

# ONLINE PUBLIC INFORMATION CENTER TRANSCRIPT

## Route 3 and 495 Interchange

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### **Slide 1 – Title Slide**

Welcome to the online Public Information Center for the Route 3 and 495 Interchange project. The overall purpose of this project is to enhance safety and improve operations at the interchange. This Public Information Center is intended to share the progress to date on this project, which is currently nearing the end of the Concept Development phase, and to solicit feedback from the public in order to enhance the project as it progresses through NJDOT's Project Delivery Process.

### **Slide 2 – Presentation Overview**

This presentation will begin with a discussion of the project's Purpose and Need, existing conditions and the proposed improvements and how they will enhance the quality of life for the affected public and stakeholders. Then we will present a brief overview of the project delivery process and schedule. Lastly, we will share information on how you – the public – can provide us with your valuable feedback.

### **Slide 3 – Project Location**

The Route 3 and 495 Interchange Project is located in North Bergen Township, Hudson County. The project limits extend along Route 495 from the NJ Turnpike to the Route 495 Viaduct, which eventually leads to the Lincoln Tunnel. This project also extends along Route 3 from Paterson Plank Road to the structure carrying Route 3 over the New York and Susquehanna Railroad. The study area primarily includes commercial facilities to the north and east and vegetated areas to the south. Of additional note is the NJ Transit park and ride located north and south of the interchange and underneath the Viaduct.

### **Slide 4 – Purpose and Need**

The overall purpose of this project is to enhance safety and improve operations at the interchange of Route 3 and 495. The project also consists of rehabilitation or replacement of Structure No. 0916-150, which carries Route 495 eastbound and Ramps B and J over Route 3; deck replacement for Structure No. 0908-152, which carries Route 3 eastbound and the South Service Road over Ramp J; and safety and operational improvements to interchange ramps (to be referred to as Ramps A, B, C, D, F, G, H, J, and U).

### **Slide 5 – Existing Conditions (Overview)**

Routes 3 and 495 within the project limits are divided four- to six-lane urban principal arterial freeway/expressways with a posted speed limit of 50 mph. Route 3 eastbound and westbound are separated by a concrete median barrier while the adjoining service roads are separated from the Route 3 mainline by an approximately 10-foot wide grass median. Route 495 eastbound and westbound are separated by a concrete median barrier. Routes 3 and 495 form an interchange east of the NJ Turnpike with access to/from the Turnpike, Lincoln Tunnel, Routes 1&9 and various local routes.

Of note for this interchange is the interagency jurisdictional mix of the mainlines and ramps. PANYNJ jurisdiction extends throughout the Route 495 corridor, such as the contra-flow Exclusive Bus Lane (XBL) and Lincoln Tunnel. NJ Turnpike Authority (NJTA) jurisdiction also extends through a portion of the Route 495 corridor and along 3 interchange ramps. PANYNJ leases the land underneath the Route 495 viaduct to NJ Transit for the existing Park and Ride. The interchange also lies within the Hackensack Meadowlands District and therefore is under the zoning jurisdiction of the NJ Sports and Exhibition Authority (NJSEA), formerly the NJ Meadowlands Commission (NJMC).

### **Slide 6 – Existing Conditions (Roadway/Bridge)**

Both roadways have several substandard conditions, including Stopping Sight Distance on vertical curves, Stopping Sight Distance on horizontal curves, Acceleration/deceleration lane lengths (to/from ramps), Minimum radius of curves (mainline and ramps), and Inside and outside shoulder widths. While these design elements are considered substandard because they do not meet the established design criteria, it does not imply that the existing roadway geometry is unsafe (nominal versus substantive safety).

Route 495 Structure No. 0916-150 and Route 3 Structure No. 0908-152 are ranked 1 on the Bridge Management System (BMS) on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being the highest priority. They are both structurally deficient and functionally obsolete with sufficiency ratings below 50. It should be noted that the fact that a bridge is "structurally deficient" does not imply that it is likely to collapse or that it is unsafe. It means the bridge must be monitored, inspected, and maintained and possibly rehabilitated or replaced.

### **Slide 7 – Existing Conditions (Safety/Operations)**

Based on crash data from January 2013 through December 2015. The most prevalent type of crash along the roadway was same direction rear end and sideswipe type crashes. Overrepresentations also included fixed object, wet or icy surface and non-daylight hours. (Of note, tower lighting along with other lighting improvements was added throughout the interchange subsequent to the crash analysis.) The actual crash rates along each segment of Routes 3 and 495 were below the 2015 statewide average.

Route 3 and Route 495 have an overall score of “med-high” and “high”, respectively, on the NJDOT Congestion Management System (CMS). Route 3 is considered “moderately congested” while Route 495 is considered “very congested”. Both sections are on corridors listed on Congested Commuter Corridors on State Highways. The existing Level of Service (LOS), or how well a facility is operating, is generally ranges from C to F in the AM and PM peak hours. For context, LOS A indicates the least amount of delay or best operations, while LOS F indicates the most amount of delay or worst operations. Additionally, delays on Route 495 further east can exacerbate the problem.

