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**REGIONAL
CENTER**

Summer
Fall
2009

BRIDGEWATER • RARITAN • SOMERVILLE

A partnership for a better tomorrow

IN SOMERSET COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

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ROUTE 202 CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT PLAN ANNOUNCED

The *Route 202 Corridor Assessment and Multi-Mobility Plan*, outlining proposed improvements to the corridor between Somerville and Flemington, was recently introduced at a public open house held in Somerset County.

The presentation detailed the efforts of the consultant team to inventory and analyze existing traffic, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian conditions. Four Steering Advisory Committee meetings were convened leading up to a public open house. The basis for these meetings was to present the data collected through employer and commuter surveys initiated by the Somerset County Planning Division and RideWise.

The main areas of public input at the open house addressed the need for additional transit options connecting the northern and southern ends of the corridor; concerns about the impact on Route 202 of the potential South Branch Parkway; and the actual conditions at the intersection of Route 202 with Old York Road compared to the model developed by the team.

Commuter surveys showed that 33.5% of respondents felt that express transit service would influence their travel behavior and pedestrian traffic would increase if accommodations were improved. More than 90% of the respondents experience “unreasonable” congestion at least one day a week and an equal percentage noted that they

Cont. page 2

COUNTY & REGIONAL CENTER PARTNERSHIP MOVING FORWARD ON PEDESTRIAN/ BICYCLE/ GREENWAYS PLANNING

Utilizing a grant from the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA), the Regional Center Partnership consultant team is moving forward on a study to define the “*Regional Center Bicycle, Pedestrian & Greenways System*.” With the goal of connecting people and places within the Regional Center through use of alternative transportation, the initiative is intended to result in a connecting pathway through the community centers of Raritan, Bridgewater and Somerville.

The study, initiated by the Somerset County Planning Board in December 2007, is nearing completion. The result will define the details of a pedestrian, bicycle and greenway transportation plan that was first presented in the Planning and Implementation Agenda adopted with the formation of the Regional Center Partnership in May 1996.

The Greenway Plan will provide a planning framework to improve pedestrian, bicycle and greenways connectivity within the Regional Center through the integration of pedestrian-safety measures, bicycle-friendly facility designs, and innovative “green”- and sustainable-design practices.

Thus far the study has identified potential bicycle routes, “green corridors,” pedestrian safety hotspots and missing pedestrian linkages, and has proposed improvements to enhance sidewalk, bicycle, and greenways connections. The plan will improve connectivity between transit facilities and neighborhoods and improve connections between schools and major trip generators including the Bridgewater Commons and the Raritan and Somerville rail stations.

The consultant team has utilized the resources of a community Steering Advisory Committee and a Stakeholder Committee to provide background information that served as the basis for the vision, goals and strategies, and offered the recommendation for the preferred bicycle, pedestrian and greenways network. Over the course of the study, three workshops were held

Cont. page 4

In this issue:

- Greenways Planning
- Route 202 Commuter Study
- Transportation Improvement Schedule
- Somerville Train Station Improvements
- Bridgewater Moves Into New Municipal Complex
- Somerville Centennial Schedule
- Sustainable Jersey
- Vo-Tech Athletic Field Concepts
- Somerville Landfill Update

ROUTE 202 CORRIDOR STUDY (CONT.)

drive alone to work each day.

Recommendations to improve vehicular traffic include:

- Optimize traffic signals
- Install Overhead Video Monitoring Service (VMS) on Route 202 North prior to the Somerville Circle to provide motorists with travel information for Routes 22, 28, 202, 206, I-287 and I-78.
- Install Overhead VMS on Route 202 South prior to the Flemington Circle for motorists traveling to Routes 12, 29, 31, 202.
- Install traffic cameras at congested and accident prone intersections to help NJDOT and local police clear incidents more quickly.

