

North Olden Avenue Extension from New York Avenue to Pennington Road

PROJECT INFORMATION

Mercer County is conducting a Local Concept Development (LCD) Study for multi-modal corridor improvements along North Olden Avenue (County Route 622) in coordination with the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) and the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT).

PROJECT PURPOSE

The purpose of the project is to improve safety, traffic operations, and mobility for all users of the N. Olden Avenue corridor, including motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users.

PROJECT AREA

The project is located along N. Olden Avenue (CR 622) in the Township of Ewing and the City of Trenton in Mercer County, NJ. The corridor extends from Pennington Road (New Jersey State Route 31) to New York Avenue (US 1 access, NJDOT jurisdiction), passing through a highly developed commercial and retail corridor. The corridor segment in Ewing (North Olden Avenue Extension) is characterized by large commercial properties, banks, pharmacies, automobile dealerships, fast-food restaurants, strip malls, and grocery stores. Cross streets are few and signalized, due to the roughly parallel course of Shabakunk Creek. East of Princeton Avenue (CR 583/US 206S), within the City of Trenton, land use along N. Olden Avenue is built to the street front and is primarily residential, mixing with small businesses south of Brunswick Avenue (US 1B/US 206, City of Trenton jurisdiction).

N. Olden Avenue is classified as an Urban Minor Arterial and is a significant cross-county corridor, one of the few crossings in Mercer County of the D&R Canal, the Northeast Corridor rail line, and the Trenton Freeway (US 1). The majority of the corridor, between Pennington Road and Capitol Plaza, consists of two (2) lanes in each direction with a center two-way left turn lane. In the vicinity of Capitol Plaza, the roadway is divided by a grass median, which limits access from Capitol Plaza to southbound Olden Avenue. South of Princeton Avenue to New York Avenue, the road consists of one (1) lane in each direction with on-street parking and a regular urban grid of streets. Eight (8) signalized intersections and 12 unsignalized intersections or alleys are located within the project limits.

PROJECT NEED

Between Pennington Road and Princeton Avenue (CR 583/US 206S), sidewalks are intermittent and cross-streets are few, requiring pedestrians to make mid-block crossings, often waiting in the two-way left-turn lane for traffic to clear. Wide lanes, no shoulders, and long distances between signalized intersections lead to high traffic speeds that create hazardous conditions for cyclists and pedestrians. Intermittent sidewalks and obstructions within them lead wheelchair users from Project Freedom on Princeton Avenue to ride in the street to shopping destinations. The Paul Robeson Charter School, south of Brunswick Avenue, draws elementary school children walking from the surrounding neighborhood and from Trenton's East Ward, south of New York Avenue and the US 1 overpass. Between Princeton Avenue and New York Avenue, in the City of Trenton, on-street parking is permitted and wide sidewalks may be partially blocked by parked vehicles mounting the sidewalk to avoid damage, including from tractor trailers accessing commercial and County waste transfer centers. Access to the County Waste Transfer Station on N. Olden Avenue Extension is unsignalized and conflicts with high volume retail driveways both immediately adjacent and across the street.

N. Olden Avenue serves both commuter traffic and traffic destined for the various commercial establishments located along the corridor. Within Ewing Township, PM peak hour traffic volumes exceed 1,000 vehicles per hour (vph) in each direction. Within the City of Trenton, where the roadway is reduced to one (1) lane in each direction, PM peak hour traffic volumes still exceed 600 vph in each direction, with traffic volumes increasing approaching the New York Avenue intersection. Traffic analyses indicate that the signalized intersections operate at overall LOS C or better during the AM and PM peak hours, with some left-turn movements operating at LOS F. Field observations indicate that congestion exists on N. Olden Avenue between Princeton Avenue and New York Avenue due to several factors such as: reduction to one lane in each direction, on-street parking, school drop-off/pick-up traffic at the Paul Robeson Charter School, and significant heavy truck traffic.

The combination of heavy pedestrian and bicycle traffic and high traffic volumes contribute to a significant crash history along N. Olden Avenue. During the 3-year period from 2016 to 2018, 402 vehicular crashes (not involving pedestrians or bicycles) were reported along N. Olden Avenue within the project area. Approximately 40% were Same Direction-Rear End crashes, which is slightly higher than the statewide County Route average of 33%. Same Direction-Sideswipe, Right Angle, Left Turn and Encroachment crashes also exceeded the County average. Right Angle crashes were reported at several signalized intersections (Parkside Avenue, Prospect Street, and Brunswick Avenue) and at several commercial driveways along the corridor. Same Direction-Sideswipe crashes were also prevalent adjacent to signalized intersections and in the vicinity of commercial driveways.

In addition, 23 pedestrian and bicycle crashes were reported in the 5-year period from 2014 to 2018. Eight (8) bicycle and pedestrian crashes occurred at or near the Parkside Avenue intersection, including two (2) at the intersection, one (1) just west of the intersection at the PNC Bank driveway, one (1) east of the intersection near Sparkling Pools (near the bus stop across from ShopRite), and four (4) near the driveways at Wendy's and Boston Market. Three (3) pedestrian crashes and one (1) bicycle crash were reported at or near the Princeton Avenue intersection.

PROPOSED LCD STUDY

Major tasks conducted during the LCD phase have included data collection and analysis; coordination with local officials, project stakeholders, and permitting agencies; development of a concise, well-defined Purpose and Need Statement; development and analysis of a range of conceptual alternatives to meet the Purpose and Need; and the selection of a Preliminary Preferred Alternative (PPA) based on impacts to safety, bicycles/pedestrians, traffic, access, right-of-way, utilities, environmental resources, and the surrounding community, in addition to constructability and construction cost.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

A Local Officials Briefing and Stakeholders Meeting were held in August 2019 to introduce the project and to gather input for the development of the Project Purpose and Need Statement. A second set of public outreach meetings will be held in Winter 2020 to present and obtain input on the development of alternatives. The final set of public meetings will be held in Spring/Summer 2020 to present the Preliminary Preferred Alternative.