

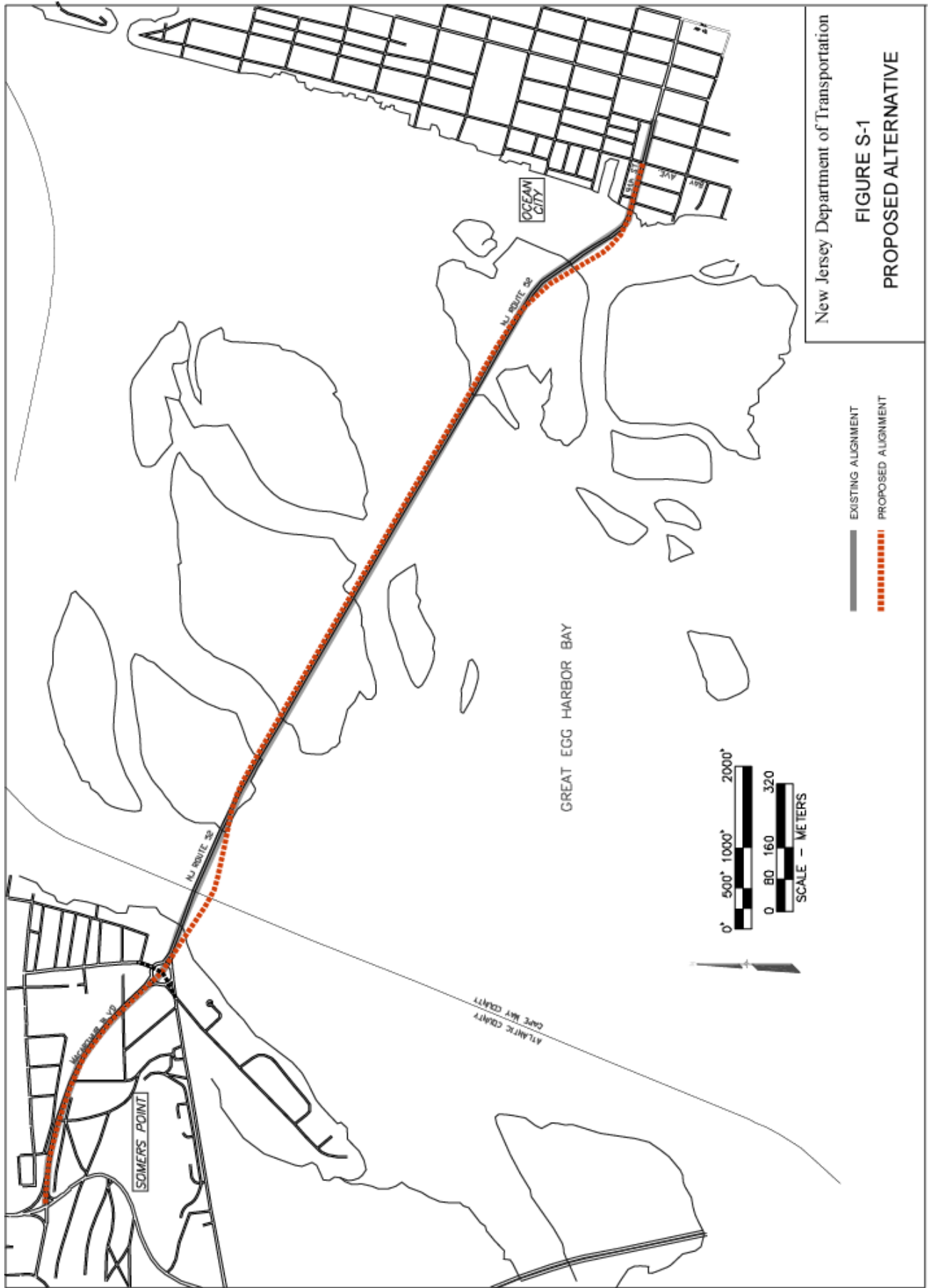
## **SUMMARY**

### **i. FHWA ACTION: THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE – ALTERNATIVE 9**

The Route 52 Reconstruction project is approximately 4.5 kilometers (2.8 miles) long from Route 9, in Somers Point, Atlantic County, to Bay Avenue in Ocean City, Cape May County NJ. The section of Route 52 between Route 9 and the existing traffic circle in Somers Point is approximately 1.0 kilometer (0.6 miles) long. The causeway between the existing traffic circle in Somers Point and Ocean City, crossing Great Egg Harbor Bay, is approximately 3.5 km (2.2 miles) in length. (See Figure S-1). The Preferred Alternative (Alternative 9) is on an alignment located approximately 10 meters (33 feet) east of the existing alignment and is comprised of 2 high fixed bridges, both with a proposed 16.8 meter (55 feet) vertical clearance over the relocated Intracoastal Waterway (ICWW) at Beach Thorofare and the Ship Channel near Somers Point. The causeway will be comprised of two 3.6-meter (12.0-foot) wide lanes in each direction, separated by a 1.5-meter (5-foot) inside shoulder on either side of a center median, a 3.0-meter (10-foot) bicycle-compatible outside shoulder on each side and a continuous 1.8-meter (6.0-foot) sidewalk on the northbound side of the structure. In Somers Point the existing traffic circle is proposed to be replaced with a 4-leg signalized intersection with turning lanes. MacArthur Boulevard would be widened from two lanes to five lanes (two lanes in each direction and a center turn lane) between the Somers Point Circle and Braddock Avenue and from two lanes to three lanes (one lane in each direction and a center turn lane) between Braddock Avenue and Route 9.

### **ii. OTHER MAJOR GOVERNMENTAL ACTIONS**

No other major action is proposed by any other governmental agency in this general geographic area.



New Jersey Department of Transportation

**FIGURE S-1**  
**PROPOSED ALTERNATIVE**

### **iii. SUMMARY OF ALTERNATIVES**

#### **iii.1 Conceptual Alternatives Evaluated**

The following eleven alternatives, ten build alternatives plus the No Build alternative and five variations were proposed and examined:

- 1) Causeway on embankment, offset to the east side, with one high level fixed bridge over a relocated ICWW / Ship Channel through Rainbow Channel.
- 2) Causeway on continuous structure, offset to the west side, with one high level fixed bridge over a relocated ICWW / Ship Channel through Rainbow Channel.
- 3) Causeway on embankment, offset to the east side, with slightly raised bascule bridges at both existing channels.
- 4) Causeway on continuous structure, offset to the west side, with slightly raised bascule bridges at both existing channels.
