



COUNTY OF BERGEN / COUNTY OF ESSEX



Local Preliminary Engineering Phase for Kingsland Avenue (Avondale and De Jessa Memorial) Bridge Township of Lyndhurst and Township of Nutley, New Jersey

Public Involvement Action Plan (PIAP)



Prepared by:
Hardesty & Hanover, LLC
M.A. Culbertson, LLC
February 2023





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Kingsland Avenue (Avondale and De Jessa Memorial) Bridge
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A. PURPOSE

The purpose of the public involvement effort for the Bergen County/Essex County Kingsland Avenue (Avondale and De Jessa Memorial) Bridge project is to have an informed and involved public who has access to the planning approach, decision-making, and engineering design process. The Public Involvement Action Plan (PIAP) seeks to provide ample opportunity for public comment regarding the identification and development of proposed improvements. The intention of this document is to establish a public involvement guideline that is dynamic in nature so that it can evolve as the project progresses, keep the public involved, and maintain broad-based support for the project with consideration for context sensitive design solutions.

B. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Bergen County/Essex County Kingsland Avenue (Avondale and De Jessa Memorial) Bridge is a critical transportation connection for the Township of Lyndhurst in Bergen County and Township of Nutley in Essex County serving local and regional transportation needs. The bridge provides access for vehicles, pedestrians and bicyclists and opens upon request for marine vessels. The movable swing span bridge is in overall serious condition and routine maintenance can no longer address its deficiencies.

Bergen County and Essex County are advancing the design for the replacement of the existing Kingsland Avenue (Avondale and De Jessa Memorial) Bridge over the Passaic River to address its structural deficiencies and maintain the important transportation connection for local residents and regional commuters in Bergen County and Essex County. Due to its age, the bridge has deteriorated over time and routine maintenance can no longer address the deficiencies.

A Local Concept Development (LCD) Study for major rehabilitation or replacement of the Kingsland Avenue Bridge was completed in 2020, using federal funding, through the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA), with Bergen County as the project sponsor and Essex County with shared jurisdiction. During this phase, a well-defined Purpose and Need Statement was developed, focusing on the need to improve safety and maintain the current crossing over the Passaic River. A number of conceptual alternatives were developed to meet the project goals and objectives.

In coordination with the NJTPA, the New Jersey Department of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration, local officials, community stakeholders, and permitting agencies, it was agreed, upon completion of an alternatives analysis, that the recommended Preliminary Preferred Alternative (PPA) to address the structural deficiencies is to replace the bridge with a new bridge structure. Resolutions of Support were passed by both the Township of Lyndhurst and Township of Nutley for the PPA. Improvements to the approach roadway intersections are also proposed in the vicinity of the bridge in Lyndhurst and in Nutley to better accommodate vehicular flow and mobility for pedestrians and bicyclists.

C. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS - OVERVIEW

Public involvement will be on-going throughout the four phases of the Local Capital Project Delivery process. The Public Involvement Action Plan (PIAP) is organized by project phase to allow integration of public involvement activities with the planning and engineering efforts of each phase. The PIAP will be amended as necessary to accommodate the outreach activities of each phase and will be implemented in such a manner as to present the public with one seamless process.

Local Concept Development (LCD) Phase. LCD denotes concept development by a local entity (MPO, county, municipality). The purpose of the Local Concept Development phase was to identify and compare reasonable alternatives and strategies that address a well-defined and well-justified Purpose and Need

Statement and to select a Preliminary Preferred Alternative (PPA). The PPA was selected based on several factors, including environmental impacts, constructability, cost effectiveness, and if the project could be constructed in a timely manner. The LCD phase involved data collection, government and community stakeholder coordination, and alternatives analysis. Along with the PPA, key products that were produced in this phase include the Purpose and Need Statement, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Classification, and the Local Concept Development Report.

The LCD phase for the Kingsland Avenue (Avondale and De Jessa Memorial) Bridge project was completed in 2020. A schedule of the public involvement activities conducted during the LCD study is provided in Section E.

