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## MADISON AVENUE/COMMUTER RAIL CORRIDOR STUDY: SCOPE OF PROJECT

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### SUBREGIONAL STUDY PROGRAM, 2008 – 2009

#### Proposal

**Proposal Sponsor:** County of Passaic

**Proposal Name:** Madison Ave/Commuter Rail Corridor Study: Linking Urban Redevelopment and Transportation Investment in Passaic County

**Amount Requested:** \$280,000

**Purpose:** To complete a concept of how the proposed Passaic-Bergen Passenger Service Restoration Project can transform the Madison Ave/Commuter Rail corridor into a transit oriented environment that would stimulate economic activity, coordinate new and existing transit options, and link other activity centers. The project will result in a comprehensive strategy on how to integrate existing and future transit modes, land use options, and transit/pedestrian oriented development.

**Description:** The focus of the study can be seen in the Study Area Map along the eastern part of the county running through the Borough of Hawthorne, and down into the Urban Center that is the City of Paterson. The map depicts the proposed Passaic/Bergen DMU Commuter Rail Line, existing NJ Transit rail lines, and the major roads that connect these transit options to the rest of the City and region. A characterization of the entire study area will be done to determine any transportation or demographic trends and issues that currently exist. In addition, the impacts of the construction of the proposed rail line on these trends will be identified in order to prioritize the key issues of the area. This characterization will assist in determining which areas will be most impacted in the future and what type of analysis should be done to develop potential solutions.

The Core Study Area Map provides an aerial view of the “urban core” focused around the proposed Madison Ave/Broadway Station stop. This area already includes an extraordinary mix of uses and will likely become the centerpiece of the “urban thoroughfare” vision. Local coordination will be crucial in facilitating the input needed to create this vision and will be a major emphasis in every part of the study.

The results of this will give the public the opportunity to provide feedback on what building typologies and intensity, pedestrian amenities, housing types, and street types would best fit their communities. These preferences can be codified and implemented where the local residents and town officials deem most appropriate.

The result will be a package of improvements and concept plans that will directly impact the Madison Ave/Commuter Rail Corridor. This integrated set of transportation improvements, land use options, and financing approaches will help determine what economic and transportation investment would bolster the success of a new rail line.

## Methodology

The methodology to be employed is a combination of traditional corridor analysis along with more targeted work looking at specific strategies at a local scale. It thus begins with a review of regional mobility and smart growth issues (Task 1), a regional transportation model (Task 2) and the development of a Vision Plan for the Madison Ave/Broadway Station area (Task 3). The resulting proposals and plans are then tested for their impact on mobility through a traditional transportation modeling process (Task 4) and an action plan is developed (Task 5). Throughout the process there is an active attempt to engage the technical community (TAC), stakeholders (municipal meetings and targeted outreach), and general public (Task 6).

### Data Sets

The data sets to be used for this study include basic plans and studies at different scales, readily available data such as the 2000 Census results and regional projections of employment and population from the NJTPA, as well as custom data products, such as the NJRTM model results – through the Passaic County Transportation and Smart Growth Model – as well as a digital overlay of land use and zoning to be used to refine the zonal data of the model. Data from the Environment Impact Statement (EIS) and Main Avenue Traffic Simulation Model will also be used in the analysis.

## Scope of Work

### Task 1: Review of Regional Mobility and Smart Growth Issues

The study will begin with a review of existing information on regional mobility and smart growth issues in the Madison Ave/Commuter Rail Corridor. This review will include an assessment of the major drivers of land use development, including both local and regional planning, zoning and regulations, profile transportation demand, examine the supply of transportation service and infrastructure by mode (auto, rail, bus, bike and walking), committed transportation and economic development projects, and available funding.

- **Economic, Land Use and Demographic Dynamics**

The basic economic, land use and demographic dynamics of the Madison Ave/Commuter Rail Corridor will be reviewed. Existing and projected trends in key variables impacting transportation demand such as population growth -- its distribution within the region, age structure, and journey to work characteristics – and employment growth (rate, distribution and type) will be reviewed. Interviews with local and regional planning officials will be conducted to ensure that the information gathered are the most up to date initiatives and to obtain more insight on the current and future needs of the area.

- **Transportation System Review**

Local Master Plans, regional plans including the NJTPA Regional Plan, local and regional transportation studies, and other readily accessible information will be reviewed to identify the major transportation issues in the region by mode.

