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**COMMISSION HOLDS HEARING ON TOLLING IMPACTS, BIKE/PED PATH
FOR I-95/SCUDDER FALLS BRIDGE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT**

*Public Comment Period Will Continue to January 3;
Testimony Will Be Compiled for Federal Decision on Environmental Impacts*

LANGHORNE, PA – The Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission this evening is hosting a hearing that will allow the public to provide comment on environmental documentation examining the inclusion of a cashless tolling system and a multi-use bicycle/pedestrian pathway in the plans for the I-95/Scudder Falls Bridge Improvement Project.

While not a regulatory requirement, the Commission opted to hold the hearing so commuters, area residents and other interested parties could have an opportunity to provide testimony on the new project documentation, which consists of a 65-page Addendum to the project's Environmental Assessment document and 224 pages of corresponding appendices.

The Addendum and appendices were released November 30, commencing a 30-day period for public review and comment that will end January 3, 2012. Tonight's hearing occurs at the midway point in the comment period. The original 561-page Environmental Assessment (EA) for the project was issued two years ago – on Dec. 9, 2009.

The EA documentation – now totaling 870 pages – identifies and assesses how the project may impact the environment, including aesthetics, air quality, noise, water quality and aquatic life, historic resources, and cultural resources.

The EA process is required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969. The Commission has carried out its EA process in cooperation with the Pennsylvania and New Jersey Departments of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)

The Addendum was prepared to evaluate the potential impacts of the cashless tolling system – no toll booths – that will be established in the southbound direction at the Scudder Falls Replacement Bridge. The Addendum also officially discloses the Bridge Commission's April 2010 decision to include the construction of a bicycle/pedestrian pathway on the new bridge.

Hearing Ground Rules

Tonight's hearing will afford the public four means of submitting comment: by giving verbal testimony before a hearing audience, by giving testimony privately to a court stenographer, through submissions of pre-written prepared statements, and through handwritten comment cards made available to hearing attendees upon request.

Attendees wishing to provide verbal testimony will first need to register at the designated sign-in table.

Elected officials will be called to the podium first. Additional speakers will be called to the podium in the order in which they registered.

Verbal testimony will be limited to five minutes as a matter of fairness so everyone may have an opportunity to speak. Written testimony also may be submitted to supplement verbal testimony or in place of verbal testimony.

Tonight's public hearing is for taking testimony on the EA Addendum. There will be no cross-examinations, questioning or responses to any speaker either from the floor or the chair.

Comment Period Continues

After the public hearing portion of the review process comes to a close on Thursday night, motorists, residents, and other concerned parties who wish to provide comment may utilize one of the following options no later than the end of the comment period on January 3, 2012:

- E-mail – ScudderfallsbridgeEAcomments@hntb.com
- U.S. Mail – Send to Kevin Skeels, Senior Program Area Manager, DRJTBC, 110 Wood and Grove Streets, Morrisville, PA 19067.

Viewing/downloading the EA Addendum

The easiest way for area residents, motorists or other interested parties to review the EA Addendum documentation is to go to the Web site – www.scudderfallsbridge.com -- the Commission created in October 2003 to keep the public informed of project developments.

Copies of the document also are available for viewing at the following six locations:

- Lower Makefield Township Municipal Building, 1100 Edgewood Road, Yardley, PA. 19067;
- Ewing Township's Municipal Clerk's Office, 2 Jake Garzio Drive, Ewing, N.J. 08628;
- The Yardley-Makefield branch of the Bucks County Free Library, 1080 Edgewood Road, Lower Makefield Township, PA.19067;
- The Mercer County Library – Ewing Branch, 61 Scotch Road Ewing, N.J. 08628;

- The DRJTBC's Administration Building at 110 Wood & Grove Streets Morrisville, PA. 19067; and
- PennDOT District 6, 7000 Geerdes Boulevard, King of Prussia, PA. 19406

Post-Hearing EA Process

Tonight's hearing will add to the public record that has been compiled to date following the December 2009 release of the 4-1/2-inch thick Environmental Assessment. An open house/public hearing on that document on January 19 and 20, 2010 resulted in 382 signed-in attendees, 295 written or e-mailed submittals from the public and advocacy organizations, and 20 addition responses from government agencies and officials.

A court stenographer will prepare a transcript of verbal testimony from tonight's hearing. The transcript and all of the other submitted testimony and comment cards will be compiled in conjunction with other submissions from the public during the Addendum's comment period and made part of the official record for the project's EA process.

The Commission will have an opportunity to prepare official responses to the various testimony and comments. All of the material – public comments and responses from the Commission and its project team – will be submitted to the Federal Highway Administration.

Ultimately, the EA documents, public comments, and Commission responses will be used by the FHWA to determine whether any significant environmental impacts will result from the project.

A date for a NEPA decision by the FHWA has not been set. If the FHWA were to issue a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), the Commission could then move the project to final design and then construction.

