



*a report to the governing body*

*respectfully submitted by the*

**Route 70 Task Force**

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## Task Force membership

Robert Saldutti, Esq, <i>Chair</i>	Barclay Farm
Mr Ramin Abbaszadeh	Erlton South
Ms Marsha Bennett	Charleston Riding - Fox Run
Mr Jim Bird	Kresson Road
Mr Art Campbell	Chamber of Commerce
Mr Anthony DePasquale	Erlton North
Ms Gaytana Pino	Wexford Leas - Old Orchard
Mr Dan DiRenzo	Erlton South
Mr Phil Guerrieri	Erlton South
Ms Helen Kushner	Barclay Farm
Mr Jeff Lucas	Business Partnership
Mr John Magosin	Barclay Farm
Mr Steve Novack	Point of Woods - Lakeview
Mr Stephen Walsh	Barclay Farm
Mr Phil Rowan	Candlewyck

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## Mission

The Cherry Hill Route 70 Task Force was appointed by Mayor Bernie Platt to bring civic leaders, residents, and other stakeholders together as representatives of the larger community to 1) consider and provide feedback on the future of Cherry Hill's 'main street' from a global perspective, and 2) inform the governing body of their collective opinions and recommendations regarding safety, aesthetics, mobility, capacity, and/or other alterations and enhancements.

# Activities summary

The Task Force first convened with Mayor Bernie Platt and Township Council members on January 25, 2007 at the Cherry Hill Municipal Complex.

The Mayor charged the group to act within 60 days on their mission to envision a revolutionized Route 70 that would benefit Cherry Hill residents, businesses, and regional travelers.

In all, the Task Force deliberated for a period of about 120 days, accepting comment from representatives of the community's Police and Fire agencies, the electric and gas utility PSE&G, the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC), and the Township's consulting engineers Remington & Vernick.

The committee held a public hearing for the business community on February 27, 2007 at the Township's Carman Tilelli Community Center.

Members voluntarily visited other local communities to observe traffic and pedestrian challenges and solutions. They considered previous studies and plans from the DVRPC and the NJ DOT and openly discussed the issues unique to their individual constituencies.

Some Township neighborhoods held public hearings with members of the Task Force to proactively solicit grassroots input.

The Task Force finalized its recommendations at a meeting on May 3, 2007 at the Cherry Hill Public Library. The recommendations contained herein are the result of a months-long process of deliberation and discussion.

During this 120-day period, the Task Force garnered consensus if possible and remained true to its stated purpose: to think broadly and deeply about Route 70, its reciprocal impact on Cherry Hill Township and the region, and the future of this vital artery for commerce and community.

## Narrative comments

The Cherry Hill Route 70 Task Force was organized to bring together a cross-section of various local community stakeholders to collectively improve this important state highway.

The Task Force made recommendations creating a visionary plan for the eight-mile corridor of Route 70 Pennsauken Township border to the Evesham Township, Burlington County line.

***The accommodation of motor vehicles was not the sole purpose. Rather, the intention was to create a connected “main street” corridor to unify our community.***

Route 70 in Cherry Hill offers tremendous economic, transportation, civic, and historical benefits to the Township. The mission of the Task Force was multi-faceted and included a global approach to create a better “main street.” Recommendations were intended to establish a uniform look, ensure local quality-of-life, provide for safe travel, and promote community benefits including pedestrian and other non-motorized uses of Route 70.

The Task Force was mindful that many areas involving transportation and development of suburban areas had been degraded over time by the single-minded emphasis on accommodating the motor vehicle and ad hoc development in general.

Increasingly, the public and its elected representatives understand that community fabric is damaged by ever-widened roadways, endless parking lots, strip centers, and suburban sprawl.

The Task Force was mindful that the accommodation of motor vehicles was not the sole purpose of the committee. Rather, the intention was to create a connected "main street" corridor through Cherry Hill to unify our community.

Because past actions to accommodate traffic had deleterious effects on the community, the Task Force sought recommendations to restore greatness to Route 70 to help and assist those neighborhoods as well as businesses along the roadway. This included the concept of traffic calming to slow vehicles through the entire span but at the same time accommodate ease of flow and efficient traffic management.

The Task Force attempted to make recommendations for a more livable corridor including accommodation of pedestrian access and crossing points, bicycling, and a strong emphasis on landscaping and general aesthetics.

In creating a scenic corridor, recommendations included a massive infusion of trees throughout the entire corridor. It was intended that a vast number of shade trees should be planted along remaining grassy center medians. These trees, in addition to offering obvious environmental and aesthetic benefits, would serve to calm traffic, reduce glare, and provide a natural centerline safety barrier to prevent vehicles from striking opposing traffic.

All recommended landscaping was suggested to be low maintenance, perennial, and both visually and physically varied to promote longevity and visual interest. Also, varied full-grown heights of vegetation should be employed to maximize driver sight lines as appropriate, particularly at major intersections and median access points.

The committee attempted to create a concept in which the street provides a backdrop for everyday life as it is really lived. In fact, Route 70 is one of the cornerstones of our entire Township and functions as a channel for the movement of people, products, and services. Our intent was to cultivate an interdisciplinary team to collaborate on ideas and create a more promising future for our community.

Maximized functionality included concepts to assist neighborhoods in creating more pedestrian-friendly environments. We recognize the important multi-use nature of Route 70. The highway should be flexible enough to support long-lasting economic vitality of our community, be attractive and functional, and most of all, allow for

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encounters between people that help form a community. Great communities are made up of great public spaces.

By looking beyond the edge of the pavement, the Task Force offers options to create a safer, more efficient roadway in harmony with the surrounding community that enhances the natural and built environments and bolsters community.

