

Debate over former bypass spans 2 decades

The following is a select timeline tracing about two decades of debate over the former Millstone Bypass.

• **1983-4:** Following discussions going back to the late 1970s, the state Department of Transportation undertakes a study of the 20-mile section of the Route 1 corridor between Lawrence Township and New Brunswick. The corridor is divided into sections, including the Penns Neck area, and alternative improvements are developed for each.

• **December 1986:** The Route 1 Corridor Transportation Study is released, recommending that signalized intersections at major regional cross streets be

removed and replaced with grade-separated interchanges, the stated goal being to maintain Route 1 as a primary arterial roadway. The study identifies the need for such improvements in the Penns Neck area.

• **1994:** The DOT develops and begins presenting potential alignment schemes to local officials.

• **September 1995:** Preliminary design is begun on a preferred alignment. A plan that will become known as the Millstone Bypass calls for removing three traffic lights on Route 1 and building a 2.3-mile roadway linking Route 571, near the Princeton Junction train station, to Washington Road, near Carnegie Lake, running parallel to

the Millstone River and Delaware & Raritan Canal. Subsequent projections anticipate construction to be completed by the summer of 2000.

• **1996:** Sensible Transportation Options Partnership, or STOP, is founded in opposition to the bypass after founders learn the DOT alignment would result in the destruction of part of the Washington Road Elm Allée.

• **October 2000:** Following years of mounting contention, the DOT releases its long-awaited environmental assessment of the bypass. In it, the state makes a case for the agency-preferred roadway, concluding it poses no significant environmental impacts.

• **November 2000:** In a surprise reversal, Gov. Christie Whitman rejects the DOT's findings and orders a full environmental impact statement on the proposed bypass.

• **March 2001:** DOT Commissioner James Weinstein brings in third-party mediators to help resolve the stalemate

over the bypass. Rutgers University's Voorhees Transportation Policy Institute is named to prepare a draft EIS in cooperation with Rutgers' Center for Negotiation and Conflict Resolution, conflict-resolution firm Helen Neuhaus & Associates, and a roundtable made up of community stakeholders.

• **June 2003:** The Voorhees Transportation Policy Institute releases to the public its draft environmental impact statement. The environmental and logistical analysis presents 19 roadway alternatives to the former bypass, at costs ranging from \$12 million to almost \$100 million, as well as a no-build option. Public input is gathered and the document and input are submitted to the DOT to prepare the final EIS.

• **January 2004:** The DOT unveils its final EIS and preferred alignment, which includes Route 1 in a below-grade underpass of Washington Road, at an estimated cost of \$65 million or more.