Scudder Falls Bridge Tolling Plan

The core focus of the Addendum is the all-electronic cashless tolling facility the Commission plans to construct on or near the Pennsylvania side of the replacement bridge. The Commission plans to use an all-electronic cashless tolling (AECT) system consisting of an overhead gantry that would hold E-ZPass toll-tag readers, high-resolution cameras and near-infrared lights.

Vehicles would pass beneath the gantry at highway speeds. Tolls would be collected using the E-ZPass system or through video capture of vehicle license plates and billing.

Such gantries are increasingly being used by toll agencies nationally and internationally to collect tolls while avoiding the congestion drawbacks of conventional toll plazas. The Commission already owns and operates two open-road-tolling gantries at the agency's I-78 and Delaware Water Gap (I-80) toll bridges, where Express E-ZPass service – toll paying at highway speeds – is offered adjacent to conventional barrier toll booth plazas.

The recommended method of toll paying at the Scudder Falls Bridge would be through E-ZPass. Non-E-ZPass customers would be billed by mail through the video capture of license plates. An administrative fee would be attached to each non-E-ZPass transaction. Non-E-ZPass customers who pre-register their license plates with the Commission would be charged lower fees than customers who do not register their license plates.

The Commission has not determined what toll rates or the schedule of administrative fees will be for the new bridge.

The administrative fees for non-E-Z Pass customers are necessary because the cost to the Commission to collect video tolls is significantly higher than the cost to collect tolls via E-ZPass. The fees help offset the cost of looking up vehicular information, printing and mailing the statement and any subsequent actions needed to recover the toll.

Analyses conducted prior to the issuance of the Addendum concluded that up to 84 percent of customers at the new bridge would be E-ZPass users. The Addendum states that the Commission will conduct E-ZPass sign-up efforts in the region prior to implementation of tolling at the bridge.

Traffic Diversion Findings

The analytical work in the EA Addendum shows that, during peak travel times, the volume of traffic using the Scudder Falls Replacement Bridge will not be appreciably different than the volume of traffic that would use the existing bridge without a toll. The Addendum also reveals that the environmental consequences disclosed in the original EA document will remain valid once cashless tolling is implemented and that cashless tolling will have “little or no additional effects on natural and human resources in the project area.”

The Addendum’s diversion findings are based on traffic study work that was conducted to gain an understanding of potential impacts to local roadway and other bridges in the region, including the Washington Crossing Toll-Supported Bridge to the north and three Trenton-area bridges to the south – the Trenton-Morrisville (Route 1) Toll Bridge, Lower Trenton (“Trenton Makes”) Toll-Supported Bridge, and Calhoun Street Toll-Supported Bridge.

The study work used both a \$1 toll for passenger vehicles (the Commission’s current base toll rate) and a \$3 toll (an amount closer to the rates charged by other NJ-PA Delaware River toll bridge operators) as a purely hypothetical figures for examining potential traffic impacts. (**Note:** *The Commission has yet to determine what the toll rate for the new bridge will be. It is a widely accepted industry practice to use hypothetical high/low toll rates as a means of identifying impacts in traffic-diversion studies for toll facilities.*)

Project Background

Congestion on the current Scudder Falls Bridge results in average delays for motorists of 27 minutes per day. Those delays are expected to grow more severe, with traffic volumes on the existing bridge projected to rise above 70,000 vehicles per day by the year 2030. Enhancing safety also is a major project goal, since approximately 105 accidents occur at the bridge, its interchanges and approach roadways each year.

The congestion and safety problems on the bridge were first articulated in the 1990 *Traffic Study of Trenton-Morrisville Bridge Crossings over the Delaware River*. In 2000, the Commission retained a consultant to conduct the *Southerly Crossings Corridor Study*, which examined ways to meet the future traffic demands of the Scudder Falls Bridge and the three nearby vehicular bridge crossings between Trenton, N.J. and Morrisville, Pa. This study attributed the Scudder Falls Bridge's congestion and safety problems to its narrow configuration and the close proximity of adjoining interchanges with entrance ramps merging onto I-95.

Currently estimated to cost \$322 million, the I-95/Scudder Falls Bridge Improvement Project is the largest single capital initiative to date in the Commission's 76-year history. The project is the marquee element of a comprehensive \$1.2 billion capital improvement program that the Commission initiated 10 years ago to refurbish, expand and modernize its network of 20 Delaware River crossings and related transportation facilities. Major capital program projects have already been completed within the past three years at other area bridges -- the Trenton-Morrisville (Route 1) Toll Bridge, the Calhoun Street Toll-Supported Bridge, and the Washington Crossing Toll-Supported Bridge, among them.