Recommendations for pedestrian improvements include:

- Installation of high visibility crosswalks
- Make connections to existing sidewalks
- Install curb ramps
- Install pedestrian signal heads/count down timers
- Install "Yield to Pedestrians" signs
- Install pedestrian-scale lighting
- Reduce turning radii at the intersection to slow traffic, where appropriate
- Provide refuge areas wherever possible

Recommendations for transit improvements include:

- Create new Park-and-Ride locations and/or shared parking facilities
- Increase rail service between Raritan & High Bridge
- Advance concept of dual freight-passenger use of Norfolk Southern Lehigh Valley freight line
- Study potential locations for new rail stations
- Study direct rail/bus service between Flemington & NYC
- Expand bus service to connect to rail stations in the study area
- Expand marketing and provide incentives for carpool and vanpool programs

Capital improvement proposals within the Regional Center include:

- First Avenue - Relocate the northern jughandle further up First Avenue and increase Route 202 to three lanes.
- Town Center Drive - Create new entrance north of traffic signal and create jughandle entry on east side of highway.
- Milltown Road - Create jughandle past Milltown Road on southbound side and expand jughandle on northbound side.

Followup steps will include completion of the final study report, interaction with NJDOT, NJ Transit, local transportation management associations, planning and design, and establishment of a bi-county group to advance the recommendations.

TRANSPORTATION COMMISSIONER UPDATES ROAD IMPROVEMENT SCHEDULE

New Jersey Commissioner of Transportation Stephen Dilts, in a letter to Somerset County Business Partnership President/CEO Mike Kerwin, outlined the NJDOT improvements scheduled for Somerset County. The letter was the result of a meeting recently held with the Commissioner and representatives from the Business Partnership, the Regional Center Partnership, and the County.

Projects funded in FY 2010 that impact the Regional Center communities include:

- **ROUTE 22 AND CHIMNEY ROCK ROAD** - The \$60.075M project will provide full access to Route 22 and Chimney Rock Road on Route 22 eastbound with Express Route 22 depressed under Chimney Rock Road. Route 22 will also be widened into four lanes between Thompson Avenue and Route 287. Frontier Road will be realigned to extend to Chimney Rock Road. A modified connection from I-287 north to Route 22 east will also be provided. Construction is anticipated in 2010.
- **ROUTE 22 SUSTAINABLE CORRIDOR LONG-TERM IMPROVEMENTS** - At present the project is awaiting authorization of federal funds.
- **ROUTE 22 SUSTAINABLE CORRIDOR SHORT-TERM PROJECTS** Short-term improvement will focus on alleviating accident "hot spots" and improve safety by eliminating U-turns at North Gaston Avenue and Adamsville Road and implementing safety improvements at the Lone Star Restaurant and North Bridge Street, Grove Street, and eastbound at Mountain Avenue. Included in the effort will be the removal of the abandoned truck weigh station, addition of an auxiliary lane on Route 22 westbound between North Grove and North Bridge Street (Fall, 2009); Extension of the deceleration lane at Route 22 eastbound and Finderne Avenue (Fall, 2009); New traffic signal at Ronson and Foothill Roads (schedule TBD by 9/1/09); Extension of Route 206 acceleration lane on Route 22 eastbound and reconfiguration of Mountain Avenue ramp (Spring, 2010).

It was estimated that the short-term improvement project will cost \$7.5 million. At this time, the Federal government has committed \$13.89 million to improvements in the corridor. An interlocal agreement has been submitted for Federal approval that will allow the County to assume responsibility for planning and implementation of the long-term improvement project. A consultant to study this project will be engaged by the County.

Business Partnership figures show that the Route 22 corridor in line for improvement generates \$11 million annually in property taxes and represents \$650,000,000 in real property value.

RENOVATIONS AT THE SOMERVILLE TRAIN STATION

New Jersey Transit (NJT) has embarked on a \$15.2 million project to reconstruct the Somerville Train Station to bring it into Americans with Disabilities Act compliance. The station serves 1,500 weekday passenger trips. The Somerville station has been identified as one of 35 key stations system-wide. The improvements will make the station a focal point for the redevelopment efforts and the center piece of a pedestrian oriented network of streets and sidewalks linking the landfill and station area to Main Street.