Local Preliminary Engineering (LPE) Phase. The project is currently in the Local Preliminary Engineering phase. The LPE phase involves performing engineering and environmental tasks and documentation in order to obtain National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) clearance for the project. Based on the Preliminary Preferred Alternative (PPA), a number of activities are simultaneously set in motion: community involvement (meetings with affected property owners or business owners), agency consultation, environmental documentation, design level mapping and design services. To inform and to encourage community consensus, community stakeholder and Public Information Center meetings will be conducted, which may lead to minor refinements of the approach roadway intersections of the PPA. The Townships of Lyndhurst and Nutley will be asked to maintain the resolutions of support for the PPA and for any design refinements.

The tasks conducted during the LPE Phase consist of, but are not limited to:

- Technical Environmental Studies (including Section 106 and Section 4(f) Evaluation)
- NEPA Document (Categorical Exclusion)
- Development of preliminary engineering design plans
- Utility discovery and verification
- Geotechnical studies for pavement design
- Preliminary drainage work
- Structural studies that document the structural selection process and the recommended structure and aesthetic treatments
- Access and right of way impact evaluation
- Development of any needed Right of Way acquisition cost estimates and design and construction project cost estimates

Section E includes a schedule of anticipated LPE public involvement activities.

Final Design (FD) Phase. During this phase, the final design plans of the bridge replacement and approach roadway improvements will be completed. Public input received during the LCD and LPE phases is taken into consideration in developing proposed improvements defined by the PPA and contributed to the approved Purpose and Need Statement. With resolution of support by both Counties and municipalities and the footprint of the bridge replacement established, further design plan details are created such as signage, lighting, landscaping, and aesthetic treatments. Securing any needed Right-of-way (ROW) acquisitions, developing final traffic staging or detour plans, and securing all needed construction permits are also part of this phase.

Construction Phase. Notifying the public about traffic staging and potential detours anticipated during this phase will be important prior to the start of construction activity for the bridge replacement and approach roadway intersection improvements. Providing this information in a timely manner during the construction

phase will maintain a positive public perception and support for the project. There will be outreach meetings to inform local officials, community stakeholders and the public of anticipated construction activities and on-going information exchange during this phase via the project website.

D. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS STEPS

The following steps provide direction for community involvement and public outreach throughout all phases of the Local Capital Project Delivery process. These steps will occur in coordination with the other project activities. Specific outreach activities and dates are listed in Section E.

1. Project Team Status Meetings / Public Involvement Coordination

The public involvement strategy and community outreach will be an agenda item for discussion at Project Team status meetings. An overall strategy for the development and presentation of information to key local officials will be reviewed and steps to coordinate the public outreach efforts proposed for the LPE phase will be discussed. The public involvement agenda items include a brief status update, identification and discussion of any community issues, next steps for public involvement, action items, meeting formats and logistics.

The Project Team consists of the following agencies and representatives:

Bergen County Department of Planning & Engineering

Joseph A. Femia, P.E., Department Director / County Engineer
Joseph Baladi, P.E., P.P., CME, Division Head-Planning (Bergen County Project Manager)
Martin Maver, P.E., Principal Engineer-Bridges
Adam Camerlengo, Engineering Aide

Essex County Division of Engineering

Sanjeev Varghese, P.E., P.P., Public Works Director / County Engineer
Luis E. Rodriguez, Assistant County Engineer
Andres F. Gomez-Ortiz, P.E., Principal Engineer

New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)

Nabil Ayoub, Supervising Engineer, Local Aid District 2
Paul Miranda, Project Manager, Local Aid District 2
Sean Warren, Section Chief, Bureau of Environmental Program Resources
Sean Ream, Environmental Project Manager, Bureau of Environmental Program Resources

North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA)

