

7.0 COORDINATION AND COMMENTS

The following is a chronology of public involvement undertaken by the NJDOT for the proposed project. Section 7.1 summarizes key issues derived from public involvement which have influenced the project design.

December 1986 The need for improvements to Route U.S. 1 in the Penns Neck area was identified by the *Route U.S. 1 Corridor Transportation Study*, (Final Report, December 1986). The study encompassed a 19 mile stretch of the Route U.S. 1 corridor extending from Trenton to New Brunswick. The primary study area included seven municipalities (Lawrence, West Windsor, Princeton Boro, Princeton Township in Mercer County, and Plainsboro, South Brunswick and North Brunswick in Middlesex County). The study found that the first priority for the NJDOT should be to provide grade separations at major regional cross streets.

The roadways identified were:

- Quaker Bridge Road
- Ridge Road
- Alexander Road
- Route 571 (Washington Road/Princeton-Hightstown Road)
- Scudders Mill Road
- Route 130
- Livingston Avenue (already grade separated)

The study also identified the need to widen Route U.S. 1 to three lanes and a shoulder in each direction. It also noted that bypassing existing settlements and new arterial roads may be required.

The NJDOT began holding informal meetings with local officials and members of the community in the 1980=s.

November 4, 1987 A Consensus Report from West Windsor Township was prepared regarding specific improvements along the stretch of Route U.S. 1 in West Windsor (including Alexander Rd, Penns Neck and Meadow Road). The report was the result of several meetings with representatives of West Windsor Twp., Princeton Twp., Princeton Boro, Plainsboro Twp., Princeton University, and the Sarnoff Center. The report opposed NJDOT conceptual Schemes A, C and F. The report stated AA bypass to Rt. 571 should follow an alignment that, to the extent feasible, parallels the Millstone River. With proper design, environmental constraints encountered on portions of this alignment can be overcome.≡ The report identified two concept plans for improvements at Meadow Road, Alexander Road and through Penns Neck. Concept 1 was noted as the preferred alternative. The alignment for a Rt. 571/Washington Road Bypass (Concept 1) was subsequently adopted by NJDOT as the preferred alternative, Scheme D-1.1C, with minor modifications.

March 1991 The EA for Route U.S. 1 from Quaker Bridge Road to North of Sayre Drive evaluated the proposed actions:

- Route U.S. 1 widening from Quakerbridge Road to Alexander Road.
- Alexander Road Interchange.
- TSM/Interim Improvements from Alexander Road to Princeton-Plainsboro Road.
- Dinky Railroad Bridge Replacement.
- Scudders Mill Road Interchange.
- Long-term improvements in the Penns Neck Area. B realigning Route U.S. 1 from the Dinky Bridge to north of Fisher Place, and construction of a grade separated interchange north of Washington Road.

The NJDOT developed and began presenting potential alignment schemes to local officials in 1994. The schemes were presented to local officials of the Princetons, West Windsor Township, Plainsboro Township and Mercer County. The property owners directly affected by the proposed alignments, Princeton University, the David Sarnoff Research Center and the D & R Canal Commission were also asked for their input. The Princeton Regional Planning Board and the NJDEP were also contacted for their input. These meetings resulted in the choice of a preferred scheme.

August 24, 1994	Princeton University/Forrestal Center - Scheme D-1 with modifications was chosen as the preferred alternative from the University=s standpoint.
September 15, 1994	David Sarnoff Research Center - Scheme D-1 considered least favorite choice in its interchange form.
September 15, 1994	West Windsor Township - Scheme D-1 was adopted as part of the Township=s Circulation Plan in 1993.
September 23, 1994	Mercer County - Scheme D-1 preferred; vacating existing Washington Road on west side of Route U.S. 1 to Princeton University can be accomplished.
November 30, 1994	PSE&G, Princeton University, Princeton Forrestal Center
November 9, 1994	Councilwoman Rae Roeder, West Windsor Township - Scheme D-1 chosen as the preferred alternative.
November 9, 1994	Princeton Regional Planning Board, Princeton University
October 19, 1994	D&R Canal Commission - Scheme D-1 chosen as preferred alternative.
October 18, 1994	NJDEP - The scheme with the least impacts to Little Bear Brook is preferable.

