

# Community Stakeholders' Meeting No. 1

Bingham Hall, Rumson

October 6th, 2016

Monmouth County Engineering, the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA), and Michael Baker International, the outside consultants, were there to talk about community input to the Local Concept Development (LCD) phase of the “Local Capital Project Delivery Process” for Oceanic Bridge. They presented some of the results of the Community Input Survey — and are still open to getting more Surveys turned in — and took opinions on the “purpose and need” for Oceanic Bridge. As stakeholders, they considered us to be representing the larger “community,” although there will also be meetings open to the general public.

The alternatives for the bridge project, e.g., whether to get rid of it, whether to fix it, or whether to replace it, weren't yet on the table. And neither were the alternatives for a replacement, such as high or low. Nevertheless, it was pretty clear that replacement would be the only “alternative,” and that most of the stakeholders who mentioned high versus low favored a low bridge. (One stakeholder not only wanted a low bridge, but also low light poles on the bridge.) The alternatives will be presented and discussed at the next stakeholders' meeting, to be held next spring. Asked if there are criteria for choosing the type of bridge, Monmouth County Engineer Joe Ettore said there are some that are quantitative and others that are qualitative and harder to apply. At the end of the meeting, Joe made a point of saying that there is no foregone conclusion as to the alternative to be chosen.

**Funding** — Funding for the whole “Local Capital Project Delivery Process,” which includes LCD phase we're in now all the way through construction of the new bridge, is from the federal government. At least one of the

stakeholders asked if we're in competition with projects elsewhere and wondered if our estimated daily use of only 11K vehicles would be enough to justify our project. Joe Ettore said we were in competition but was quite sure we'd get funding.

**Purpose and Need** — Right now the study team is putting together the “purpose and need” statement. It's not clear to me exactly what this is, but Monmouth County Project Manager Inkyung Englehart mentioned a couple of the subheadings are “goals and objectives.” I got the sense that answers on the Community Input Survey would help them formulate the purpose and need statement. So far 81 surveys have been returned, which was maybe 2/3 of those sent out. That was a pretty good return rate, but they would like to hear from a lot more people.

Also, at this meeting the stakeholders were asked for their input. Someone mentioned aesthetics, which would be a big one for us. Then a couple of other things mentioned were fishing from the bridge, which would require a low bridge; and the ability for tall barge cranes to get through, which would require an opening bridge. These cranes had been needed upstream after Sandy. The bridge is being regarded as a “multimodal resource” so the purpose and need can go well beyond those of vehicle operators. I asked Inkyung if we can still submit opinions on the purpose and need, and she said we can.

I asked if anything from the earlier County submission to the feds could be used as “community input” to the present study. I was told it couldn't be. But then Kim brought up all the work that we and our real-estate consultant had put into that submission, and they said we could re-submit our findings. The earlier survey of community opinion that the County took

wasn't mentioned, but maybe if we re-quoted those findings they might be taken into account.

**Meetings and Links** — A draft of the purpose-and-need statement will be presented at two public meetings on October 25th:

*Rumson:* Bingham Hall, 40 Bingham Avenue, Rumson, NJ 2pm – 4pm (brief presentation at 2:30pm)

*Middletown:* Middletown Public Library Community Room 55 New Monmouth Road, Middletown, NJ 6pm – 8pm (brief presentation at 6:30pm)

The above times and locations are from the new project website

[MonmouthCountyOceanicBridge.com](http://MonmouthCountyOceanicBridge.com) . Also announced was their email address [MonmouthCountyOceanicBridge@gmail.com](mailto:MonmouthCountyOceanicBridge@gmail.com) .

**Navigation, Maritime, and Bottom Studies** —

The project team did a small “navigation” study this past summer. For a day they looked at boats going past the bridge and found that 78 percent were lower than the 22 feet of clearance under the bridge at mean high water. Few were taller than sixty feet. The bridge opens on call so there was no real queuing of boats. And the opening times were short enough that the queue lengths for vehicles were tolerable. The results of this study go to the Coast Guard.

There is also a “maritime” study, and it’s still in progress. That looks at boat owners’ opinions on use of the channel, which the Corps of Engineers maintains. The channel is now prescribed to be at least six feet below low water and 75-feet wide.

Then late this fall the team is planning to study the condition of the river bottom. This will allow them to say what kind of foundation would be needed for a new bridge. They’ll be taking borings from the bottom.

**Bridge Condition** — Joe Ettore told us the bridge was built in 1939, which makes it 77 years old, and that’s beyond the 75-year lifespan expected. The superstructure is now in “serious” condition, the substructure in “poor” condition, the deck in “fair” condition, the mechanical components in “fair-to-poor” condition, and the electrical components in “poor” condition. Still, he thinks with frequent DOT inspections and repairs as needed, the bridge can survive into the mid-2020s, when it can be retired.

**Project Scale** — Of all New Jersey counties, Monmouth County has the most bridge-deck area — surface area of all bridges. This “critical” project is the biggest project Monmouth County has had.

— John Lewis 10/8/2016

**A Few of the Attendees:**

Monmouth County

Joe Ettore, County Engineer  
Inkyung Englehart, Project Manager  
Daria Jakimowska, Chief Engineer, Traffic Design

NJTPA

Sarbjit Kahlon, Project Manager

Martine Culberson, Community Involvement Facilitator

Township of Middletown

Tony Mercantante, Township Administrator

Friends of the Oceanic Bridge

Todd Thompson, President

Chris Coleman, VP Middletown

John Lewis, VP Hartshorne Woods

Kim Warman, VP Locust Point

Dan Crabbe, Treasurer