Rich Brundage, NJTPA Project Manager

Hardesty & Hanover Team

Glen Schetelich, P.E., Principal in Charge, Hardesty & Hanover
Bruce Riegel, P.E., Project Manager, Hardesty & Hanover
Brian Medino, P.E., Deputy Project Manager, Hardesty & Hanover
Matt Witkowski, P.E., Traffic Engineer, Hardesty & Hanover
Sue Quackenbush, PWS, Environmental Specialist, Davey Resource Group
Lynn Alpert, Principal Senior Architectural Historian, Richard Grubb & Associates, Inc.
Martine Culbertson, Community Involvement Facilitator, M.A. Culbertson, LLC

2. Project Stakeholders Contact/Mailing Lists

A stakeholder is an individual or group with an interest or investment in this bridge replacement project. It is necessary to understand the interests and issues represented by each stakeholder and to determine that there is not high duplication of interests or any missing interests for inclusive representation. This is to ensure community balance, environmental justice and development toward broad-based support. Contact/ mailing lists of project stakeholders were developed during the Local Concept Development (LCD) Study and will be reviewed and maintained throughout each phase.

Project Stakeholders List

The project stakeholders list will be maintained in coordination with NJTPA, NJDOT, Bergen County and Essex County team members and with discussion and review by local officials from the Township of Lyndhurst and the Township of Nutley.

Stakeholders may be added throughout the project process as pertinent individuals become evident. Environmental and cultural resource agencies involved in the delivery process will be amended to the stakeholder list at the appropriate phase for those work activities as initiated in the transportation improvements development process. The stakeholders list includes representation from the following groups, local and regional organizations and agencies:

- Property owners, businesses, and residents within 500 feet of the project limits
- Hospitals and medical facilities that serve the area
- Public and private schools, school districts and colleges
- Environmental and historic preservation organizations
- Chambers of commerce, business organizations and businesses
- Interested groups in the area such as cycling, boating and rowing, religious, cultural and civic organizations
- Government officials and organizations
 - Bergen County Executive, Bergen County Board of County Commissioners, Department of Planning & Engineering, Office of Emergency Management, Sheriff's Office, Department of Parks
 - Essex County Executive, Essex County Board of County Commissioners, Department of Public Works, Office of Emergency Management, Sheriff's Office, Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs
 - Township of Lyndhurst Officials, Township Engineer, Police Department, Fire Department, Office of Emergency Management
 - Township of Nutley Officials, Township Engineer, Police Department, Fire Department, Office of Emergency Management
 - State Senate and Assembly Representatives, US Legislative Representatives
- Federal and State Agencies
 - US Federal Highway Administration, New Jersey Division
 - US Coast Guard, 1st District
 - US Army Corps of Engineers, New York District
 - NJ Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) Department of Land Resource Protection
 - NJDEP Green Acres Program
 - NJDEP Historic Preservation Office
 - NJDOT Bureau of Environmental Program Resources

- NJDOT Bureau of Safety, Bicycle & Pedestrian Programs
- NJDOT Local Aid District 2
- NJTPA Local Programs and Project Development
- NJ TRANSIT

Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice

Environmental Justice efforts must be integrated into the planning phase of transportation project development according to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice (EJ) in Minority Populations and Low- Income Populations in 1994. There are three fundamental principles to effective environmental practices:

- Avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority populations and low- income populations;
- Ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process; and
- Prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations.

Based upon a Community Profile assessment of the cultural and economic population residing in the area of the Kingsland Avenue Bridge over the Passaic River, and consistent with Environmental Justice guidance, notification of residents and consideration of potential property impacts within 500 feet of the Kingsland Avenue Bridge has been indicated.

Based upon the Demographic Profile of the area and consultation with Bergen and Essex County Project Managers and local officials, Public Information Center (PIC) meeting notifications will be done in Spanish as well as English. If needed to enhance outreach in compliance with EJ guidelines, paper flyer versions of the PIC notice may be distributed in the communities near the bridge area. Such locations for posting flyers include residential complexes, libraries, bus stops and local retail stores to supplement the public meeting legal postings, postal mailings, and website postings. The Project Team will continue to consult with the local officials to determine what additional efforts may be needed to address any potential concerns of Environmental Justice as the project progresses.