The project area will extend 4.4 miles along I-95 - from the Route 332 interchange in Bucks County, Pa. to the Bear Tavern Road interchange in Mercer County, N.J. The work will include a complete replacement of the existing four-lane Scudder Falls Bridge over the Delaware River with six lanes of through traffic (three in each direction), two auxiliary northbound lanes for entry/exit travel, and one auxiliary southbound lane for entry/exit travel.

Other major components of the project include:

- Widening of I-95 from the Route 332 exit in Pennsylvania to the bridge by adding an additional lane in each direction (widening to the inside of the highway).
- Reconfiguration of the I-95/Taylorville Road Interchange in Lower Makefield Twp., Pa. by eliminating the existing eastern southbound off-ramp from I-95 and combining it with the existing western southbound off-ramp.
- Reconstruction and reconfiguration of the Route 29 interchange through the use of roundabouts; this option would avoid traffic signals, resulting in a folded diamond interchange with two roundabout intersections at the ramps with I-95.
- A multi-use bicycle/pedestrian pathway on the southbound span; the Commission approved the pathway's inclusion in April 2010.

- Full inside and outside shoulders/breakdown lanes on both bridge spans, a current highway standard requirement; the inside shoulders will be 14-foot wide (two feet wider than the 12-foot width required under current highway design criteria) to allow for future bus-rapid transit routes in the region.
- \$7.5 million of noise-abatement walls along the approach roadways leading to and from the bridge.

Reasons for Tolling Replacement Bridge

The Commission on December 21, 2009 authorized tolling for the new facility due to the absence of federal and state transportation financial support for the project and because it would have been unfair to apply the financial costs solely to motorists using the Commission's seven current toll bridges. The Commission has been criticized from time to time by motorists at its current tolled crossings – notably drivers using the agency's I-78 and I-80 toll bridges – who have expressed resentment over how their tolls currently help to subsidize the agency's existing I-95 bridge.

The tolling decision came in the aftermath of the release of the project's original 561-page, three-volume EA document -- a development that necessitated the compilation of the Addendum document that the Commission is holding a hearing on today.

Cashless tolling will be employed regardless of whether the Commission decides to carry out the project itself through a conventional design-bid-build procurement or as a public-private partnership (P3). The Commission last year initiated the process of examining whether to use a P3 to carry out the bistate project. The Commission has entered into a contract with KPMG and Nossaman LLP to provide advisory services on the financial and legal feasibility of using a P3 to carry out the project.

Facility History

The 50th anniversary of the Scudder Falls Bridge's official opening was in June of this year.

Construction of the 1,740-foot span was completed on October 29, 1959. However, the bridge did not open to traffic until June 22, 1961 due to incomplete highway approaches on both sides of the river. The bridge was built by a contractor hired jointly by Pennsylvania and New Jersey and the two states annually paid the Commission to maintain and operate the bridge until July 1, 1987, when the two states transferred ownership of the Scudder Falls Bridge and 12 other non-toll Delaware River spans to the DRJTBC.

The bridge was not built with federal interstate highway funds. Its construction was financed with 50 percent federal highway money (non-interstate program) and 50 percent by the states of New Jersey and Pennsylvania. The contractor on both the bridge substructure (piers and abutments) and superstructure (steel girders and bridge deck) was the Conduit and Foundations Company of Philadelphia, Pa.

The Scudder Falls construction project took 1 year, 2 months, and 22 days to complete. It was one of six bridges that were built within the Commission's jurisdictional limits during the 1950s.

The bridge is a 10-span structure, consisting of two-span continuous steel-plate girders with alternating cantilever suspended spans and a concrete deck. The bridge was constructed using the following approximate amount of materials:

- 9,000 cubic yards or 18,000 tons of concrete. The concrete mixture included an estimated 14,625 barrels or 58,500 bags of cement.
- 3,265 tons (6,531,000 lbs) of steel in the superstructure of the bridge.
- 2,500 gallons of paint for three coats of paint of the steel work in the superstructure of the bridge.
- 596,000 pounds of reinforced steel rods in the bridge's superstructure.

The bridge has been the Commission's most heavily used span during the past 10-year period. The bridge carried an average of 58,200 vehicles per day in 2010.

More Project Information

For more information, individuals should access the project Web site – www.scudderfallsbridge.com -- or call the project hotline telephone number at 1-800-879-0849.

About the Commission

The Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission was formed by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the State of New Jersey in 1934. It operates seven toll bridges and 13 toll-supported bridges, two of which are pedestrian-only spans. The Commission is a self-supporting public-service agency that receives neither federal nor state tax dollars to finance its projects or operations. Funding for the operations, maintenance and upkeep of its bridges and related transportation facilities is solely derived from revenues collected at its toll bridges. The Commission's jurisdiction extends along the Delaware River from the Philadelphia-Bucks County line north to the New Jersey/New York border. The bridges carried more than 139 million cars and trucks in 2010. For more information about the Commission and its various initiatives to deliver safer and more convenient bridge travel for its customers, please see: www.drjtbc.org.

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