- 5) Continuous structure offset to the west side of the causeway, with moderately high bascule bridges over slightly realigned channels. Variations 5A, 5B, and 5C were also examined.
  - 5A) The channels are realigned further from the shore, through tidal wetlands in the case of the ICWW, to provide sufficient space to raise the bascule bridges to a height where the required openings are reduced to only 7% of the present number of openings.
  - 5B) The ICWW is realigned without impacting tidal wetlands, but the profile is raised sufficiently to reduce the openings to only 7% of the present number. This creates minor property impacts on 9<sup>th</sup> Street in Ocean City. Ship Channel is realigned sufficiently to permit a high fixed bridge.
  - 5C) Both the ICWW and Ship Channel are realigned to permit high fixed bridges. The approach profiles are increased from 4% to 5% to limit the property impacts.
- 6) Causeway rehabilitated in place on the existing alignment, with the four existing bridges replaced-in-kind.
- 7) Continuous structure on relocated alignment distantly offset to the west, with high-level fixed bridges over existing channels.

- 8) Causeway on continuous structure, offset to the west side, with high level fixed bridges over existing channels.
- 9) High fixed bridges over slightly realigned channels with three intermediate causeway options on the island between Elbow Thorofare and Rainbow Channel: 1) all structure, 2) embankment with edge walls, and 3) embankment with side slopes.
  - 9A) High fixed bridge over realigned Ship Channel and high bascule bridge over the existing ICWW channel with the same options for the intermediate causeway.
- 10) Tunnel between the Somers Point traffic circle and 9<sup>th</sup> Street north of West Avenue.
- 11) No Build.

### **iii.2 Rejected Alternatives**

Of the ten Build Alternatives (some with variations) that were initially developed and analyzed, Alternatives 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 and 10 either did not meet the purpose and need criteria, or would result in extensive social, economic or environmental impacts, and therefore were removed from further evaluation during the initial screening process.

### **iii.3 Alternatives Selected For Detailed Analysis**

Five alternatives, 5A, 5B, 5C, 9 and 9A with 3 variations were considered for additional detailed environmental evaluation in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). During this study, it was found that Alternatives 5A, 5B and 5C had greater impact on wetlands, public open space and other environmental areas as compared to Alternatives 9 and 9A.