Community Input Survey

Issues assessment is an essential step in public involvement strategy, providing the means to identify and acknowledge issues relevant to all affected parties and identify stakeholders and their underlying interests. Issues identification prior to meetings allows for more effective planning to design the appropriate meeting format and agenda to accomplish the goals of the public outreach meetings and the overall project effort.

During the LCD Study, a community input survey was designed and distributed (via mail and email) to obtain initial input from community and agency stakeholders. A summary of survey results is posted on the project website (www.kingslandavenuebridge.com).

3. Conduct Local Officials Meetings

Key officials from both municipalities were invited to local officials meetings held during the LCD phase (see Section E for meeting dates). For the LPE phase, the first local officials meeting was to introduce the LPE Project Team, present the project status and LPE phase schedule, and to obtain input from officials on community interests or changes since the determination of the PPA at the end of the LCD phase.

All local officials meetings will be arranged via email with telephone follow-up calls made as necessary. Meetings may be held online via Microsoft Teams or other online engagement software or scheduled in-person as determined by the County Project Managers and local officials. The Project Team will provide an agenda and meeting facilitation. After the meeting, a meeting summary report with key action items will be provided to local officials for their internal use.

4. Facilitate Community Stakeholders Meeting

Community stakeholders meetings were held during the LCD phase as listed in Section E. For the LPE phase, a community stakeholders meeting will be held as requested by Bergen County and Essex County to introduce the LPE Project Team, present the project status, provide the LPE phase schedule, obtain input on community interests or changes since the approval of the PPA and discuss next steps. The project stakeholders list will be used to distribute meeting invitations via mail and email with follow up phone calls made as needed. Federal and State agencies involved in the transportation process may attend meetings and will be provided a meeting summary report. Meetings may be held online via public engagement software such as Microsoft Teams or scheduled in-person as determined by the County Project Managers in coordination with local officials.

The Project Team will provide an agenda and will create a presentation and other meeting materials appropriate for the meeting format (online or in person). In addition, the Community Involvement Facilitator will monitor the communication to ensure balanced participation and clear understanding of information by all participants and observers. The facilitator will record issues and provide a meeting summary report. The meeting summary report will be posted to the project website along with other project documents in order to share the information with those unable to attend online or in-person meetings and to maintain clear, concise, and consistent distribution of project information.

5. Conduct Public Information Center Meeting

The purpose of a Public Information Center (PIC) meeting is to present the current status and information about the project, to obtain feedback from the public and to present next steps. The Project Team will work with the Bergen County and Essex County Project Managers in creating the PIC notification for the meeting. The PIC meeting notice will be mailed and emailed to all contacts on the Project Stakeholders List and posted on the project website. In addition, the notice will be distributed to both Counties and local municipalities as a PDF file for posting to their websites. A legal posting in two local newspapers will also be implemented.

PIC meetings are conducted in an open house format when held in-person, with sign-in tables, handouts and display boards for the public to view. The alternative format is to conduct the PIC meeting online, whereby display materials are provided electronically for viewing or can be downloaded from the website to print. In either scenario, after Project Team introductions and opening remarks from the County Project Manager, a PowerPoint presentation will be conducted, followed by a Q&A session with support staff available to answer questions in the remaining meeting time. The Community Involvement Facilitator monitors the communication to ensure balanced participation and clear understanding of information by all participants and observers. A summary report of the PIC meeting noting the attendance, participation and key issues will be written and posted to the project website.

Written public comments are encouraged and may be submitted within the 30-day comment period after the PIC meeting has been held. Comments may be submitted via the Contact Us feature on project website, the project email address, or by mail to the Bergen County Project Manager. PIC Comment Forms will be mailed and emailed with the meeting notice and will be available as a printable PDF on the project website. Hard copy forms will be available if an in-person PIC meeting is held.