- **Local and Regional Planning Review**

A review of local and regional planning initiatives including the Passaic County Strategic Revitalization plan, the OSG-sponsored Greater Paterson Study being undertaken by NJIT, and local and county master plans will be completed to identify key policies and practices that might impact on the pattern of land use and transportation demand within each center and movement between them.

- **Review of Current Investments and Financial Resources**

Using resources such local master and capital improvement plans, county and regional transportation improvements programs, as well as interviews with local and regional decision-makers, a list of committed projects and available resources will be developed.

- **Environmental Impact Statement Review**

An environmental impact statement (EIS) is currently being finished for the DMU project, but a preliminary review of the environmental conditions along the corridor will be completed. Information including, but not limited to, environmental impacts, grade crossings, ridership, and project design will be used to educate other decision making processes.

**Product:** A technical memorandum:

- documenting the existing and projected patterns of growth for the Madison Ave/Commuter Rail Corridor; reviewing the impact of existing local and regional land use and economic policies (especially the Highlands Legislation and Urban Revitalization) on the demand for transportation services;
- assessing the current performance of the transportation system by mode;
- outlining projected local and regional transportation investments; and
- identifying existing local and regional resources to finance transportation improvements
- a review and various mapping of the environmental factors in the study area

Time Frame: Within 3 months of consultant selection.

## **Task 2: Regional Transportation System Performance**

The information developed during Task 1 will be used to develop a “Baseline Mobility Scenario” for the Madison Ave/Commuter Rail Corridor. This will then be input into the Passaic County Regional Transportation and Smart Growth Model<sup>1</sup> and the results for the

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<sup>1</sup> It is possible that a sub-area extraction of the County Model could be executed, although this is not felt to be necessary at this time.

Madison Ave/Commuter Rail Corridor under trend conditions identified for both the current year and some future year (likely to be the NJTPA Plan Horizon Year). Both input and outputs will be presented by zone, mode and facility and summarized to be accessible to municipal and county decision-makers.

Product 2.1: The first product will be a recalibrated transportation model and a set of model outputs to be used as a baseline for the local models used to test specific scenarios.

Product 2.2: The second product will be a Technical Memorandum synthesizing the modeled results and the information collected in Task 1 to define a set of mobility issues. This will include an estimate of the trips by purpose, origin, destination, mode, and the delineation of key mobility issues within each center and for the region as a whole. This will be used to inform the discussion of the transportation mobility enhancement strategies in Tasks 3 and 4.

Timeframes: Within 6 months of Consultant Selection.

### **Task 3: Madison Ave/Broadway Station Area Vision Plan and Needs Assessment: The Foundation of A Great Urban Thoroughfare**

The Passaic-Bergen Passenger Service Restoration Project will no doubt lead to the transformation of what is now warehousing and small manufacturing businesses, into varying transit oriented developments. Although private investment may drive the majority of the improvements it is vital to integrate these uses into the surrounding communities in a way that will invite pedestrians, improve public amenities, alleviate congestion, and add transportation options. If these developments isolate themselves, the reinvestment and integration with the surrounding areas needed to make this a great urban experience will never happen.

The Madison Ave/Broadway station area holds many unique characteristics that make it ideal as the focal point of a community visioning process. This area comprises the blocks within the vicinity of the intersection of two of the most important streets in the City of Paterson, Madison Ave and Broadway Ave. The blocks surrounding the proposed station contain a good mix of commercial, residential, and civic uses and would benefit most from transit oriented development. The area falls within two redevelopment areas, which provides flexibility to the City of Paterson in terms of zoning, development regulations, and financing options. The redevelopment plans also provide a great deal of guidance in creating positive urban design in the surrounding neighborhood, allowing the study to focus more on the nature of any potential transit oriented development adjacent to the proposed station. In addition, the City of Paterson currently owns several parcels of land surrounding the proposed station site making it the most critical asset for economic development. Providing county resources along with cooperation between the City of Paterson, local community, and other vital stakeholders will result in the most feasible concept plan around any of the proposed stations.

This will be facilitated through a community based visioning and visual preference survey approach such as that used so successfully in other Passaic County communities

such as Bloomingdale, Pompton Lakes, Wayne, and West Milford. A key part of this process is early public participation, facilitated through the local officials, which results in a clear vision of how the community defines the character of their existing neighborhoods as well as what would be appropriate in future reinvestment. Participants will be shown various images on pedestrian spaces, housing types, building typologies, signage, and street designs. It is at this time that the mobility options from the first part of the needs assessment can be tested to find out how appropriate the public feels they are for their neighborhoods. The most appropriate aspects will then be implemented into a concept plan for any potential transit oriented development.