October 18, 1994 Borough of Princeton, Princeton Township, Princeton University, Forrestal Center - Scheme D-1 is preferred. Mayor Reed supports vacating Washington Road west of Route U.S. 1 as a county road.

September 29, 1994 D&R Canal Commission, Princeton University, Forrestal Center - Schemes C and D-1 pose least risk to the canal.

October 19, 1994 D&R Canal Commission, Princeton University - Scheme D-1 chosen as preferred scheme.

Preliminary design was begun on the preferred alternative, Scheme D-1.1C, in September 1995.

October 5, 1995 Sarnoff Center - Scheme D-1.1C discussed.

October 23, 1995 Sarnoff Center follow up meeting.

November 15, 1995 Princeton University, Sarnoff Center - Scheme D-1.1C chosen as preferred scheme.

December 15, 1995 Princeton University, Eden Institute, Sarnoff - Scheme D-1.1C supported.

February 7, 1996 Princeton University, Mayor Frascella, West Windsor Township, Carnegie Center - Scheme D-1.1C supported.

March 26, 1996 West Windsor - Mayor Frascella, Township Planner, Members of the Business Community

April 9, 1996 Lower Fisher Place Community Group - Opposed to portion of project that comes closest to their neighborhood.

May 20, 1996 Follow-up w/Lower Fisher Place Community Group - Still opposed to portion of project that comes closest to their neighborhood.

June 13, 1996 Mayor Reed, Princeton Borough - Supports the project, especially connection to Harrison Street and Washington west of Route U.S. 1.

June 14, 1996 Robert Kiser, Princeton Twp. Engineer - Discussed possible design revisions to minimize the number of trees affected at the connection to Washington Road west of Route U.S. 1.

June 17, 1996 Sarnoff Center, Walter Schmidlin - Discussed landscaping through their property and an additional driveway connecting to Relocated Route 571.

June 26, 1996	Princeton University, Gene McPartland - Discussed landscaping through the University property. The University is adamant about closing Washington Road to Route U.S. 1 southbound.
July 25, 1996	Princeton Regional Planning Board - Presentation of preferred alternative.
September 6, 1996	Meeting with Alan Goodheart representing the Sensible Transportation Options Partnership.
September 10, 1996	Public Information Center
October 2, 1996	Meeting with Plainsboro Township Engineer to discuss the project. Township Engineer expressed general support for the project.
November 7, 1996	Attended Princeton Regional Planning Board Meeting and gave project update.
April 9, 1997	Meeting with NJHPO
June, 16, 17, 19, 1997	DVRPC Public Hearings on TIP Amendments - presented project
6/24/97 to 2/10/98	CMS Committee Meetings
November 5, 1997	CMS Public Meeting - DVRPC & NJDOT
February 26, 1998	DVRPC Board Meeting
March 3, 1998	DVRPC RTC Meeting
March 10, 1998	DVRPC Citizens Committee Meeting
March 26, 1998	DVRPC Board Meeting - CMS approved
June 1998	The lawsuit with West Windsor Township over the Hightstown Bypass ended. The DAG advised that the Traffic Impact Report for this project could be circulated. Copies were sent to the municipalities and counties for their information.
June 1, 1998	Presentation to the West Windsor Town Council B NJDOT is considering advancing the Route U.S. 1 improvements ahead of the Route 571 improvements. This would allow the replacement of the Route U.S. 1 bridge over the Millstone River, the removal of the signals and the widening of Route U.S. 1. As these improvements were being implemented NJDOT could continue to work with local officials to seek consensus on the alignment of Relocated Route 571. West Windsor, Plainsboro, Mercer County, Princeton Borough and Township, adamantly opposed this option.