6. Maintain Project Website and Email Address

A project-specific website was created during the Local Concept Development phase. The website content and layout were updated for the LPE phase. The website stores and provides access to meeting reports and other project documents for community and agency stakeholders and the general public. Additional information, such as a project overview, FAQs (*Frequently Asked Questions*), maps, photos, and helpful links are also available. All materials and information associated with this project-specific website are reviewed and approved by the Project Team, Bergen County and Essex County.

For the LPE phase, a project-specific email address (kingslandavenuebridge@gmail.com) was created to obtain and track comments, questions and input from stakeholders and the general public. It is also possible to submit input via the project website's Contact Us page.

E. SCHEDULE OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT / COMMUNITY OUTREACH INITIATIVES

1. Local Concept Development (LCD) Phase

The public outreach efforts conducted during the LCD phase were as follows:

LCD INITIATIVES	DATE	PURPOSE
Project Team Status Meetings / Public Involvement Coordination	Spring 2016-Spring 2020 Bi-monthly status conference calls/sit-down meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present approach and updates • Discuss public involvement strategies • Review stakeholders and support status
Community Input Survey	August-November 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify stakeholders • Develop and maintain contact information for community stakeholders, local officials, and agencies • Identify issues/interests • Assess stakeholders
Local Officials (LO) Meetings	<u>LO Meeting No. 1</u> July 25, 2016 - Nutley July 27, 2016 - Lyndhurst <u>LO Meeting No. 2</u> October 29, 2019 Lyndhurst (10:30 a.m.) Nutley (1:00 p.m.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce project team • Present project status and schedule • Obtain input on community interests • Present project status and schedule • Review Alternatives Comparison Matrix • Discuss proposed Preliminary Preferred Alternative (PPA) • Prepare for Public Information Center (PIC) meetings

LCD INITIATIVES	DATE	PURPOSE
Community Stakeholders (CS) Meetings	<u>CS Meeting No. 1</u> September 29, 2016 <u>CS Meeting No. 2</u> April 26, 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce the project team • Present project status and schedule • Provide information on existing conditions & environmental screening • Share the Community Input Survey summary • Obtain input on community interests associated with the Kingsland Avenue bridge • Review project status • Present Purpose and Need Statement • Discuss conceptual alternatives for proposed improvements to the Kingsland Avenue bridge • Obtain community input on the benefits and impacts associated with each option
Public Information Center (PIC) Meetings	<u>PIC Meeting No. 1</u> October 17, 2016 Lyndhurst (2-4 p.m.) Nutley (6-8 p.m.) <u>PIC Meeting No. 2</u> December 12, 2019 Lyndhurst (2-4 p.m.) Nutley (6-8 p.m.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce the project team • Present project status and schedule • Obtain input from the general public regarding community issues and interests • Inform the public of the Purpose and Need Statement • Solicit public input and comment on the conceptual alternatives and the proposed PPA
Project Website	Summer 2016 (on-going)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft website outline, visual design, and content for review by Project Team • Release website upon approval prior to CS Meeting No. 1
Establish Twitter as social media application (meeting alerts and link to project website)	Summer 2016-Spring 2020 (Status Meetings Agenda Item – Twitter activity)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft social media plan and Twitter feed • Draft standard reply for issues received via Twitter to direct to website for written comments to be accepted as part of project record • Develop standard Twitter reply statements for project inquiries based on FAQ's • Establish protocol for unique Twitter comments to report to project team – unless urgent, review of Twitter activity part of status meetings

2. Local Preliminary Engineering (LPE) Phase

The public outreach efforts anticipated for the LPE phase are as follows:

