastbound local access road from Mountain Ave. to Gaston Ave.
6. Direct connections from 202/206 to I-287S
 - o Eliminate traffic just passing through Rte. 22 westbound corridor to I-287
7. Safer pedestrian access, especially for high school students
 - o Sidewalks are an issue – can there be access from behind buildings?
 - o Pedestrian access: Bridge Street and Prince Rodgers to Library and V-Tech, Red Bull Inn to Diner
 - o Landscaping using natural vegetation in median
8. Improve connections:
 - o From Rte. 22 eastbound to 202/206 south bound
 - Now have to take Mountain Ave. exit and go through town to circle to get to 202/206 S and Rte. 28 Eastbound
 - o I-287 to Rte. 22 westbound
 - Merge issue
 - Speed from I-287 is > 75 mph - that speed is carried on to Rte. 22
9. Do not like businesses in median (unsafe)
10. More ramp capacity 202/206 north and southbound from Rte. 22 westbound
11. Bridge St. rather than Grove St. – Keep access to Rte. 22 at Grove St.

GROUP #3

Concerns:

1. Traffic density :Acceleration/deceleration lanes
2. Adamsville
3. Critical need for pedestrian access
 - Pedestrian traffic now no access
 - Bridges
 - Mall underpass – crossing and walking above
 - No sidewalks, people are running across the streets
 - Employees getting to work
4. Traffic control “calming” light – warning lights
 - No bridge to median/crossing
 - Commons Way, Grove, 202 merge
5. Do not want additional lanes on Rte. 22 (no more pavement except for driveways widening)
6. Convert shoulders better – acceleration/deceleration lanes striped
7. Grove St. there is standing water
8. Repave the corridor
9. Speed is excessive – must slow down
10. Better sign clarity
11. Turn off Rte. 22 westbound Ronson Rd. is slippery
12. Drainage and retention West of Adamsville insufficient
13. Sign for Albers/Lone Star on Rte. 22 W
14. Relocate businesses in median
15. Lights to remediate access issues
16. Signage to Mall before Grove St. overpass
17. Median 202/206 connect to I 287
18. Trees and vegetation (i.e. forsythia) for aesthetics – less pavement
19. 206 to I-287 connection North of Rte. 22
20. I-287 N exit to Mall



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21. Dead-end streets – Davenport, Mercer
22. Limit driveways
23. Eliminate litter on side streets
24. Lights all along?
25. Business would benefit with less traffic
 - Local do not go as often as they would like
26. Too many driveways – lights?
27. More safer pedestrian access
 - Side walks
 - Bridges to Mall and businesses
 - Density/demographics
 - Public transportation/trains (from bus routes and fro trains)
28. Lights break traffic
29. Signs
30. Run off/retention
31. Connection North of Rte. 22 206/287
32. SPEED !!

GROUP #4

Issues & Constraints - Eastbound

1. 202/206 to Rte. 22 eastbound – lack of merge (acceleration) compounded by Mountain Ave. merger–
2. Access to driveways along entire stretch driveways
3. No acceleration/deceleration for local roads
4. Bridge St. vehicles turning off Rte. 22 travel at high speed
5. Pedestrian safety is a problem: @ KFC from Somerville High school
6. Pedestrian paths from Bridge St. area difficult especially in snowy weather – diverts pedestrians to Rte. 22
7. People use cut-thru to bypass circle through Somerville from 202/206
8. Commons Way: vehicles do not realize the new lane and look to merge right - Weaving danger from Common's Way to Gaston and Common's Way to 202
9. Short acceleration/deceleration problem at Grove St. & throughout the corridor
10. From Wendy's it is easier to use Ivanhoe N. Bridge rather than entering Rte. 22 on deceleration lane (or lack thereof)
11. Median businesses – long term – should be removed
12. Grove to Gaston
 - Traffic begins to accelerate
 - Jockeying for position
 - Multiple driveways
13. Difficult to get from Commons Way to Gaston
14. Beyond Gaston – traffic speed increases further truck traffic increases
15. Midas & U-turns are problems
16. Commercial building with larger volumes lack deceleration/acceleration lanes
17. In general, there are too many short merges created by multiple access and local roads
18. Thru traffic not using local businesses need to separate business traffic from through traffic
19. Bridgewater Diner very high accident
20. Foothill Rd. is underutilized



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21. Signage not adequate for I-287
22. No entrance to I-287 northbound
23. Ramps @ East. project limits, and is a problem

Westbound

1. Ronson Rd. – not using acceleration lane
2. Confusing signage:
 - Foothill Rd.
 - Poor signage at I-287 is poor
 - Signage along Westbound corridor is poor
3. Same issues as Eastbound with media businesses
4. Separate off ramps
5. Grove St. – 2 entrances
6. First ramp – jockeying for position under Grove St.
7. Signs along Rte. 22 for local destinations on N. Bridge St.
8. Commons Way – signs for Mall provide direction: need larger signs
9. Merge 202/206 merge @ interchange – bad merge traffic causes back-up
10. Thru traffic does not slow thru interchange area
11. Rte. 202/206 Southbound backs up onto Rte. 22 Westbound

Solutions

1. Remove median businesses
2. 202/206 flyway and have express and local roads
3. Improve signage for high volume destinations along with signage for alternate routes
4. Flyover @ Grove St. to make Grove a major interchange
5. Merge Commons Way with 202/206 flyover
6. Create better pedestrian network from Grove St. to Mountain Ave.
7. Move pedestrians from Rte. 22 to parallel local areas