July 7, 1998 Met with Assemblyman Gusciora to discuss the project. The Assemblyman expressed his desire to help gain consensus on an alignment for Relocated Route 571.

July 21, 1998 Met with NJHPO and FHWA to discuss eligibility determinations for the potentially historic properties within the area of potential effect.

August 1998 Public Forum canceled so as not to interfere with meetings being set up by Assemblyman Gusciora.

August 5, 1998 Meeting held by Assemblyman Gusciora with local officials, the county and other stakeholders, to discuss the project and work towards consensus on an alignment for Relocated Route 571. NJDOT did not attend in order to give Mercer County the opportunity to take the lead since Relocated Route 571 would be a county road.

November 12, 1998 In response to criticism on the segment of Relocated Route 571 in the vicinity of the D&R Canal, an alternate alignment - Scheme D1.1D was developed. Scheme D1.1D was presented to local officials, Mercer County, the D&R Canal Commission, STOP and the Washington Road Preservation Trust, FHWA, MSM, Princeton University, Assemblyman Gusciora, the Sarnoff Center and the Eden Institute. Option D1.1D would remove the segment of Relocated Route 571 in the vicinity of the Canal and use Faculty Road, in Princeton, to distribute traffic between Harrison Street and Washington Road. The Princetons expressed concerns about this alternative because it would put additional traffic on Faculty Road. The D&R Canal Commission expressed its support for this alternative because it removed Relocated Route 571 that would parallel the Canal. Assemblyman Gusciora convened the meeting.

January 15, 1999 Copies of the traffic analysis for Scheme D1.1D sent to Assemblyman Gusciora for distribution.

February 10, 1999 Letter to Assemblyman Gusciora explaining that depressing Route U.S. 1 under Washington Road is not a feasible or prudent option.

March 16, 1999 Meeting with local officials, Mercer County, FHWA, MSM, STOP, Washington Road Elms Preservation Trust, Princeton University, Sarnoff Center, and the Eden Institute convened by Assemblyman Gusciora. The Princetons rejected Scheme D1.1D. NJDOT agreed to leave Washington Road open at Route U.S. 1. The Princetons requested that Relocated Route 571 west of Route U.S. 1 be extended to Alexander Road as part of the original Scheme D-1.1C.

March 25, 1999 Meeting with the D&R Canal Commission and Princeton University to discuss the Canal Commission=s comments on the alignment.

April 9, 1999 Met with Mercer County to discuss the Canal Commission=s concerns on the alignment.

April 12, 1999 Met with the D&R Canal and Mercer County. The County agreed to reduce the design speed of Relocated Route 571 west of Route U.S. 1 and also to reduce the width of the shoulder from 10ft to 8ft. The County and NJDOT agreed to move the intersection of Relocated Route 571 and Washington Road further from the Canal at Commission=s request. The Canal Commission rejected any consideration of extending Relocated Route 571 to Alexander Road in proximity to the Canal.

April 28, 1998 Met with the FHWA to discuss the status of the project.

May 7, 1999 Met with Princeton University and Mercer County to present revised alignments moving Relocated Route 571 further from the Canal. The County and University rejected an alignment placing Relocated Route 571 on the easternmost half of the University=s property. Each agreed to the alignment shifting Relocated Route 571 further from the Canal but keeping it on the westernmost portion of the University=s property.

May 27, 1999 Meeting with local officials, Mercer County, FHWA, D&R Canal Commission, Assemblyman Gusciora, STOP and the Washington Road Elms Preservation Trust, Princeton University, Sarnoff, Eden Institute. Presented the revised alignment moving Relocated Route 571 further from the Canal. West Windsor and Mercer County rejected an alignment moving Relocated Route 571 in proximity to Route U.S. 1. NJDOT again rejected the request to depress Route U.S. 1 under Washington Road. Mercer County, West Windsor, Princeton University, the Eden Institute, the Sarnoff Center and MSM stated their support of the project and the revised alignment. This meeting was also open to the public by Assemblyman Gusciora.