LPE INITIATIVES	DATE	PURPOSE
Project Team Status Meetings / Public Involvement Coordination	Summer 2022 (on-going)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present approach and updates • Discuss public involvement strategies • Review stakeholders and support status
Local Officials (LO) Meetings	<u>LO Meeting No. 1</u> (online) Nutley & Lyndhurst September 13, 2022 <u>LO Meeting No. 2</u> Fall 2023/Winter 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce project team • Present project status and LPE schedule • Obtain input from officials on community interests or changes since determination of PPA for bridge replacement • Provide next steps • Present preliminary design plans, discuss project status and proposed schedule
Community Stakeholders (CS) Meetings	<u>CS Meeting</u> Spring 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce project team and LPE phase • Present project status and LPE schedule • Obtain input from stakeholders on community interests or changes since determination of PPA for bridge replacement • Provide next steps
Public Information Center (PIC) Meetings	<u>PIC Meeting</u> Fall 2023/Winter 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce project team and LPE phase • Present preliminary design plans, project status and proposed schedule • Obtain public input and comment on project preliminary design development
Project Website and Email Address	Website: on-going since Summer 2016; updated Fall 2022 Project Email Address: added Fall 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide project information and updates to stakeholders, officials and the general public • Announce public meetings and project milestones • Gather and track submissions (comments and questions) from stakeholders, officials and the general public

F. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT DELIVERABLES

Project Information Sheet. A project fact sheet or Project Information Sheet handout was prepared and distributed at the initial local officials, community stakeholders, and Public Information Center meetings during the Local Concept Development (LCD) Study. The Project Information Sheet will be updated as the project progresses to reflect the most up-to-date project information available during each phase of the project. Approval from the Project Team and project managers at Bergen County and Essex County is required before distribution or posting to the project website.

Project Portfolios. Project portfolios were created during the LCD phase and utilized to provide clear and consistent hard copy materials to Project Team members, local officials, stakeholders meeting participants and other key stakeholders. The materials included a list Project Team members with contact information, a map of project study area, project schedule, project information sheet, meeting agendas and meeting reports. For the LPE and future phases, the Project Portfolio documents are now available on the project

website and can be viewed and/or downloaded and printed. The files will be maintained and updated through each phase.

Display Boards. Display boards may be utilized at in-person public meetings. Depending on the phase of the project, displays may present project deficiencies summary, environmental constraints screening map, Purpose and Need, conceptual alternatives (including the PPA), proposed detour or traffic staging maps, preliminary and final design plans for the proposed improvements, any proposed Right of Way impacts, project aerials or renderings, final project configuration, or other project information. The display boards can be converted to PDF files for use in PowerPoint presentations and to post to the project website.

Comment Forms. Blank comment forms are provided in Public Information Center (PIC) notice mailings, at in-person PIC meetings, on the project website and at the local officials meetings so on-going public comment and input can be submitted through all phases of the project. Comments are shared with the Project Team and distributed to the Counties or municipalities as directed or requested. PIC comments can also be submitted online via the website or the project-specific email address.

Public Outreach Meeting Reports. For the local officials, community stakeholders and Public Information Center (PIC) meetings, summary meeting reports are drafted and circulated for review to the Project Team members. Upon approval from Bergen County and Essex County, the meeting reports are finalized as PDF files for the public outreach documentation. Summary meeting reports from Community Stakeholders Meetings and Public Information Center Meetings will be posted on the project website upon County approval.

PIC Mailing List. For each PIC meeting notification mailing, a PDF file containing the cover letter, PIC notice, comment form and mailing address labels is provided to the Counties and Project Team members for their records.

Meeting Notices. Meeting notices for public outreach meetings are distributed by mail, email and posted to the project website. Notices will also be sent to the County and municipalities in PDF format for inclusion on their websites and link to their social media postings.

Project Website and Email Address. Project information and images have been posted to a project-specific website, as approved by Bergen County, Essex County and the Project Team. The project-specific website was developed to enhance sharing of project information and to obtain input via online submissions. The website includes information such as a project overview, maps and plans, community outreach meeting information, meeting summary reports, a photo gallery, FAQs (*Frequently Asked Questions*), a glossary and helpful links. There is also a Contact Us page through which the public can submit general comments or questions or sign up for project updates.

All website content posted is approved prior by the Project Team and Counties. Google Translate is located in the upper right corner of each page to allow translation to any language. A project specific email address is used to track submissions and to respond to comments and questions received from officials, community stakeholders and the public.

The project website address is www.kingslandavenuebridge.com and the project email address is kingslandavenuebridge@gmail.com.