



COUNTY OF HUDSON / COUNTY OF ESSEX



Clay Street Bridge Replacement over the Passaic River

Borough of East Newark and City of Newark, New Jersey

Public Involvement Action Plan (PIAP)



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A. PURPOSE

The purpose of the public involvement effort for the Hudson County/Essex County Clay Street Bridge over the Passaic River 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 intent 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 Hudson County/Essex County Clay Street Bridge over the Passaic River is a critical transportation connection for the Borough of East Newark in Hudson County and City of Newark 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.

Hudson County and Essex County are advancing the design for the replacement of the existing Clay Street Bridge over the Passaic River to address its structural deficiencies and maintain the important transportation connection for local residents and regional commuters in Hudson 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 Clay Street Bridge was completed in Summer 2020, using federal funding, through the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA), with Hudson 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, and the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT), 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. Improvements to the approach roadway intersections are also proposed in the vicinity of the bridge in the Borough of East Newark and in the City of Newark to better accommodate vehicular flow and mobility for pedestrians and bicyclists. Resolutions of Support were passed by the Councils in the Borough of East Newark, City of Newark, Town of Harrison and Town of Kearny for the PPA. Also, the County Board of Commissioners of Hudson County and of Essex County passed resolutions of support for the PPA to replace the bridge with a new moveable span bridge structure.

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 has been and will continue to 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, Local Officials and Community Stakeholders coordination, and alternatives analysis. Along with the PPA, key products that were produced in the LCD 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 Clay Street Bridge project was completed in Summer 2020. A schedule of the public involvement activities conducted during the LCD Phase is provided in Section E.

Local Preliminary Engineering (LPE) Phase: The project is currently in the Local Preliminary Engineering Phase and will soon be completed by Summer 2026. The LPE Phase involved 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 were 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, an online Community Stakeholders Meeting and an online Public Information Center Meeting were conducted, which presented the preliminary engineering plans of the PPA. The Borough of East Newark, the City of Newark along with the Towns of Harrison and Kearny, continue to maintain support for the PPA and for any design refinements.

The tasks conducted during the LPE Phase consisted 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 the LPE Phase public involvement activities.

Final Design (FD) Phase: During the Final Design 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 are taken into consideration in developing proposed improvements defined by the PPA and contributed to the approved Purpose and Need Statement. With Resolutions of Support by both Counties and the four municipalities together with the footprint of

the bridge replacement established, further final design plan details will be developed such as signage, lighting, landscaping, and aesthetic treatments. Securing any needed Right-of-Way (ROW) acquisitions, developing final traffic staging with detour plans, and securing all needed environmental permits will also be part of this FD phase.

Construction Phase: Notifying the public about traffic staging and the anticipated detours during the Construction 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 FD 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 representatives from the following:

- Hudson County Division of Engineering
- Essex County Division of Engineering
- New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
- North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA)
- Hardesty & Hanover, LLC consulting team

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 and movement toward broad-based support. Contact/ mailing lists of project stakeholders were developed during the Local Concept Development (LCD) Phase and will be reviewed and maintained through the Local Preliminary Engineering (LPE), Final Design (FD) and Construction phases.

Project Stakeholders List

The project stakeholders list will be maintained in coordination with Hudson County, Essex County, NJDOT and NJTPA team members and with discussion and review by Local Officials from the Borough of East Newark and the City of Newark.

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
- Utility companies with service lines within 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
- Mariners and users of the Passaic River, including Passaic Valley Sewer Commission
- Interested groups in the area such as cycling, boating and rowing, religious, cultural and civic organizations
- Government officials and organizations
 - Hudson County Executive, Hudson County Board of County Commissioners, Division of Engineering, Office of Emergency Management, Sheriff's Office, Department of Parks and Recreation
 - 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
 - Borough of East Newark Officials, Township Engineer, Police Department, Fire Department, Office of Emergency Management
 - City of Newark Officials, Township Engineer, Police Department, Fire Department and Emergency Medical Services, Office of Emergency Management
 - Town of Harrison Officials
 - Town of Kearny Officials
 - 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
 - US Environmental Protection Agency
 - NJDEP Department of Land Resource Protection
 - NJDEP Green Acres Program Unit (under the Office of Transactions & Public Land Administration)
 - NJDEP Historic Preservation Office
 - NJDOT Local Aid District 2
 - NJDOT Bureau of Environmental Program Resources
 - NJDOT Bureau of Safety, Bicycle & Pedestrian Programs
 - NJTPA Local Programs and Project Development
 - NJ TRANSIT

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 Phase, 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.claystbridge.com.

3. Conduct Local Officials Meetings

Key officials from the Borough of East Newark and City of Newark 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 held 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. A second Local Officials Meeting was held to present the preliminary engineering plans prior to conducting the Public Information Center (PIC) Meeting to present the proposed preliminary plans to the public.

