

**DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
FOR THE ROUTE 92 PROJECT
PROPOSED BY THE NEW JERSEY TURNPIKE AUTHORITY**

April 2004

Responsible Lead Agency

US Army Corps of Engineers - New York District
Regulatory Branch
26 Federal Plaza, Room 1937
Jacob K. Javits Federal Building
New York, New York 10278-0090

Cooperating Agencies

US Environmental Protection Agency - Region 2
US Fish and Wildlife Service
New Jersey Department of Transportation

Abstract

In accordance with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) regulations, this Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) has been prepared to assist the New York District of the USACE in reaching an informed decision on Application No. 1999-00240-J1, submitted by the New Jersey Turnpike Authority (NJTA), PO Box 1121, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 08903.

NJTA seeks authorization to discharge fill in 12.03 acres of waters of the United States, including wetlands, as part of the proposed Route 92 highway project. A further 1.16 acres of wetlands would be permanently shaded by bridges. Proposed Route 92 would be a 6.7-mile, limited access toll highway that would serve as an east-west highway link connecting US Route 1 in South Brunswick Township with the New Jersey Turnpike at Interchange 8A in Monroe Township. The proposed project in South Brunswick, Plainsboro, and Monroe Townships would pass through land mostly used for agriculture, with lesser amounts of parkland and other open space, commercial, and residential uses also present. NJTA has proposed a wetland mitigation plan in which 57 acres of wetland would be constructed and an additional 202 acres of forested wetland and upland would be preserved.

The alternatives evaluated in this DEIS include the No Action alternative, US Route 1 Improvements, Existing Local and County Roadway Capacity Improvements, Improvements to the Existing Regional Roadway System, and New Roadway Facilities. Seventeen alternatives, including the No Action alternative, were screened. Those not meeting the screening criteria that included environmental effects, socioeconomic effects, and responsiveness to project purpose and need were eliminated from further consideration. The alternatives that met the screening criteria were fully evaluated. These alternatives include the proposed Route 92, US Route 1 widening, and US Route 1 widening with signal removal. The No Action alternative is also evaluated.

NJTA-proposed Route 92 requires a permit pursuant to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. Jurisdiction for the permit was transferred from NJDEP to USACE on October 26, 1998. After an initial evaluation of the application and a Public Hearing held on February 26, 1999, a "Notice of Intent" to prepare this EIS was published in the Federal Register on April 28, 2000. A Public Scoping Meeting was held on June 8, 2000, and a Final Scope of Work was issued on April 30, 2001.

This DEIS documents and evaluates existing environmental and socioeconomic conditions in the project study area, and the potential direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of the proposed project and its alternatives, including the No Action alternative.

The public is encouraged to review this DEIS and provide comments on the information contained herein, and the project as a whole. A public hearing will be held at least 30 days after the commencement of the comment period. Details will be provided in a published public notice, which will also be available on the District's website, accessed via www.nan.usace.army.mil. Comments can be presented as testimony at the public hearing, or in writing prior to the end of the comment period to the following address:

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To reduce the use of paper and other costs, copies of this DEIS and its printed appendices will be made available at repositories to be listed in the public notice. The DEIS is also available on the New York District website, www.nan.usace.army.mil. Individual copies of the printed DEIS may be limited and the appendices will not be provided in printed format. The DEIS with appendices will be provided on a set of CD-ROMs upon request. For further information on the DEIS, write to Ms. Koko Cronin, Regulatory Project Manager, at the above address, via electronic mail at nan.route92eis@usace.army.mil, or call her at (212) 264-6731.

John B. O'Dowd
Colonel, U.S. Army
District Engineer

Date