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Introduction
Introduction

1.1 Context and Purpose for the Route 31 Study

Route 31 Congestion Mitigation
At the start of the study in late 2003, congestion on Route 31 in the Raritan Township/Flemington Borough area had been a growing concern for area residents, business owners, and elected officials for some time. A number of congestion mitigation alternatives had been studied by NJDOT since 1987, resulting in 1) modification of six intersections on existing Route 31 to include additional turning lanes (completed in 2004), 2) the proposed “elimination” of the Flemington Circle by grade separating the intersection of Route 31 and 202 (currently being re-designed for an at-grade solution), and 3) the proposed “Flemington Bypass”, a 4-lane limited access highway from Route 202, east of Voorhees Corner Road to Route 31, just north of Bartles Corner Road (currently on-hold).

A Smart Growth Alternative
New Jersey’s Smart Growth Council, consisting of state-wide departments and agencies including the NJDOT, has been tasked with ensuring that state-wide programs and projects are consistent with New Jersey’s smart grown principles. This smart growth initiative, coupled with the high cost of the Flemington Bypass in the face of declining state road revenues, led the NJDOT to initiate the development of a “smart growth alternative” for the Flemington Bypass.

New Jersey Smart Growth Principles
Smart Growth is the term used to describe well-planned, well-managed growth that adds new homes and creates new jobs, while preserving open space, farmland, and environmental resources. Smart Growth supports livable neighborhoods with a variety of housing types, price ranges and multi-modal forms of transportation. Smart Growth is an approach to land use planning that targets the State’s resources and funding in ways that enhance the quality of life for residents in New Jersey. (New Jersey Office of Smart Growth).

New Jersey’s Smart Growth Principles include:

- Mixed land uses
- Compact, clustered community design
- Range of housing choice and opportunity
- Walkable neighborhoods
- Distinctive, attractive communities offering a sense of place
- Open space, farmland, and scenic resource preservation
- Future development strengthened and directed to existing communities using existing infrastructure
- Transportation option variety
- Predictable, fair and cost-effective development decisions
- Community and stakeholder collaboration in development decision-making
1.2 The Process

The development of the Framework Plan is the result of a collaborative effort that included the staff and elected officials of the local jurisdictions (Flemington, Raritan Township, and Hunterdon County), property owners, general public, NJDOT, and other regional and state-wide agencies. The planning process included a variety of forums to engage these groups and stakeholders.

Advisory Group

An Advisory Group, also known as the Local Planning Committee (LPC), was formed that included representatives from NJDOT, Raritan Township, Flemington Borough, and Hunterdon County. This Advisory Group met regularly to provide direction and review the plan’s progress. Specifically this group guided public and stakeholder involvement, identifying key stakeholders, public venues for discussion, and direction on local political and implementation issues that would need to be addressed.

As the project developed, smaller sub-groups were formed to address specific key issues related to the project. These groups included the following:

- Traffic Modeling Subcommittee
- Outreach Subcommittee
- Access Management Subcommittee
Initial Stakeholder Interviews

Study Area Property Owners

Brian Barbiche - 184 Pennsylvania Avenue
John Bowby - Bass Transportation Co., Inc.
Jack Cust - HealthQuest
Gary Dean - Gary Dean Associates (Flemington Fairgrounds)
George Dills - Dills and Koester
Herbert Dvoor
Nat Gatlin - Good News Home for Women
Rick Kuhl, Jr. - Kuhl Corp. (Flemington Fairgrounds)
Scott Loventhal - Garden Properties (Flemington Fairgrounds)
Marion McLeod - 78 Junction Road (McLeod Farm)
Gary Nagel - Hunterdon Care Center
Suresh Patel - Flemington Industrial Park
Robert Schenkel - Lincoln Realty Services (Lipton Property)
Don Shuman - Don Shuman Assoc. Inc
Arthur Stryker - Raritan Valley Disposal
William Vogt - Don Shuman Assoc. Inc.
Ted Resnick - Flemington Department Store

Environmental Resources

Beryl Doyle - Citizens for Parkland
Don Einhorn - South Branch Watershed Association
Jennifer Fisher - Raritan Township Environmental Commission
Doug Kiovsky - Hunterdon County Parks and Recreation
Ruth Prince - Raritan Twp. Planning Board
Kevin Richardson - Hunterdon County Open Space Trust Fund
Chris Testa - Hunterdon County Soil Conservation District

