

July 28, 2003

Governor James E. McGreevey
New Jersey
PO Box 001
Trenton, NJ 08625

RE: Penns Neck Area Bypass - Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)

We write to encourage the Governor to participate in the decision process and support our recommendation for the design and construction of ***Alternative D.2*** in the Final Penns Neck Area EIS, on behalf of the twenty-six (26) endorsing organizations listed in the attachment. This project has drawn the interest of an army of citizens, as well as local, regional and statewide open space groups, historic preservation groups, and environmental organizations who recognize that traffic congestion, as well as inappropriately designed roadways, can negatively impact the quality of life and the natural resources of New Jersey. The ultimate decisions in this review process should reflect the cumulative interests expressed and minimize the potential impacts of this highway, and not be rigidly focused on construction costs.

I cannot underestimate the dedication of these volunteer groups since 1999, or the thousands of hours spent during this 24-month review process to develop alternative roadway alignments and assess their potential impacts. Together we have reviewed documents, completed independent analysis, and even led guided canoe trips, in order to provide a balanced, open-minded evaluation of the issues and potential alternatives. These 26 organizations represent thousands of members and supporters who ***endorse the D.2 Alignment.***

We recommend Alternative D.2 because it enhances both north-south traffic, relieves east-west traffic, improves traffic management and safety, and it also protects neighborhoods and cultural features, prevents habitat loss for an endangered species, and minimizes degradation to the Millstone River and Delaware & Raritan Canal, that supply drinking water to the communities of central New Jersey.

We know that as our Governor and a New Jersey resident, you recognize the intrinsic value and benefits that our citizens gain from living in communities where historic and cultural buildings, parklands and natural resources are protected and preserved. Therefore we ask you to voice your support for ***Alternative D.2*** in order to ensure that these fine goals are acted upon!

The following paragraphs summarize the basis for our recommendations and they are more fully supported in the enclosed report, entitled “*Speaking for the River*” which was authored by the Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association.

What does Alternative D.2 include?

Alternative D.2 includes Route 1 in a cut, frontage roads with a diamond interchange between Harrison Street and Washington Road, and a Vaughn Drive connector to Alexander Road. This alternative removes three lights from Route 1, and provides two routes for motorists traveling east-west across Route 1. The D.2 Alternative does *not* include an east-side connector road.

An east-side connector road was *not* supported by either the NJ State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), *nor* the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (Division of Fish and Wildlife), because of the high likelihood of significant impacts to cultural and ecological resources. In addition, a 1990 NJDOT report concluded that a four-lane east-side connector road was *not viable* due to the magnitude of potential environmental and socioeconomic impacts.

Why we support Alternative D.2:

- ◆ Protects water quality of two significant water supply resources, the Millstone River and Delaware & Raritan Canal from potential degradation from road runoff.
- ◆ Protects floodplains, forests, wetlands, and the habitat for a threatened species (long-eared owl); prevents habitat fragmentation; and ensures groundwater recharge.
- ◆ Preserves National Register-listed and eligible archaeological and historic sites.
- ◆ Does not invade the serenity of the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park.
- ◆ Enhances vehicular access and safety to businesses and the environment by reducing north-south and east-west travel time.
- ◆ Performs as one of the best overall alternatives for east/west travel time and performs well for north/south traffic flow as well. Overall, Alternative D.2 either has a positive or neutral effect on the amount of traffic on various local roadways relative to the no-build alternative.
- ◆ Incorporates many of the components agreed upon by the Roundtable: including Route 1 in-a-cut at Washington Road, frontage roads, and no west side connector (WSC) along the D&R Canal. Alternative D.2 does not have east side connector (ESC) or a road going through Sarnoff property, which accounts for many of its environmental benefits.

