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**SCUDDER FALLS BRIDGE PROJECT NJ REFORESTATION PLAN COMMENTS
TO BE ACCEPTED UNTIL MAY 16**

*Tree Cutting in Vicinity of New Bridge and I-95 Approach in New Jersey
Scheduled to Begin after October 1*

EWING, N.J. – The Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission today reconfirmed that the public will have until May 16 to submit comments on planned New Jersey tree cutting and reforestation measures for the Scudder Falls Bridge Replacement Project.

The extended comment period began after the conclusion of a public hearing that was held Wednesday evening on the project’s proposed New Jersey No Net Loss Reforestation Plan.

Under the proposed plan, the Commission plans to remove trees on a little more than 14 acres in Ewing, N.J. The affected properties are in the vicinity of the bridge, at the adjacent I-95/Route 29 interchange, and along the I-95 New Jersey approach to the bridge. Tree cutting work is scheduled to begin after October 1, which is the end of the annual Indiana bat foraging season.

The Indiana bat, classified as an endangered species in 1973, winters in caves and mines and spends summers in wooded areas. Because of the possibility that Indiana bats could roost in the wooded areas near the Scudder Falls Bridge (there is no verifiable evidence to that effect, however), the project’s forest clearing measures may only occur from October 1 to March 31. The annual tree cutting moratorium for potential Indiana bat roosting areas is a generally standard practice for large-scale projects across the Northeast.

The tree cutting work planned for the bridge replacement project’s New Jersey right-of-way areas would affect a little more than 14 acres. The tree removal will allow for replacement of the Scudder Falls bridge, reconstruction of the I-95/Route 29 interchange, and installation of additional noise-abatement walls along the bridge’s I-95 approach in New Jersey. Of this area, 10.36 wooded acres is classified as qualifying forest requiring mitigation by the Commission. In accordance with the New Jersey No Net Loss Reforestation Act, the Commission has mapped out a plan of how it will compensate for the trees that will be removed for the project in New Jersey. All of the affected property is in Ewing Township, N.J.

The crux of the proposed reforestation plan is as follows:

- Plant slightly more than 1,400 trees on 7.18 acres of the project’s New Jersey right-of-way after respective construction stages are completed;
- Plant another 650 trees elsewhere in Ewing Township to the maximum extent practicable; and
- In the event the Commission cannot meet its Ewing tree-planting quota, the agency would provide monetary compensation to the state DEP at a rate of \$300 per tree.

The Commission’s reforestation plan will be submitted shortly after the 60-day public comment period on the proposal ends on May 16.

The count-down clock for submitting the plan was triggered after the Commission adjourned a public hearing on the plan on Tuesday evening at the West Trenton Volunteer Fire Company Ballroom in Ewing Township. Only two individuals testified on the plan at that event. An informational New Jersey-oriented open house on the Scudder Falls Bridge Replacement Project that immediately preceded the public hearing, however, attracted 96 attendees. There are a variety of ways for the public to provide further comment on the proposed reforestation plan:

- E-mail: Interested parties may send comments to info@scudderfallsbridge.com
- Project website: The project website – www.scudderfallsbridge.com – has a “Contact” portal that includes a form that the public may utilize to provide comments
- Commission website: The Bridge Commission has a public website – www.drjtbc.org – that includes a “Contact Us” page where people can fill out an on-line comments form
- U.S. Mail: Please address envelopes to Community Affairs Department, Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission, 2492 River Road, New Hope, PA. 18938-9519

The Commission plans to compile and respond to comments on the reforestation plan as part of its formal submission to the NJ Forest Service.

Updated Project Video/Open House Display Boards Available Online

The Commission has posted additional information on the reforestation plan and all of the display boards from Tuesday’s project open house on the home page of the agency’s website, www.drjtbc.org. The website also now includes a link to an eight-minute project video that was revised for the recent New Jersey-centric open house. The updated video may be directly accessed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KXq9L3Jm7iw>. The project fact sheet distributed at the recent open house also has been posted.

Many of these materials will be linked at or directly uploaded to the project website --- www.scudderfallsbridge.com -- in the coming days.

The open house enabled New Jersey residents and motorists to reacquaint themselves with the project by examining informational display boards and speaking with project representatives. The event featured 22 different display boards grouped into 8 different subject categories:

- Project Status and Contracts
- Route 29 Interchange
- Updated Bridge Design Renderings
- Construction Staging/Traffic Control
- Taylorsville Road Interchange (Pennsylvania)
- Environmental Considerations
- Noise Walls
- NJ No Net Loss Reforestation Act Compliance

The Scudder Falls Bridge Replacement Project involves a heavily commuted 4.4-mile portion of the I-95 corridor extending from the Route 332/Yardley-Newtown Road interchange (Exit 49) in Bucks County, Pa. and the Bear Tavern Road/Route 579 interchange (Exit 2) in Mercer County, N.J. The congestion-prone highway segment is a choke point for job-commuter traffic between Bucks County, Pa. and Central Jersey. Construction on the project is expected to get fully underway during the first half of 2017.

The Commission plans to raise capital to pay for the project through the dissemination of bonds. To address the resulting financing obligations, the Commission will collect tolls on the replacement bridge via an all-electronic/cashless/pay-by-plate tolling system (there will be no cash collections via toll booths). An electronic toll gantry with related infrastructure is to be installed in the southbound direction on the Pennsylvania side. The facility will have E-ZPass tag readers and video cameras for license-plate billing.

The Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission recently began utilizing such a “Toll by Plate” system at the Pennsylvania entry point for the Delaware River Bridge, which links the Pennsylvania and New Jersey turnpikes. Cashless systems also are in place in many other states and countries. The Commission plans to hold hearings on both sides of the river in the coming months once a toll schedule for the Scudder Falls Replacement Bridge can be determined and proposed.

More information about the project is available at www.scudderfallsbridge.com. A toll-free information/comment line for the project may be accessed toll-free at 855-I95-SPAN (855-495-7726).

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 141.7 million cars and trucks in 2015. For more information about the Commission and its various initiatives to deliver safer and more convenient travel for its customers, please see: www.drjtb.org.