

What is the Route 17 Bottleneck?

The Route 17 Bottleneck is the portion of Route 17 that necks down to 2 lanes in each direction just south of the Route 4/17 Interchange, and just north of Essex Street and I-80. This stretch of Route 17 falls within the Boroughs of Maywood and Paramus, and the Township of Rochelle Park.

What is planned?

Bergen County is currently participating with the State of New Jersey on the *Route 17 Bottleneck Project Alternatives Analysis, Preliminary Engineering, and Environmental Documentation*. This project is in the process of developing and advancing a number of improvements geared toward improving traffic operations and safety in the Route 17 corridor. Route 17 is a New Jersey State Highway, under the jurisdiction of the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT). Bergen County's role is to review the State's plans and make sure that the highway functions and is safe. While it has no jurisdiction over the highway, Bergen County's role has been to oversee the daily work and progress for this critical regional project.

What are the major issues in the corridor?

Other than the obvious traffic issues created by losing a lane in each direction on Route 17, there are a number of structural and safety issues that have arisen in the corridor:

- Six of the seven major structures (bridges, overpasses, and culverts) are nearly 80 years

old and in need of replacement to correct longstanding structural deficiencies.

- The Bottleneck has crash rates that are 55% greater than the Statewide average of crash rates on similar 4-lane divided highways: 677 crashes in the measured period over the course of three years from January 2005 through December 2007 – more than one crash every other day. The overall crash rate within the Rochelle Park section of the bottleneck is even greater than the crash rates in the remainder of the corridor

These frequent occurrences must be addressed by the local police and first responders, and place a financial burden on the local municipalities.

What about the traffic?

This highway serves as a vital artery for local and regional traffic, in addition to serving as a connector between the New Jersey Turnpike and the New York State Thruway – a critical link for interstate truck traffic and longer-haul commerce. It is one of the most congested corridors in the entire State of New Jersey with 90,000 vehicles per day, placing it in the top one percent for congestion.

This project is geared toward alleviating traffic congestion and improving the reliability of the highway for all users. In addition, improvements to Route 17 would help to remove regional “spillover” traffic from local roads and return it to its intended place on Route 17. This would help to improve conditions on parallel and connecting routes such as Rochelle Avenue, Maywood Avenue, Passaic

Street, and various local residential streets that are plagued by this cut-through traffic.

Why now?

The NJDOT has been in the process of studying Route 17 for many years now. The most recent series of efforts to advance improvements in this corridor were initiated by the NJDOT over ten years ago under a program entitled the *Route 17 Needs Assessment/Concept Development Study*. The current Route 17 Bottleneck Study, which began in December 2008, is an outgrowth of these earlier efforts.

How much property will be affected?

Since the project's alignment hasn't been finalized, the actual property impacts are not yet known. However, many property owners who are likely to be affected by the Bottleneck project have already met with the Project Team to explain the nature of the impact. Those affected will ultimately deal directly with the State, and property will be acquired through either purchase or the statutorily provided eminent domain process.

Who will pay for this project?

Currently, the study efforts here on Route 17 are funded through the State of New Jersey. Given the project's regional nature, as it moves forward it will likely be positioned to receive Federal funding. As such, all efforts thus far have been conducted under strict Federal guidelines. To date, the NJDOT has stated that there is no available funding to move this critical project beyond its current phase.