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 scheduled in-person as determined by Hudson County, Essex County 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 was held as requested by Hudson 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 is used to distribute meeting invitations via mail and email with follow-up phone calls made as needed. Federal and State agencies involved in the project may attend meetings and will be provided with a meeting summary report. Meetings may be held online via public engagement software such as Microsoft Teams or scheduled in-person as determined by Hudson County and Essex County 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 Hudson County and Essex County in creating the PIC Meeting

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 affected Municipalities as a PDF file for posting to their websites. A legal posting in two local newspapers recommended by Local Officials will also be implemented. In the LPE Phase, the legal postings were published in *The Star-Ledger* and the *Record*.

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 Counties, a PowerPoint presentation will be presented, followed by a Q&A session with support staff available to answer questions in the remaining meeting time. The Community Involvement Facilitator monitors 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 the project website, the project email address, or by mail to the Hudson County Project Manager or the Essex County Project Manager. 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 (www.claystbridge.com) was created during the LCD 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, Hudson County and Essex County.

For the LPE Phase, a project-specific email address (claystbridge@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	Winter 2014-Spring 2020 Bi-monthly status conference calls/sit-down meetings	• Present approach and updates • Discuss public involvement strategies • Review stakeholders and support status

LCD INITIATIVES	DATE	PURPOSE
Community Input Survey	February - April 2014	• Identify stakeholders • Develop and maintain contact information for Community Stakeholders, Local Officials, and agencies • Identify issues/interests • Assess stakeholders
Project Website	Winter 2014 - present (on-going)	• Draft website outline, visual design, and content for review by Project Team • Release website upon approval prior to CS Meeting No. 1
Local Officials (LO) Meetings	<u>LO Meeting No. 1</u> January 29, 2014 - East Newark, Harrison, Kearny, Hudson County February 26, 2014 - City of Newark, Essex County <u>LO Meeting No. 2</u> June 4, 2015, 10am City of Newark, Essex County June 4, 2015, 1pm - East Newark, Harrison, Kearny, Hudson County	• 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) Meeting No. 2
Community Stakeholders (CS) Meetings	<u>CS Meeting No. 1</u> - March 24, 2014 <u>CS Meeting No. 2</u> - City of Newark – October 22, 2014 - Borough of East Newark – November 7, 2014	• 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

LCD INITIATIVES	DATE	PURPOSE
Public Information Center (PIC) Meetings	<u>PIC Meeting No. 1</u> April 7, 2014 (Two sessions - afternoon in East Newark, evening in City of Newark). <u>PIC Meeting No. 2</u> June 24, 2015 Two sessions: –afternoon 2-4pm in Borough of East Newark - evening 6-8pm in City of Newark	• 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 • Present alternatives and PPA. • Solicit public input and comment on the conceptual alternatives and the proposed PPA
Establish Twitter as social media application <i>(meeting alerts and link to project website in LCD Study only, not continued in LPE phase, but links established to municipal and County social media platforms)</i>	Winter 2014-Spring 2016 (Status Meetings – Agenda Item – Twitter activity – Jan - April 2014 (on-going))	• 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 conducted during the LPE Phase are as follows:

LPE INITIATIVES	DATE	PURPOSE
Project Team Status Meetings / Public Involvement Coordination	Fall 2023 (on-going) Bi-monthly status conference calls/sit-down meetings	• Present approach and updates • Discuss public involvement strategies • Review stakeholders and support status
Project Website and Email Address	Website: on-going since Summer 2016; updated Fall 2023 Project Email Address: added Fall 2023	• Provide project information and updates to Community Stakeholders, Local Officials and the general public • Announce public meetings and project milestones • Gather and track submissions (comments and questions) from Community Stakeholders, Local Officials and the general public
Notification/Access Letter	January 12, 2024	• Introduce the LPE Phase • Notify property owners about field crews working in the area

LPE INITIATIVES	DATE	PURPOSE
Local Officials (LO) Meetings	<u>LO Meeting No. 1</u> - January 17, 2024 - Online with East Newark, Harrison, Kearny and City of Newark, Hudson County and Essex County <u>LO Meeting No. 2</u> - April 13, 2026 - Online with East Newark, Harrison, Kearny and City of Newark, Hudson County and Essex County	• Introduce Project Team • Present project status and LPE schedule • Obtain input from Local Officials on community interests or changes since determination of the PPA for the bridge replacement • Provide next steps • Present preliminary design plans, discuss project status and proposed schedule
Community Stakeholders (CS) Meetings	<u>CS Meeting</u> (online) July 23, 2025 - Online, 2-4 P.M.	• Introduce Project Team and LPE Phase • Present project status and LPE schedule • Obtain input from stakeholders on community interests or changes since determination of the PPA for the bridge replacement • Provide next steps
Public Information Center (PIC) Meetings	<u>PIC Meeting</u> April 27, 2026 - Online, 6-8 P.M.	• 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

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) Phase. 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, Hudson 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, Community Stakeholders Meeting participants and other key stakeholders. The materials included a list Project Team members with contact information, a map of the project study area, project schedule, project information sheet, meeting agendas and meeting reports. For the LPE Phase 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) Meeting 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 Meeting 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 Hudson 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 Meeting Mailing List: For each PIC Meeting notification mailing, a PDF file containing the cover letter, PIC Meeting 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 Hudson 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 Local Officials, Community Stakeholders and the public.

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