### **Slide 8 – Existing Conditions (Environmental Constraints)**

The study area is located within the Hackensack Meadowlands District. Wetlands were identified southwest of the project limits. The Penhorn Creek Tributary and Cromakill Creek are very close to the project. Both streams are classified as freshwater, non-trout, saline estuarine (FW2-NT/SE2) in NJ’s surface water quality standards and have tidal flows. No endangered species, no wildlife refuges, and no fish hatcheries are expected to occur at the project location. 30 migratory bird species of conservation concern may be found at the project location. The anticipated National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document for this project is a Categorical Exclusion Document (CED).

### **Slide 9-13 – Preliminary Preferred Alternative**

*In general, all alternatives evaluated during Concept Development included reducing the number of conflict points, improving driver expectancy, replacement of the structures within the project limits, and SWM compliance. Objectives included eliminating left hand exits and entrances, minimize weaving, prioritize route continuity over traffic patterns and provide lane balance, where feasible.*

The PPA proposes to realign the Route 3 and Route 495 eastbound mainlines along their westbound counterparts. The left-hand exit of Ramp J and circuitous right-hand continuation of Route 3 eastbound will be switched, providing a two-lane continuation of Route 3 parallel to the existing Route 3 westbound alignment and aligning Ramp J as a right-hand exit. Access to Ramp B will be provided via a weaving

section with South Service Road traffic under the Route 495 and Ramp J overpasses. Route 495 eastbound will be divided from the NJ Turnpike (NJTP) into local and express roadways. The existing ramp from NJTP northbound to Route 495 eastbound will be reduced to one lane and used to access the express roadway. A new ramp will be constructed south of the NJTP southbound ramp to connect the NJTP northbound ramp to the local roadway. The existing ramp from NJTP southbound to Route 495 eastbound will divide to local and express roadways near its current merge point with the NJTP northbound ramp. The express roadway will continue east tangent to the westbound alignment and tie into the left-most lane of the viaduct. All lanes will merge into the 4 existing eastbound lanes on the Route 495 Viaduct. The express roadway will serve points east of the Route 495 Viaduct, such as the Lincoln Tunnel. The local roadway will serve points immediately east of the interchange, such as 30th Street, JFK Boulevard, Paterson Plank Road, etc. Route 495 westbound will also be widened to provide a 3 and 4 lane section west of Ramps D and C, respectively.

Ramp C will be replaced with a standard loop ramp carried over ramp D and the existing NJ Transit Park and Ride lot via a 6-span structure. Ramps B, H and J will be realigned to accommodate the eastbound local and express roadways. Ramp H will be widened to provide a two-lane exit with lane balance from the local roadway. Ramp J, which will remain as two lanes, will be widened to provide a standard outside shoulder and will tie into the viaduct in the middle-left and middle-right lanes between the local and express roadways from the NJTP. Ramp G will also be realigned as Route 495 eastbound local and merge with Ramp B on a replaced structure over Route 3 before tying into the viaduct in the right-most lane. The Route 3 South Service Road (SSR) ramp will be reduced to one lane and the structure carrying the same over Ramp J will be replaced. No significant improvements are anticipated for Ramps A or U.

A 2-lane exit will be provided at the exit to 30th Street/Columbia Avenue and JFK Boulevard with a decision lane to either the ramp or to continue on Route 495 eastbound. Columbia Avenue will be widened and reconfigured at its intersection with Paterson Plank Road to improve operations. The PPA also includes replacement of Structure Nos. 0916-150, 0908-152, E112.58B and E112.58C; construction of 2 new bridges for Rt 495 eastbound over Ramp J and Route 3; and construction of a new bridge to carry Ramp C over Ramp D. In addition, new overhead and cantilever sign structures will be constructed for the interchange reconfiguration.

The proposed Level of Service (LOS), or how well a facility is operating, is generally ranges from B to D in the AM and PM peak hours. An analysis of weaving operations indicates that they improve in the PPA from the no-build condition. Similarly, merge conditions from ramps also improves, with the exception of Ramp C, which remains unchanged from the no-build condition.

#### **Slide 14 – Travel Times**

This table presents the average travel time (min) estimated by a travel demand simulation model for various paths through the interchange during the AM and PM peak hours. The table compares estimated travel times between the Future No Build and PPA Build (year 2043). Average travel times in the PPA between the NJ Turnpike and Route 495 at JFK Boulevard are significantly reduced with the remaining origin and destination pairs having comparable or shorter travel times than the No Build alternative. This is true for all travel paths through the interchange during both the morning and afternoon peak hours.

Overall, it is anticipated that the PPA will reduce the frequency of delays and turbulence by improving driver expectancy.

**Slide 15 – Project Delivery Process**

The Project Delivery Process consists of four distinct phases. The first phase is the Concept Development phase which is the current phase of this project. Data on the existing conditions is collected and analyzed, the project's Purpose and Need is determined, alternatives and their impacts are investigated, and a Preliminary Preferred Alternative is selected in this phase. This is followed by Preliminary Engineering where the Preliminary Preferred Alternative is advanced to the point necessary to obtain approval of any required design exceptions along with the environmental document. The last phase in design is Final Design during which all necessary permits are obtained, right of way is acquired and the construction documents are finalized. After Final Design, the project advances to Construction. The project is nearing the completion of the Concept Development phase. Preliminary Engineering is expected to begin in fiscal year (FY) 2022 and construction in FY 2027.

**Slide 16 – Public Feedback**

If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, please fill out the website survey form or contact the NJDOT Office of Community Relations by August 31, 2021. Details are provided on this slide. Thank you for your interest in this project and for taking the time to view this presentation!