

— THE —  
**REGIONAL  
CENTER**

Spring  
2014

BRIDGEWATER • RARITAN • SOMERVILLE

A partnership for a better tomorrow

IN SOMERSET COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

## **NJ TRANSIT INITIATES ONE SEAT RIDE TO NEW YORK CITY**

A 15-year effort by numerous Somerset County officials working closely with the Raritan Valley Rail Coalition culminated on March 3, 2014 with the maiden voyage of a one-seat ride from three Regional Center Raritan Valley Line train stations to New York's Penn Station. The first one-seat ride departed from Raritan at 8:43 A.M. and reached Penn Station at 10:09 A.M., without a transfer at Newark for the first time.

Led by Freeholder Peter Palmer, who chairs the Raritan Valley Rail Coalition, local figures representing the Regional Center communities of Raritan, Somerville, and Bridgewater, boarded the train at their respective stations.

NJ Transit purchased dual-mode locomotives that operate as diesel from the Regional Center to Newark's Penn Station and as electric powered through the tunnels to Manhattan. Initially, the one-seat ride will be restricted to off-peak hours until increased tunnel access is available. Ten trains are part of the pilot program.

The one-seat ride will provide significant business and residential development advantages to the Regional Center communities.

## **AMAZING THINGS ARE HAPPENING IN THE REGIONAL CENTER**

The Regional Center Partnership has embarked on a major marketing initiative for 2014 under the banner, "Amazing Things Are Happening in the Regional Center." The program will integrate three main elements: the Regional Center Partnership Presentation Took Kit; the Amazing Things Are Happening in the Regional Center Campaign Toolkit; and the Amazing Things Are Happening in the Regional Center Kick-Off Event.

The Regional Center Partnership Presentation Toolkit will provide non-profits, community, and special interest groups with materials highlighting the history, accomplishments, assets, and priorities of the Regional Center. Serving as concise background information, the Toolkit will help agencies take advantage of their presence within the Regional Center.

The Amazing Things Toolkit will provide a road map showcasing the Regional Center as a highly attractive location to work, live, shop and for recreation. The Toolkit will be designed to serve as an investment and business recruitment/attraction tool, highlighting the significant quality of life amenities in and near the Regional Center. Included in the presentation materials that will be available for businesses and agencies in the Regional Center will be descriptions of natural features and attractions; cultural attractions, programs and events; access to services and resources; major economic initiatives and major infrastructure investments.

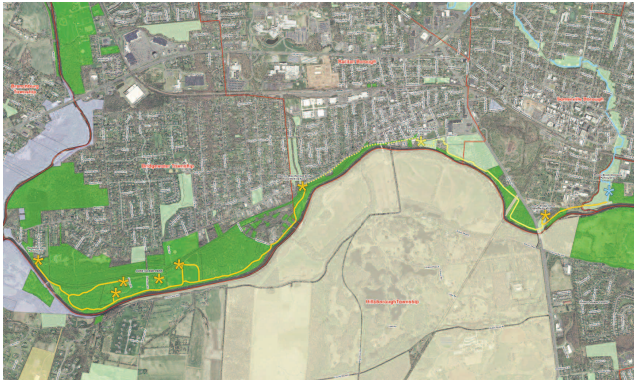
The Tool Kit will be designed to be distributed electronically and organized in an interchangeable fashion to be customized by various users for targeted audiences. The project will be showcased at a kick-off event to be scheduled in the fall of 2014. Invitees will include representatives from the local and regional business community, civic groups, and non-profit organizations.

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## SOMERSET COUNTY GREENWAY CONTINUES TO LENGTHEN

Tom Boccino, representing the Somerset County Engineering Division, visited the Regional Center Partnership to provide a detailed update on the status of the expanding Raritan River Greenway/Bikeway project.



The Raritan River Greenway extends from the confluence of the North Branch and South Branch of the Raritan River to the confluence of the Millstone River and the Raritan River; a distance of approximately 8.1 miles. The county currently owns and maintains approximately 840 acres of public open space within the Greenway. The Greenway is shown in the photo on the left along the river with Somerville Borough in the upper right hand corner.

The overall goal of the Raritan River Greenway Plan is to create a series of nodes and linked trails designed to provide pedestrian linkages between neighborhoods, commercial areas, and trail systems.