Historical Resources

Steve Hardegen - Historic Preservation Officer, NJDEP
Peter Kinsella, Raritan Township Committeeeman; Raritan Township Local Historians Committee
Stephanie Stevens - Hunterdon Cultural & Heritage Commission

Richard Stothoff - Raritan Historic Preservation Committee
Karen Weber - Division of Environmental Resources, NJDOT

Community Resources

Glenn F. Barry - Hunterdon Central Regional High School
Kean Burenga - Black River & Western Railroad
Bill Clother - Hunterdon County Parks and Recreation
William P. Donnelly - Hunterdon Central Regional High School
Jack Farr - Flemington-Raritan School Board
Lawrence Grand - Hunterdon Healthcare System
Marty Hogan - Hunterdon Healthcare System
Ed McCaffrey - Hunterdon County Parks and Recreation
John J. Trontis - Hunterdon County Parks and Recreation
Ron Van Teyens - Hunterdon Central Regional High School

Other Stakeholders & Agencies

Byron Brisbee
Brenda DePugh - The LINK, Hunterdon County Department of Human Services
Donna Drewes - Municipal Land Use Center
Erica Edwards - Flemington Department of Community and Economic Development
Tanya Jackson-Emam - Federal Highway Administration
Mary Melfi - Flemington Borough Council;
Hunterdon County Planning Board
Ron Tindall - North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority

Stakeholder Interviews

Individual and informal one-on-one interviews were conducted with area stakeholders in order to understand site specific development issues and local jurisdiction interests. These stakeholders included property owners, developers, local municipal staff, elected officials, and area-wide interest groups. Collectively the information gathered through these interviews provided a deep understanding of the study area, uncovering both opportunities and obstacles. In addition, these interviews provided a way to bring the stakeholders directly into the process, creating a dialogue in which ideas could be shared and tested.
Design Workshops
The development and testing of the Framework Plan was conducted in a series of Design Workshops held over 12-month period between 2004 and 2005. The Design Workshops were housed at public meeting facilities within the study area over several days allowing critical decision-making and information sharing. The purpose of the Design Workshops is to facilitate an on-site working “studio” allowing collaborative work sessions between the project team, NJDOT, the public, stakeholders, and the Advisory Group.

The Design Workshops included a variety of stakeholder interviews, team site visits, working sessions, public visioning sessions, and Advisory Group briefings. Over the course of these Design Workshops the Framework Plan was developed and tested. The “Framework Plan” and “Design Vision & Implementation Plan” documented in Sections 3.0 and 4.0 are the direct product of this workshop process.

Public Visioning Sessions
As part of the Design Workshops a public visioning session was held that provided interested citizens the opportunity to articulate their issues and concerns and have an informed dialogue about their future vision for the area. These sessions involved a briefing presentation on the analysis background of the projects and table design sessions where small groups formed to discuss issues, concerns and identify key goals and community character that should be protected.

Character:
- keep pastoral feel
- Want real historic quality
- Protect rural character and historic resources
- Do not want to be “urban”

Parks & Open Space:
- Want trees, walkability, bikeability
- Build trails to connect Flemington to the Raritan River
- Create more parks

Proposed Network:
- Abandoning original grade separated Flemington Circle project is good
- Need connections south of Route 202
- Network approach provides safe access between uses
- Will more roads cause more development??
- Need to deal with land use and development ordinances too
- How much will it cost? Who pays? How long will it take?
This report summarizes over four years of planning, analysis and implementation of a “smart growth alternative” for the Flemington Bypass. This effort included working corroboratively with the local jurisdictions to document their land use and transportation issues in order to develop a “Framework Plan”. The Framework Plan represents an initial step toward an integrated land use and transportation plan, outlining new street connections, redevelopment opportunities, and open space protection within the context of local community goals and individual landowner actions.

This report is organized into the following sections:

1.0 Introduction – Sets the policy context for the study and outlines the planning process that went into the development of the Framework Plan.

2.0 Context – Describes the land use and transportation context of the Flemington study area.

3.0 Framework Plan – Illustrates the principles and key components of the Framework Plan.

4.0 Design Vision & Implementation Plan – Outlines in greater detail key design aspects of the Framework Plan and its implementation.

5.0 Potential Land Use Alternatives – Summarizes the development and evaluation of land use alternatives.

6.0 Traffic Analysis – Summarizes the technical analysis that went into testing and refining the proposed road network of the Framework Plan.

7.0 Implementation Initiatives – Highlights the number of “breakout” projects and on-going initiatives that have resulted from this study.

8.0 Lessons Learned – Summarizes the key things learned through the process that can be applied to other similar initiatives.