Major elements of the reconstruction are:

- 710 foot-long high-level side platforms with canopies
- New passenger communications system with CCTVs and video message signage
- ADA compliant elevator cabs
- Inbound waiting room ticket agent
- Public restrooms
- Outbound platform waiting room
- Platform shelters
- Platform ramps and stairs
- Electrical and communication rooms
- Sidewalk to South Bridge Street
- Alteration to the inbound tunnel entrance
- Lighting and drainage improvements in pedestrian tunnel
- New sidewalk from South Bridge Street to station plaza
- New landscaping and street lights

Working with representatives of the Borough, the NJT Arts in Transit program engaged leading artists to design the guard rails and pedestrian tunnel art to reflect the Somerville area. The guard rails reflect the wildlife of the Raritan River and the pedestrian tunnel will have ceramic tiles showing life in Somerville. On the parking area side of the station near the new tunnel entrance, a twelve foot high stainless steel sculpture representing rail and road travel in Somerville will be erected.

The project is expected to be completed in December of 2010.


BRIDGEWATER OPENS NEW MUNICIPAL COMPLEX

Following more than 20 years of discussion and four years of planning and construction, the Bridgewater municipal offices will complete relocation in the Spring of 2010 to a state-of-the-art 60,000 sf complex. Police and courts have already moved into the new building which is LEED certified as an environmentally sustainable facility.




The new offices, on Commons Way and Garretson Road, consolidate all administrative, judicial, and police functions into one facility. The complex incorporates the historic Green Knoll School, built in 1935. Contained within the addition extending to the south is a new and enlarged police and courts facility featuring a large public meeting space capable of seating up to 150 people.

**SOMERSET COUNTY
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**Your
Neighbors
Assembling the
Pieces for a
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**THE
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The Regional Center is a public-private partnership among Bridgewater, Raritan, Somerville, Somerset County government, businesses, & residents, acting as a cooperative entity to address quality of life issues within the region.

Charting an Action Agenda
Strategic Master Plan for the 3 Municipalities
Pedestrian, Bicycle, & Greenways System Connections
Mountain Avenue Pedestrian Overpass
Somerset Street Linkage Project
Traffic Calming Study & Implementation
Municipal Planning Assistance

Details are available at:
www.regionalcenterpartnership.org

A PARTNERSHIP FOR A BETTER TOMORROW
BRIDGEWATER, RARITAN, SOMERVILLE • SOMERSET COUNTY, NEW JERSEY
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SOMERVILLE SCHEDULES CENTENNIAL EVENTS

- **CENTENNIAL GOLF OUTING**
Monday, August 31st, Noon,
Neshanic Valley Golf Course
- **SOMERVILLE COMMUNITY PICNIC DAY**
Saturday, September 12th, 2009
Exchange Field, Green Street
- **SOMERVILLE BOROUGH HALL TOURS & SOMERSET COUNTY'S WEEKEND JOURNEY THROUGH THE PAST.**
Saturday and Sunday, October 10th & 11th
- **CENTENNIAL DINNER, WITH INVITED GUEST CONGRESSMAN RODNEY FRELINGHUYSEN**
Friday, October 16th, Somerville Elks
- **WALLACE HOUSE CENTENNIAL PROGRAM**
Sunday, November 1st, 71 Somerset Street
- **CHRISTMAS PIPE ORGAN CONCERT**
Saturday, December 5th at five Somerville churches
- **NEW TIME CAPSULE CEREMONY**
Saturday, June 12, 2010
- **PARADE & CELEBRATION OF CENTENNIAL & SOMERVILLE FIRE DEPARTMENT 175TH ANNIVERSARY**
Saturday, June 19, 2010

For details: www.somervillenj.org.