Sections of the Greenway in the Regional Center include a completed 2.5-mile stretch along Duke Island Park from the headgate to the historic Hibernia Mine railway bridge; a completed 5-mile stretch from South Bridge Street to the Peters Brook Greenway connection; a section currently in design from South Bridge Street to Orlando Drive (includes a segment under Route 206); and 0.3 miles along Orlando Drive awaiting funding.

## GRANT TO FUND DRIVER FEEDBACK SIGNAGE TO ENHANCE TRAFFIC SAFETY.

Another step toward bringing to conclusion a project initiated in 2013, representatives of the Regional Center Partnership communities have submitted their recommended locations for the installation of new Driver Feedback Signage (DFS).

With traffic calming a major goal of the Regional Center Strategic Master Plan initiative to enhance pedestrian and bicycle safety, installation of DFS with recognition that the project is within the limits of the Somerset County Regional Center addresses quality of life issue common to the three municipalities while providing an opportunity to raise awareness of Regional Center initiatives.

The Regional Center has committed \$50,000 of the \$65,211 that had been allocated in November 2012 for installation of solar-powered driver feedback signs. It is estimated that the funds will be sufficient for the purchase and installation of four DFS in each municipality. Installation will be accomplished by the Somerset County Department of Public Works Engineering Division. Estimated installation timeframe is spring of 2014.

The Driver Feedback Signage will include a representation of the Regional Center logo that will align with the brand developed for the “Amazing Things Are Happening in the Regional Regenter” initiative currently under development.





## REGIONAL CENTER EARNS EXCELLENCE IN PLANNING AWARD

The Regional Center Partnership of Somerset County earned a 2013 Excellence in Planning Award from the Somerset County Planning Board, honoring the organization's attainment of Plan Endorsement from the New Jersey State Planning Commission. The award was presented at the celebration of the 60th Anniversary of the Planning Board in February of 2014.

On October 16, 2013, the Regional Center Partnership achieved a major milestone to preserve its prominent standing in the state by attaining Regional Center Plan Endorsement, a comprehensive review process that ensures the coordination of state, county, and municipal planning efforts in achieving the goals and policies of the State Planning Act.

Through Plan Endorsement, all levels of the three municipal governments, Bridgewater, Raritan, and Somerville, contribute to coordinated capital investment and planning implementation mechanisms that are consistent with the State Plan and with each other. With approval from the State, the Regional Center is now in a better position to receive competitive state and federal resources, grant applications, technical assistance, and incentives to assist in accomplishing the goals for the organization's master plan.

## CHIMNEY ROCK INTERCHANGE PROJECT CONTINUES WITH THE OPENING OF THE WESTBOUND LANES

The opening of the westbound lanes of Route 22 at the Chimney Rock Interchange marked a major step forward toward the completion of the \$70+ million project. When complete, the area will feature a full service interchange at US 22 and Chimney Rock Road that will satisfy current and future traffic demands and meet the mobility goals of the area while providing linkages to enhance existing businesses. The project will minimize existing traffic impacts in residential neighborhoods and improve quality of life issues from a transportation standpoint.

## RAIN BARREL REBATE PROGRAM EXPANDS COVERAGE AREA

The Somerset County Regional Center Partnership, utilizing a grant from the New Jersey Water Supply Authority (NJWSA), has announced that the Rain Barrel Rebate Program, now in its fourth year, has expanded to include all residents in the communities of Bridgewater, Raritan, and Somerville.

The Rebate Program is intended to encourage residents to purchase and install rain barrels by offering rebates up to \$200. Rebates are available in the amount of \$50 for those that hold 40 to 70 gallons and \$100 for barrels that hold more than 70 gallons. Rebates are available for multiple rain barrels that meet all criteria.

Residential homeowners within the Peters Brook Watershed who purchased and installed rain barrels after July 1, 2011 are eligible for a rebate. Residents outside the Watershed but within the boundaries of the three municipalities must have purchased after January 1, 2014. Homeowners must pledge to maintain the rain barrel for at least two years to be eligible for the rebate.

Detailed information can be found on the Regional Center Partnership's website at [www.regionalcenterpartnership.org](http://www.regionalcenterpartnership.org), by calling 908-685-0315 x234 or sending an email to [rainbarrel@raritanbasin.org](mailto:rainbarrel@raritanbasin.org).