NJDOT stated their intention to advance the revised alignment based on the support of the host communities and the entities directly impacted by the project.

June 16, 1999 At the request of the Canal Commission, NJDOT presented the revised alignment at their Board Meeting. The Board refrained from endorsing the alignment until they have the opportunity to review the EA/4(f).

June 22, 1999	Meeting with Princeton Officials to discuss their request to construct Relocated Route 571 as a frontage road along Rt.1, depressing Route U.S. 1 at Washington Road, and extending Relocated Route 571 to Alexander Road west of Route U.S. 1.
July 6, 1999	Attended DVRPC Technical Committee Meeting. The committee recommended including funding for the project in the TIP.
July 8, 1999	Attended DVRPC Citizens Steering Committee Meeting. The committee abstained from voting on the project because one of its members was not present.
July 13, 1999	Attended DVRPC Citizens Committee Meeting. The committee recommended not including funding for the project in the TIP.
July 22, 1999	Attended DVRPC Board Meeting. Local officials, Mercer County, Princeton University and MSM spoke before the Board. The Board voted to include funding for the project in the TIP. A community involvement program was initiated early in the design phase of the project to assist in the identification of reasonable alternatives, the evaluation of social, economic, and environmental impacts of the proposed action, and the development of measures to mitigate adverse impacts which may result from the project. Various organizations possess a vested interest in the Penns Neck area. The key to obtaining project support and consensus is open communication with interested entities.

This EA/4(f) will be submitted to Mercer County, Middlesex County, and the Townships of West Windsor and Plainsboro for review and comment. This EA/4(f) will also be made available for public review at each of the Township=s municipal buildings and libraries. A Notice of Availability will be placed in the local newspapers by NJDOT=s Office of Community Involvement. Soon after circulation of this EA/4(f), a public hearing will be held to ascertain both public and private agency concerns regarding the elements of the proposed action.

7.1 Key Issues

Key issues raised during the public involvement process that affected the design and selection of the preferred alternative are identified below.

1. Route U.S. 1 widening should occur to the west to avoid impacts to the historic Princeton Baptist Church and the Penns Neck community on the east side of Route U.S. 1;
2. Through traffic using Washington Road (Route 571) and Harrison Street should be diverted from these local roadways through the construction of a bypass road;
3. The alignment of Relocated Route 571 should be located so as to minimize impacts to residential areas (Penns Neck community and Harrison Street);

4. The Relocated Route 571 alignment should be located so as to maintain the largest contiguous land area for Princeton University's future development plan; the design should minimize frontage takings along Route U.S. 1;
5. The Relocated Route 571 alignment should be located so as to maintain usable land parcels for the David Sarnoff Research Center while minimizing impacts to the facility's campus-like setting; the design should minimize frontage takings along Route U.S. 1;
6. Relocated Route 571 should maintain connections to both Washington Road and Harrison Street, key access ways to Princeton Borough;
7. Relocated Route 571 should improve access to and from the Princeton train station as well as maintain access to Washington Road;
8. The Route U.S. 1/Relocated Route 571 interchange should provide for all turning movements that would be eliminated with the removal of traffic signals in the project area;

9. Relocated Route 571 should minimize floodplain and wetland impacts by location of alignment crossing where these areas are smallest;
10. Relocated Route 571 should be located so as to provide an adequate distance buffer from the D&R Canal Park;
11. The Harrison Street connector road should be designed to replace existing poor roadway curvature and sight distance east of the bridge over the D&R Canal; and,
12. The Millstone River bridge reconstruction should maintain the same area of under clearance so as not to alter the rate or volume of river flow under the structure.

Each of these key issues was taken into consideration and worked into the design of the preferred alternative. While the rejected alternatives (with the exception of No-Build) incorporated elements to address some of the concerns, only the preferred alternative incorporates each concern to the maximum extent practicable.