Both Alternatives 9 and 9A were evaluated for three causeway options on the island between Elbow Thorofare and Rainbow Channel. Under the first option, the causeway would be completely on structure. Under the second option, the causeway would be on embankment bordered by edge walls. Under the third option, the causeway would be on embankment with side slopes down to existing grade. The causeway option completely on structure would result in the least wetland impact and the shortest construction time. Since Alternative 9 proposes dredging in the ICWW, concerns have been raised regarding the impact of dredging on the channel bottom (benthic) habitat. Studies performed indicated that this impact would be

minimal and temporary. In addition, compared to Alternative 9, Alternative 9A would result in a higher construction cost, increased permanent impacts to open waters and benthic habitat and higher impact to traffic (particularly during peak summer travel days). Therefore Alternative 9 option 1 (causeway on continuous elevated structure) was selected as the Preferred Alternative since it fully met the purpose and needs for this project with minimal environmental impacts.

The project also includes the conversion of the Somers Point traffic circle into a 4-legged signalized intersection with turn lanes in order to improve traffic operations and increase safety. In addition Mac Arthur Boulevard will be widened from two lanes to five lanes (two lanes in each direction and a center turn lane) between the Somers Point Circle and Braddock Avenue and from two lanes to three lanes (one lane in each direction and a center turn lane) between Braddock Avenue and Route 9.

#### **iv. SUMMARY OF BENEFICIAL AND ADVERSE IMPACTS OF THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE**

Route 52 is a designated emergency evacuation route and a part of the Coastal Evacuation System, as well as an Urban Principal Arterial in the National Highway System. The Preferred Alternative will maintain and improve this important roadway, satisfying the purpose and needs of this action, as described subsequently in this document.

Alternative 9 is proposed to be built over the existing causeway embankment, thereby avoiding extensive impacts on tidal wetlands and public open space, and retaining fairly easy access to the tidal wetland islands for recreational fishing. However, this alternative suffers from the following adverse impacts:

- Some of Ocean City's open space inventory has to be acquired for right-of-way.
- One or more business displacements and proximity impacts to several businesses will occur in Somers Point and Ocean City.
- There will be the loss of the historic World War Memorial Bridge.
- It requires the realignment of Ship Channel, and requires dredging to realign the channel in the ICWW.

- The views from two (2) historic architectural sites eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places will be affected by the project's higher profile across the causeway.
- There will be some filling of wetlands and pile installation in wetlands.
- There will be some shading of tidal wetland grasses.
- There will be some reduction in access for fishermen and other recreational users.
- Soil erosion and siltation in sensitive environments may occur during construction
- It will have a temporary impact on shellfish, migratory pathways and wintering areas.
- There will be a permanent loss of some parking spaces along MacArthur Boulevard.

#### **v. AREAS OF CONTROVERSY**

Upon review of the DEIS, some agencies expressed an opinion that Alternative 9A should be proposed as the Preferred Alternative. After additional studies and coordination with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACOE) and other agencies, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) concluded that Alternative 9 remains as the Preferred Alternative for the reasons stated in iii-3 above.

#### **vi. OTHER UNRESOLVED ISSUES**

All comments and issues that have been raised by the public, the cooperating agencies and other government agencies have been addressed and incorporated into this document. There are no significant unresolved and outstanding issues.

#### **vii. FEDERAL AND STATE ACTIONS REQUIRED FOR THIS PROJECT**

The following Federal and State actions are required to implement this project:

1. Compliance with Federal Executive Order 11988, Floodplain Management;
2. Compliance with Federal Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands;
3. Section 106 Coordination, pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act;
4. U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), Section 4(f) Determination;

5. U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), Section 9 Permit;
6. USACOE, Section 404 and Section 10 Permits;
7. Compliance with new planning regulations issued under the 1991 Intermodal Transportation Efficiency Act (1991); namely, USDOT's Statewide Planning; Metropolitan Planning Final Rules (23 CFR Part 450/49 CFR Part 613);
8. NJ Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), Water Quality Certificate;
9. NJDEP, CAFRA Permit;
10. NJDEP, Waterfront Development Permit;
11. Compliance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. P.L. 94-265, as amended in 1996
12. Compliance with the Endangered Species Act of 1973.
13. NJDEP, Tidal Wetland Permit; and
14. NJDEP, Tidelands Grant.

The USACOE, the USCG, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) have agreed to be Cooperating Agencies for this project. Cooperating Agencies have jurisdiction by law or special expertise in specific environmental issues to be addressed in an environmental impact statement (EIS), and as such provide information and environmental analysis at the early stages of EIS development. This insures compliance with all procedures involving those agencies and avoids unnecessary duplication of effort.