Although Alternative D-2 is one of the more expensive options, the magnitude of the predicted congestion and the concentration of National-Register listed and eligible structures and districts, highly important archaeological sites and unique scenic and ecologically important areas justify this expenditure. The Millstone River and D&R Canal, its floodplains, wetlands, habitats, and parkland supply the region with drinking water; help to clean our air; control flooding; remove pollutants from the water; and allow citizens to escape to nature, catch fish, bird watch and canoe. The 26 endorsing organizations

want to ensure that local environmental and cultural features are protected, preserved and enhanced.

The endorsing organizations also support all efforts to provide congestion relief by the implementation of Travel Demand Management practices, creation of transit-based actions, inclusion of a Commute Options Package, and inclusion of bicycle and pedestrian enhancements.

We would like to thank NJDOT for undertaking this innovative EIS process, for evaluating 19 potential alternatives, and for incorporating the concerns raised by the various Roundtable partners.

We sincerely hope that you will carefully consider the potential impacts to cultural features, loss of habitat, and degradation of our natural resources that could be caused by the other alternatives, and support Alternative D.2 in the final EIS. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me directly at 609-737-3735.

Sincerely,

George S. Hawkins, Executive Director
Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association
on behalf of the 26 Endorsing Organizations identified on the attached list.

Copies to:

Commissioner John F. Lettiere, Jr., NJ Department of Transportation
Young Kim, Federal Highway Administration
Commissioner Bradley Campbell, NJ Department of Environmental Protection
U.S. Senator Frank Lautenberg
U.S. Senator Jon Corzine
Congressman Rush Holt
Senator Shirley Turner
Senator Peter Inverso
Assemblyman Reed Gusciora
Assemblywoman Bonnie Watson Coleman
Assemblywoman Linda Greenstein
Assemblyman Gary Guear
Mr. Anthony Sabadussi, NJ Department of Transportation
Mayor Marvin Reed, Princeton Borough
Mayor Phyllis Marchand, Princeton Twp
Mayor Shing-Fu Hsueh, W Windsor

(Please note that four additional organizations joined this endorsement).

30 Organizations that Endorsed Alternative D.2 for the Penns Neck Area ESI Include:

Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC)

Central Jersey Group of the Sierra Club, Ed Pfeiffer, Chair

Citizens United to Protect the Maurice River and Its Tributaries, Inc., Jane Morton Galetto, President

Concerned Citizens of Cape May County, Jody Carrara

Delaware & Raritan Canal Watch

Federation of Gloucester County Watershed, Suzanne McCarthy, President

Friends of Princeton Open Space, Wendy Magher, President

Garden Club of Princeton, Mary Ellen Johnson

Great Egg Harbor Watershed Association, Fred Akers, Administrator

Great Swamp Watershed Association, Julia Somers, Executive Director

Harrison Street Neighborhood Association, Candace Preston

Kingston Greenways Association, Forwood C Wiser III, Trustee

Lawrence Brook Watershed Partnership Inc. Alan Godber, Trustee

Millstone Valley Preservation Coalition, Liz Palius

New Jersey Conservation Foundation, Michele Byers, Executive Director

NJ Environmental Federation, David Pringle

New Jersey Chapter of the Sierra Club, Jeff Tittel, Director

New Jersey Chapter of the Sierra Club, Laura Lynch, Conservation Chair

Pequannock River Coalition, Ross Kushner, Executive Director

Princeton Environmental Commission, Douglas Schleifer, resident and member

Sensible Transportation Options Partnership (S.T.O.P.), Richard Barrett

South Branch Watershed Association, Fran Varacalli, Executive Director

Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association, George Hawkins, Executive Director

The Delaware and Raritan Canal Coalition, Rosemary Blair

The Millstone Bypass Alert Coalition, Sandra Shapiro

Upper Rockaway River Watershed Association, Constance Stroh, President

Washington Crossing Audubon Association, Herb Lord

Washington Road Elms Preservation Trust, Patrick Lyons

West Windsor Citizens for Transportation Alternatives, Paula McGuire

Whole Earth Center, Barbara Parmet, Board Member