The visioning process also includes improvements to the existing uses and services along with new development. The work completed in Task 1 will provide all the background needed to determine the current needs of the corridor as well as the impacts of the rail line. The first set of recommendations that will come from the needs assessment will focus on the road and transit facilities surrounding the Madison Ave/Broadway station area. This will include developing concept plans for several intersections that will promote improved efficiency for both cars and pedestrians. These alternatives can be tested through transportation models that will provide feedback on the impacts of these changes as well as address issues such as safety and capacity management through speed changes, signal coordination, or alternative parking strategies. The results would not only improve safety, and flow, it would make public transportation options such as buses and para-transit service more efficient. Feedback from the County Engineer will help in determining which alternatives are most feasible before they are tested in the models.

**Product:** A Vision Plan for development surrounding the Madison Ave/Broadway Station Area. Specific concept plans at intersections that promote traffic calming and transit oriented development will be created. Urban design principles and certain design criteria will be included in the reports from the vision plans as well as the results of the community input from the VPS.

**Timeframe:** 6 months after consultant selection.

#### **Task 4: Testing the Smart Growth and Mobility Enhancement Scenario**

Once the different land use and transportation investments that could enhance mobility and smart growth in the region have been identified, they can be tested to determine their impact on levels of service and efficiency. At this point a “micro-model” will be created that can simulate the individual movements of vehicles and pedestrians in the “urban core”, at grade crossings, or at crucial intersections within the study area. This will include anticipated growth in the area as well as any additional growth through the redevelopment areas and any new transit oriented development. This will provide feedback on which options are most feasible and what areas may be impacted most by the operations surrounding the new rail line.

**Product:** A technical memorandum outlining the benefits of an enhanced mobility and smart growth approach to regional growth and recommendations on how to improve on current and future infrastructure investments.

**Timeframe: 3 - 9 months after consultant selection.**

### **Task 5: Phased Implementation Action Agenda**

Based on the model results, planning strategies, and available financing, a prioritized set of implementation actions will be identified. These will include both transportation investments and strategies as well as smart growth approaches. Each action will be assigned to a timeframe, responsibilities for implementation identified, and potential financing sources established.

It is anticipated that this will lead to a number of recommendations for both the regional transportation planning and investment program (problem statements) as well as a variety of supportive land use and local investment actions that can increase the bang for the buck.

The vision plans will provide suggestions on implementation of improvements to the built environment and pedestrian realms within the “urban core area”, but may also be used throughout the study area.

The implementation agenda will be presented to all of the local stakeholders and the public in order to receive feedback. This feedback will be integrated and retested if necessary.

#### **Specific Concepts that may be developed for hand-off include:**

- Identification of key bicycle and pedestrian projects (local and regional)
- Recommended Land Use and Design Standards to be implemented through local ordinances and redevelopment plans (local)
- Potential “community shuttle” services (local, NJT)
- Specific improvements to Madison Ave/Broadway Station Area to promote safety, mobility and an interpretive roadway that reflects the cultural and environmental themes that it links. (Physical improvements, NJDOT, County, Local)
- Improved Bus Service

**Product: Action plan including hand-offs.**

**Timeframe: 12 months after consultant selection.**

### **Task 6: Public Involvement and Interagency Coordination**

Public involvement will occur throughout the process and will be tailored to the stage of the study. It will take advantage of the County’s current outreach processes that include regular meetings with each municipality and other related outreach efforts associated with the Strategic Revitalization Plan. A technical advisory panel will be formed to meet on a quarterly basis to provide technical insights and other support. It is anticipated that membership will include at least the NJTPA, NJT, NJDOT, The City of Paterson, The

Borough of Hawthorne, and other Passaic County Engineer. A project website will be maintained as part of the Department of Planning's location on the County of Passaic website. Specific stakeholder outreach will be done through meetings with the municipalities as well as identified interest groups such as Skylands Clean (environment) and the Tri-county chamber of commerce. In addition, the Passaic County Engineer will be involved throughout the project to ensure that all implementation and strategies meet county guidelines. Updates and feedback on the progress of the study will occur early and often with all members of the technical advisory panel and the various stakeholders.

**Product:** Minutes of meetings, maintenance of website, interagency, municipal and public outreach as indications of an effective public involvement and interagency process.

**Calendar:** Early and Often.

### **Task 7: Project Management and Reporting**

This will cover items such as preparing an RFP, selecting a consultant, meetings with the consultant to go over the scope and progress, as well as quarterly reporting to the NJTPA.

**Months 1-24**

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