

March 6, 2011

Mercer County Executive Brian Hughes  
Mercer County Administration Building  
640 South Broad Street  
P.O. Box 8068  
Trenton, NJ 08650-0068

Dear Mr. Hughes,

Thank you for your response to my previous letter of February 28, 2011 in regard to the **Jacobs Creek Crossing Rural Historic Landscape** and the current County plans for the Jacobs Creek (Bear Tavern Road) Bridge. I appreciate your thoughtful consideration, and expect that I can rely on your staff to continuously keep me aware of the developments on this project (e.g. the selection of a design firm, designs submitted, designs approved, etc.) Is there a specific contact in your office who would be most able to provide me with the best information on a regular and timely basis?

Your response was thorough, but I feel it neglects certain critical issues and considerations. To highlight a few:

1. The county alternative (5B3) goes well beyond accommodating the inherent traffic in the area as evidenced by the lack of disruption from the bridge closing for the past 17 months. Your comments regarding the future traffic due to the construction of the new hospital seem without merit as the hospital will have direct access to Interstate 95 and is located on a four lane, divided thoroughfare. The community at large has grown over the years but the vast majority of Bear Tavern Road is either rural or residential, and constructing such a major bridge on this type of road does not seem appropriate in light of other facts, such as the more cost-effective alternative of rehabbing the existing bridge, and the fact that **the site, not just the bridge, is profoundly historic.**
2. 5B3 will encourage significant additional traffic, not for people traveling to Hopewell Twp., but rather for cars and trucks who will use the redesigned route to simply bring pollution and traffic through the Township as they traverse from Pennsylvania to NJ. There is potential damage to the **Nationally Registered Historic Harbourton District** on Bear Tavern Road from this increased traffic pattern. Several of the historic buildings in this district are less than ten feet away from the road right of way.
3. Your response continues to focus primarily on the bridge, but continues to ignore the Potentially Eligible Historic Landscape which the bridge has protected for the last 129 years.

4. In regard to the preferred alternative 3B (of the 2004 Task Force , the Hopewell Twp. Committee, the 3000+ members of the Save the Victory Trail Coalition, and many other historic and environmental groups), I can understand your concerns about schools buses using the bridge since a 15 ton limit may be marginal for a loaded school bus or fire truck. However, in the **Keller Kirkpatrick Historic Bridge Analysis** you had produced in 2009 (see page 51 of the Historic Bridge Alternative Analysis, paragraph 2) they state "As an option, higher load capacity is possible, as the two-span stringers could be selected to adequately carry a heavier load." A center pier could also be installed.
5. I also agree with your concern that Alternative 3B would require extensive modification in order to strengthen and widen the currently eligible historic bridge and may not comply with SOI standards. However, in granting **Potential Eligibility for the National Register** to the site on October 1, 2010, SHPO has determined that saving the historic site itself, which Dan Saunders stated is "profoundly historic", supersedes keeping the bridge SOI compliant. A good example of this is the **Califon bridge in Hunterdon County** where a similar Alternative 3B was performed. After the modifications were performed, *the structure retains its individual eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C, and remains a contributing element of the Califon Historic District*. This is our desire for the Jacobs Creek Crossing Rural Historic Landscape, and the Jacobs Creek Bridge.
6. Regarding your concern about the longevity of doing a rehab vs. new construction, the rehabbed Califon Bridge was completed in 1986 and still stands strong and viable today ; 25 years later. Today the Engineering firm responsible for the Borough of Califon, NJ is Keller & Kirkpatrick, the same firm the County retained for the Historic Bridge Alternative Analysis.
7. Thanks to your help, the roadway on both sides of the Jacobs Creek Bridge now has a 4-ton capacity road weight limit.
8. Yes, it is true that the recent written opinion of SHPO indicated that the area **immediately** surrounding the bridge exhibits a "low potential for significant archeological resources", However, as we all know, Washington's army did not cross Jacob's Creek Bridge on their way to the first Battle of Trenton, but they did in fact cross Jacob's Creek a small distance to the west, where Ewing Creek meets Jacob's Creek. And, based on information contained on RFP documents available, this new construction will most surely dramatically, negatively impact the colonial road leading to the crossing point, and the crossing point itself. **Importantly, the archaeological disturbance mentioned, which has been restored, does not affect the historic character of the larger landscape.**

I would like to add, that at no time did I indicate that your staff was anything but accommodating to me when I visited the County Engineering Office. They were helpful and pleasant.

Yet the misunderstanding that prevails in that office as to the actual facts of the historic site surrounding the Jacobs Creek Bridge can be easily corrected and should most certainly not be repeated.

To avoid additional letters and the time of the persons copied on this correspondence, I am proposing a meeting to clarify the historical considerations in regard to this project and the meaning of certain correspondence and its effect on the National Register decision for the Jacobs Creek Crossing Rural Historic Landscape. This discussion can result in the positive outcome which can be attained by knowledgeable consensus prior to additional steps being taken by the County.

I respectfully suggest that this meeting be attended by you, Aaron Watson, Director of Mercer County D.O.T., Greg Sandusky, County Engineer, Mayor Burd or Deputy Mayor Michael Markulec of Hopewell Township, David Blackwell, Beth Kerr and myself as the Applicants to the National Register, Mary Jane Cooper and Nancy Weinstein (impacted property owners adjacent to the proposed construction), and Asst. Commissioner Amy Cradic and Dan Saunders, Acting Administrator of the State Historic Preservation Office. Ms. Cradic, Dan Saunders and Deputy Mayor Markulec have all agreed to this proposed meeting. Please let me know your availability and that of your staff.

I am looking forward to the opportunity to discuss these issues and achieve a mutually productive and informative dialogue.

I will certainly, as you requested, forward your response and my answer to the persons copied.

Sincerely,

Roni Browne Katz  
Applicant - Jacobs Creek Crossing Rural Historic Landscape

cc: Beth Kerr - Applicant - Jacobs Creek Crossing Rural Historic Landscape  
David Blackwell - Applicant- Jacobs Creek Crossing Rural Historic Landscape  
Cate Litvak, Crossroads of the American Revolution  
Ron Emrich, Preservation NJ  
Congressman Rush Holt  
Senator Shirley Turner  
Senator Menendez  
Walter Gallas, National Trust for Historic Preservation  
Chair Pat Colavita, Mercer County Board of Chosen Freeholders  
Bob Martin, NJDEP Commissioner  
Amy Cradic, Asst. Comm, DEP, State Historic Preservation Office  
Dan Saunders, Acting Administrator, State Historic Preservation Office  
Marilyn Lennon, Asst. Comm, DEP, Land Use  
Charlie Welsh, DEP, Land Use  
Chris Jones, DEP, Land Use  
Mayor Jim Burd, Hopewell Township  
Deputy Mayor Michael Markulec, Hopewell Township  
Max Hayden, Chair, Hopewell Township Historic Preservation Commissioner  
Judith Peoples, Ewing Historical Society  
Lee Farnham, Chair, Ewing Environmental Commission  
Aaron Watson, Director, Mercer County D.O.T.  
Greg Sandusky, Mercer County Engineer