*Bernie Navatto, Chair of the Somerset County Planning Board presents Troy Fischer (r) Chair of the Somerset County Regional Center Partnership with the Excellence in Planning award*



## MUNICIPAL UPDATES

### BRIDGEWATER

Land development applications under consideration include: proposed retail/restaurant next to Honda Sport on Route 22; proposed Quick Chek application to dispense fuel at the Route 28/Adamsville Road location; Wawa's use variance approved for a proposed food mart with fuel dispensing at Route 28/Chimney Rock Road; Seasons 52 Restaurant at the Commons Mall; McDonald's site plan conditionally approved to improve on-site circulation at their Promenade Boulevard location. Under construction is the CVS next to Eastern Star Home on FINDERNE AVENUE. The Township Planning Board has determined the former Weyerhaeuser site in FINDERNE as an "area in need of redevelopment" as defined by the NJ Local Redevelopment & Housing Law.

### RARITAN

*New Jersey Monthly* magazine (September 2013) included Raritan among the state's 100 most desirable communities.

The very successful 2013 Riverfest event, conducted with the support of Ortho Clinical Diagnostics, resulted in a significant contribution to the Somerset Medical Center Steeplechase Cancer Center.

Students from Raritan Valley Community College interested in business and economic development are helping the Borough outreach to local merchants.

### SOMERVILLE

As part of the North Gaston Avenue study, the Planning Board is working to determine whether North Gaston Avenue between Union Avenue & East Main Street is an "area in need of rehabilitation," an "area in need of redevelopment," or should be addressed through land use zoning.

Rutgers University Bloustein School agreed to address design and implementation planning for recreational areas within the Somerville Landfill.

## 2013 REGIONAL CENTER ACHIEVEMENTS

### REPORT AVAILABLE



The Somerset County Regional Center "2013 Annual Achievements Report" is now available online at [www.regional-centerpartnership.org](http://www.regional-centerpartnership.org) under "Publications" or in hard copy by calling James Ruggieri at the Somerset County Planning Division, 908-231-7021.

## 2014 REGIONAL CENTER PARTNERSHIP

- Chair: Troy Fischer  
Vice-Chair: Glenn McCreesh  
Treasurer: Freeholder Peter Palmer  
Secretary: James Ruggieri (non-voting position)
- At-large Private/Institutional Sector Representatives  
Troy Fischer, Chair, Senior General Manager, Bridgewater Commons\*  
Glenn McCreesh, Vice Chair, Vice-President of Operations, Somerset Medical Center\*  
James Driscoll, Site Manager, Workplace Solutions, Johnson & Johnson Company\*  
Jason Dameo, General Manager, Dameo Companies
- Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders  
Patricia Walsh, Freeholder\*  
(Freeholder Peter Palmer, Alt.\*)
- Somerset County Planning Board  
Robert Bzik, Director of Planning, Somerset County  
Bernie Navatto, Chair, Somerset County Planning Board
- Bridgewater Township  
Mayor Daniel J. Hayes, Jr.\*  
Councilwoman Christine Henderson-Rose  
Planner Scarlett Doyle  
Henry E. Reynolds, Jr., local private/institutional representative
- Raritan Borough  
Mayor Jo-Ann Liptak\*  
Councilman Greg Lobell  
Planner David Maski  
Don Christensen, local private/institutional representative
- Somerville Borough  
Mayor Brian Gallagher\*  
Councilman Dennis Sullivan  
Planning Board Vice-Chair Lisa Yates  
Rick St. Pierre, local private/institutional representative
- Somerset County Business Partnership  
Michael Kerwin, President/CEO  
(John Maddocks, Alternate)
- Somerset County Park Commission  
Ray Brown, Secretary/Executive Director  
(Cynthia Sullivan, Alternate)
- \*RCP Executive Committee member

## REGIONAL CENTER 2014 MEETING DATES

- Wednesday, May 21st @ 5:00 P.M.  
Wednesday, July 16th @ 5:00 P.M.  
Wednesday, September 17th @ 5:00 P.M.  
Wednesday, November 12th @ 5:00 P.M.
- All meetings take place in the County Administration Building Engineering Conference Room, 2nd Floor, 20 Grove Street, Somerville, New Jersey.

### THE REGIONAL CENTER

BRIDGEWATER, RARITAN, SOMERVILLE • SOMERSET COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

Contact: Somerset County Planning Board • Post Office Box 3000, Somerville, New Jersey 08876  
Phone 908-231-7021 • [www.regionalcenterpartnership.org](http://www.regionalcenterpartnership.org)