PENNS NECK AREA EIS

Statement Regarding Selection of Preferred Alternative

The following is a summary statement regarding the New Jersey Department of Transportation's decision regarding the selection of the preferred alternative for the Penns Neck Area EIS. The NJDOT undertook the Penns Neck Area EIS more than 2 years ago in an effort to:

- reexamine the mobility challenges facing the Penns Neck Area;
- carefully and fully investigate a full range of actions and alternatives designed to address the identified challenges; and
- to provide the public with meaningful opportunities to participate in the EIS process.

Over the course of the past two and 1/2 years, the Department has worked with the Partners' Roundtable advisory committee and the broader public to define:

- the transportation problems to be addressed in the Penns Neck Area;
- a comprehensive set of goals and objectives to guide the evaluation of alternatives; and
- a full range of alternatives intended to address the identified transportation problems.

The Department collected and analyzed new traffic and environmental data, documented the potential transportation, environmental and community impacts of 20 alternatives including a no-action alternative and presented this information, in detail, to the Roundtable and general public.

After considering all of the data and information presented in the DEIS and the public input received throughout the DEIS process, including the numerous comments received on the DEIS, the Department narrowed the field of potential alternatives to Alternatives D and D.2. Alternative D included the following major transportation components:

- Route 1 in-a-cut at Washington Road;
- Frontage roads on both sides of Route 1;
- An east-side connector road located near the center of the Sarnoff property;
- A west-side connector road connecting directly with Harrison Street in the vicinity of the D&R Canal;
- A diamond-type interchange at Harrison Street located south of the PSE&G substation; and
- A Vaughn Drive connector road.

Alternative D.2 included all of the same components of D except the eastside connector road was eliminated.

Once the field of alternatives was narrowed to two and based on the comments received on the DEIS, additional engineering, traffic simulation and water quality modeling studies were completed. The findings of the additional studies helped to inform the selection of D.2 as the preferred alternative and resulted in several engineering refinements.

The preferred alternative which will be referred to as Alternative D.2.A is substantially similar to Alternative D.2 with the following modifications:

- The covered area or plaza was eliminated. The Department determined that the limited community benefits derived from its inclusion did not justify its high cost.
- The configurations of the Washington Road and Harrison Street interchanges were redesigned to include a "single-point" interchange configuration at both locations. This design modification provided sufficient additional capacity to permit the interchanges, frontage road system and connecting roads to function at an adequate level of service without an east-side connector road.
- The Vaughn Drive connector road was located between VDC 2 and VDC 3.

Alternative D.2.A was selected as the preferred alternative because it provides a reasonable level of transportation benefit, while avoiding and minimizing environmental impacts. Alternative D.2.A represents a project that will achieve significant benefits without entailing years of delay due to extensive environmental permitting requirements. In short, it is a project that can be accomplished expeditiously. Specifically, Alternative D.2.A will:

- Provide system-wide congestion relief as measured by vehicle hours traveled, vehicle hours traveled under congested conditions and vehicle miles traveled under congested conditions in the core study area;
- Improve the flow of traffic on Route 1, resulting in shorter travel times in both the north and southbound directions;
- Improve the flow of traffic on east-west routes crossing Route 1, resulting in shorter east-west travel times and significantly reducing traffic delays on Washington Road east of Route 1;
- Maintain an equitable balance of traffic on east-west routes, on both sides of Route 1, substantially consistent with the distribution of traffic that exists today;
- Reduce traffic on residential streets in most parts of the core study area;
- Minimize potential wetland and floodplain impacts;
- Minimize habitat fragmentation and avoid disturbance of potential habitat for the threatened long-eared owl, located adjacent to the Little Bear Brook on the Sarnoff property;
- Minimize impacts to parks and natural areas, including the D&R Canal State Park, Little Bear Brook and the Millstone River corridor;

- Reduce potential pollutant impacts from new road surfaces on the Millstone River;
- Avoid disturbance to National Register eligible archeological sites located adjacent to the Little Bear Brook and Millstone River;
- Minimize disturbance to other National Register listed and eligible historic resources;
- Avoid residential displacements and minimize adverse impacts to residential neighborhoods;
- Enhance vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian access and safety to schools and other community facilities located within the core study area; and
- Minimize business displacements and enhance vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian access and safety to institutions and businesses in the study area.

Although the preferred alternative avoids and/or minimizes many potential community and environmental impacts, some temporary and permanent impacts may still occur as a result of construction. The Department will make every effort to avoid and minimize these impacts during final design and construction. In addition, the FEIS and Record of Decision for this project will include a number of environmental and design commitments. These will include, but may not be limited to the following:

- Fund and implement a commute options package as a three year demonstration program, including the following:
    - $1.4 million over three years for enhanced TMA services, including funding for a parking cash-out incentive program;
    - $1.5 million over three years for new/expanded jitney/shuttle services; and
    - up to $1.35 million over three years for local area pedestrian and bicycle network improvements, including the completion of a feasibility study and potential implementation of a new grade-separated pedestrian/bicycle crossing of Route 1 in the vicinity of the Dinky railroad bridge.
- Utilize context sensitive design principles throughout the final design and construction process, including as appropriate, the inclusion of traffic calming and other design and operational changes to address potential traffic impacts on Washington Road east of Route 1, Upper Harrison Street west of the D&R Canal, and Bear Brook Road south of Alexander Road, as well as at the Harrison Street crossing of the D&R Canal;
- Undertake an on-going public consultation process to solicit public input on various aspects of project design, including the design of roadways, structures, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, traffic calming, walls, fences, lighting and landscaping, as well as, construction phasing, the timing of

construction for various components of the project, and traffic control planning;

- Comply with the New Jersey Freshwater Wetlands Protection Act;
- Comply with the New Jersey No Net Loss Reforestation Act;
- Develop a storm water management plan in accordance with NJDEP regulations pertaining to water quality, hydrology, flood control, stream corridor buffers, and protection of aquatic ecology;
- Develop and apply a soil erosion and sediment control plan to protect area waterways from adverse impacts during construction;
- Restore temporarily disturbed natural areas;
- Conduct additional wildlife/habitat surveys as needed to further document the presence of threatened/endangered species and habitat and to inform the final design process;
- Consider techniques to reduce vehicle-wildlife collisions on new roads;
- Document and mitigate impacted cultural resources, in accordance with applicable laws and regulations and in accordance with Section 106 consulting parties consultation;
- Conduct a final noise study based on final design and implement appropriate noise mitigation for sensitive noise receptor sites;
- Further assess potential contaminated materials sites within the right-of-way for the project and develop/implement a remediation/mitigation plan for such sites;
- Comply with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, where unavoidable residential and business relocations occur;
- Develop and apply construction phasing and traffic control plans, including a public awareness campaign; and
- Develop and apply a health and safety plan during construction.