



COUNTY OF MERCER

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County Administrator

Hon. Michael Markulec
Mayor
Hopewell Township
201 Washington Crossing-Pennington Road
Titusville, NJ 08560

September 29, 2010

Dear Mayor Markulec,

I would like to thank you and your administration for helping to lead the continued effort, in partnership with Mercer County and the township Historic Preservation Commission, to determine the future of Jacobs Creek Bridge.

As you are keenly aware, this project has an extensive history. My administration began its partnership with the township and the township Historic Preservation Commission in 2004, when the County began anew the process to find an acceptable solution for Jacobs Creek Bridge. For the past six years, we have partnered with a broad spectrum of community residents, engineering consultants, historic preservation experts and other stakeholders to reach a consensus.

The process was transparent and balanced public safety, engineering necessity, community input, historical concerns and long-range planning. It included many public meetings and a report from an independent consultant that provided more than 15 options in its Historic Bridge Alternatives Analysis. As a result of that thorough analysis, it was decided that the best course was Alternative 5A/5B Modified 3, which is to construct a new Jacobs Creek Bridge adjacent to the site of the existing bridge, and then relocate the existing bridge to a park after rehabilitation.

We also completed an archeological survey to alleviate any additional concerns that important historic and archeologically significant artifacts could be disturbed as a result of the project. The findings of the survey, which were accepted by NJDEP, were that the immediate area around the existing bridge has no identifiable historic significance.

The County met with New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Bob Martin and his staff on Sept. 10 in order to ensure NJDEP has no objection from an environmental permitting perspective to Alternative 5A/5B Modified 3. At this time, we have no reason to believe NJDEP will not approve permits associated with Alternative 5A/5B and the County intends to solicit engineering design proposals and make Alternative 5A/5B the basis of

our Request for Proposal. In addition, we will submit permit applications once the preliminary design is completed.

In May 2010, my administration outlined to NJDEP three variations of Alternative 5A/5B along with a fourth option, which was to keep Jacobs Creek Bridge closed.

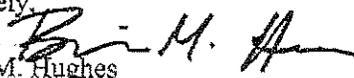
During meeting on August 6, I presented a fifth option to NJDEP: to deed to Hopewell Township both Jacobs Creek Bridge and the portion of County Route 579 from the Ewing Township line to Washington Crossing Road (County Route 546). To date, the County has not received a response from you or your administration about this option.

The bridge was closed in September 2009 as a result of extensive studies to determine the viability and the safety of the existing bridge. It was concluded the existing bridge would not be able to sustain the repetitive overloads that were occurring. Mercer County is not willing to reopen Jacobs Creek Bridge in its current condition.

However, if Hopewell Township wishes to reopen the bridge and retain the current road alignment, the County would be willing to transfer jurisdiction of Bear Tavern Road from the Ewing Township line to Washington Crossing Road, including Jacobs Creek Bridge, to Hopewell Township. The County views this as a reasonable alternative in which Hopewell would be free to determine the future of the bridge as well as undertake roadway treatments in front of Bear Tavern Elementary School. In addition, Hopewell Township would assume all liability for the bridge and the portion of the roadway deeded to it.

I urge you to discuss this option within your administration and to share this letter with the Historic Preservation Commission. The County is hereby requesting a response from the township by Oct. 30 on its position on the option to accept the deed from Mercer County for Jacobs Creek Bridge and a portion of County Route 579.

Sincerely,


Brian M. Hughes
County Executive

Cc: Paul Pogorzelski, Administrator
Maximillian Hayden III, chair, Hopewell Township Historic Preservation
Commission