REGIONAL CENTER MUNICIPALITIES EXAMINING SUSTAINABLE JERSEY

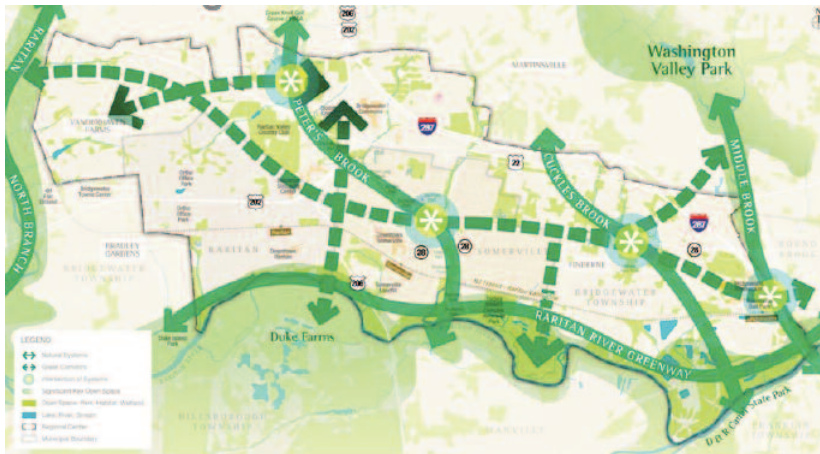
The Regional Center municipalities were presented an overview of *Sustainable Jersey*, a program of the NJ League of Municipalities, Rutgers University, and the College of New Jersey. *Sustainable Jersey* is a certification program for municipalities with a commitment to environmentally sound operation that controls costs that save taxpayer dollars.

The program identifies concrete action to be implemented to become "certified," provides guidance and tools to enable progress, and provides access to grants and other incentives.

PEDESTRIAN/ BICYCLE/ GREENWAYS PLANNING (CONT.)

to engage the public in the process and serve as a mechanism for feedback for the consultant team.

The recommendations include Linkage Improvement Concepts that will connect the core activity centers. Linkages to be developed in Bridgewater include Vanderhaven Farms, the 4-H Center and North Branch Park; Bridgewater-Raritan High School, Bridgewater Commons, Recreational Fields at Prince Rogers Avenue and the Somerset County/Bridgewater Library; and the Bridgewater Promenade, TD



Bank Ballpark, Bridgewater Train Station and Bound Brook. An additional linkage will connect the Somerset Shopping Center with the Raritan Train Station.

Raritan linkages will connect the proposed Willow Walk development in the northwestern corner of the borough with downtown Raritan and the train station.

The Somerville Greenway will connect the Torpey Athletic Complex with residential neighborhoods; Somerville High School and VanDerveer Elementary School along the Peters Brook Greenway; and the Somerville Train Station, Downtown Somerville, Exchange Field and the Cornell Skate Park along the Peters Brook Greenway.

“The typical improvements will include sidewalks and pathways, high-visibility crosswalks, bike lanes, shared-lane markings, pedestrian count-down signals at key intersections, and various traffic-calming measures as needed,” said Freeholder and NJTPA Trustee Peter S. Palmer. A series of “Quick Wins” also were identified where there are critical gaps in the pedestrian network, he said.

“The Greenways Connection Plan is a project that has been discussed since the very inception of the Regional Center Partnership,” said Partnership Chair Rose Evans. “This is a major quality-of-life initiative that, when completed, will make Bridgewater, Raritan and Somerville the standard by which cooperative planning for the public good is measured.”

SOMERVILLE LANDFILL UPDATE

Due to the collapse of the financial and housing markets, Somerville did not receive any response to Redevelopment RFQ issued in October of 2008 with a deadline for submission in March of 2009. To continue to progress on the project, it was the recommendation of the Redevelopment Committee to continue with the environmental investigation and remediation of the site.

This initiative will keep the project moving forward and in front of the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). Furthermore, the Borough will determine the limits of “buildable” land in the area, develop a remediation plan, and be assured of maintaining the 40 plus acres of the “green seam” as open space and recreational area.

Revised thinking on behalf of Borough leadership will result in bidding out smaller sections of the project to a broader range of developers.

The Borough is seeking designation as a Brownfield Development Area (BDA), enabling major grants from the DEP for environmental investigations and certain types of remediation. Designation will also identify the Borough within State agencies as being in conformance with the “Smart Growth” initiative, providing access to other sources of grant money. The Borough is also applying for Transit Village status that will again provide access to a broader array of state and federal grant opportunities.

VO-TECH MULTI-PURPOSE ATHLETIC COMPLEX CONCEPTS UNDER REVIEW

Conceptual plans for the multi-purpose athletic facility under consideration for the Vocational and Technical Schools in Bridgewater were presented to the Regional Center Partnership and the Vo-Tech Board of Education.

Three conceptual plans contemplate a combination of baseball and softball fields and one or two rectangular multi-purpose fields to accommodate soccer, lacrosse, and football.

The conceptual plans will soon be the topic of public meetings to solicit input.

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