We as a committee are committed to improving pedestrian accessibility to Route 70, believing that good community design focusing on walking and bicycling as fundamental and growing modes of transportation are basic building blocks of balanced, modern, multi-modal transportation systems.

Recommendations provide for consideration of walkers' and bicyclists' needs early in the planning and design process and elevate bicycling and walking as viable modes in larger context.

Finally, a word on diversity and intentional outreach: the Task Force obtained input from various stakeholders across the local community through a broad cross-section of membership and advisors.

The board was to create an interactive and inclusive community involvement process to hear local issues including specific opportunities and challenges related to Route 70's future.

We believed and still believe that the best projects are those in which local residents and business owners are actively involved and in which local ownership ensures successful implementation. Cherry Hill's increasing demand is that transportation initiatives not be "designed for" but rather "designed with" the community.

Within the Task Force, in our work with various consultants, and in our neighborhood meetings, open two-way communication was the foundation of our approach.

***The best projects are those in which local residents and business owners are actively involved and in which local ownership ensures successful implementation.***



# Recommendations outline

Note: The Task Force reached general consensus on all recommendations with the exception of some members (particularly from Erlton North and South) regarding the addition of three traffic lanes from King's Hwy-Rt 41 to Haddonfield Rd-Grove St. The body of recommendations follows:

## Overall goals

- Minimize congestion according to best projections
- Minimize 'escape' traffic entering residential neighborhoods
- Slow traffic with physical and sensory cues
- Enhance aesthetics through land- and hard-scape improvements corridor-wide
- Encourage pedestrian travel and other alternative transport modes
- Minimize 'islands' of hard to reach businesses while consolidating access points if possible
- Upgrade signage for regional travelers, local 'wayfinders,' and emergency services

## Broad strategies

- Where possible, narrower vehicle travel lanes should slow traffic.
- Better traffic signal synchronization should ease flow of through traffic. At the same time, 'cross-over traffic' needs traffic gaps and safe queue lanes for u- and left-turns.
- Place all utilities underground. Utility providers should anticipate historical outages with redundancies to minimize the service down time and ensure ever-improving levels of service.
- Plantings which blend into the community as well as establish a traffic calming effect. An eventual canopy of trees will help minimize drivers' speeding and frustration. Low maintenance and condition-tolerant ground cover, shrubs and trees *with irrigation* should be selected to create a suburban paradise impression for regional travelers, out-of-town visitors, and residents alike.
- Lighting and bus stop shelters along the route should have a hometown, substantial feel. Advertisement clutter from the present configuration is less than desirable.
- Rethink all signage based on what a non-local driver would need for safety and convenience. Enhance existing signage with unified wayfinding elements, local neighborhood signs, and consistent mile markers for local and emergency service drivers.
- Develop new and existing sidewalks to encourage non-automotive trips. Community-centric hardscape themes will accent neighborhood diversity but can unify the entire corridor.
- Eclectic, generally 'neo-Colonial' themes should be present in design elements and fixtures.

Traveling from the Evesham Township/Burlington County line in a westerly direction:

1. Pennsauken Creek (Evesham border) to Springdale Road.
  - a. Monument signage and landscaping should welcome travelers to Camden County and Cherry Hill Twp (in center median on Cherry Hill side of Pennsauken Creek bridge).
  - b. Stacking lane eastbound for access into the Market Place mall; between Old Orchard and the Marlton town line.
  - c. Next best alternative: eastbound stacking lane for U-Turn only at the signalized Old Orchard and Route 70 intersection.
  - d. Eliminating any existing median openings with planned east and westbound stacking lanes (Klein Company and Sun National Bank).
  - e. Monument/neighborhood ID signage and landscaping at Old Orchard (Old Orchard Rd), Wexford Leas (Wexford Dr), and Lakeview (Birchwood Park Dr South) to replace existing. At all cost, preserve the entrance medians to Old Orchard and Wexford Leas.
2. Springdale to Greentree Road.
  - a. A right-hand turn onto Greentree, westbound.
  - b. Stacking lane eastbound and U-Turns for business access.
  - c. Greentree, southbound, pedestrian "walk light"; and, a *red arrow* signalized light. Current northbound Greentree jug handle turning traffic are forced to cut into the farthest right lane for business access.
  - d. Signage to warn Greentree of a *cross over traffic* pattern as they enter Route 70.
3. Greentree to Old Cuthbert Road.
  - a. Close Grayton Avenue to direct Route 70 access. Grayton is a dead end road.
  - b. Connect Rock Hill Rd to the Cherry Hill Business Park area. This will give drivers an additional travel option.
4. Old Cuthbert to Route 295.
  - a. Extend to Roland Avenue into Mt Laurel. Another route for Kingston and residents and existing tractor trailers.
  - b. The exit onto Route 70 is too sharp for full sized trucks, increase turning radius to allow a full sized tractor trailer their own turn-into lane.
  - c. Since there is only two through lanes, the second from the right lane can be a dedicated N-S exit only lane to Route 295. Signage should warn of merging vehicles.

- d. A westbound signal to allow for entering vehicles into Route 70. Vehicle activated only signal.
- 5. Route 295 to Covered Bridge Road.
  - a. Eliminate entrance from hotel directly into the jug handle.
  - b. Close entrance/exit from bank closest to Route 70.
  - c. Closing apartment exit closest to the intersection at Frontage Road and Route 70.
- 6. Covered Bridge to Kingston Drive.
  - a. At Randoldo Terrace: signalize for eastbound movement from Kingston Development.
  - b. At this new intersection, stacking lanes for left turns and U-Turns, east and westbound.
  - c. Align the westbound stacking lane to a new or existing entranceway into the Medical Center/Barclay Farms businesses.
  - d. An eastbound turning and stacking lane into Kinkos.
  - e. Monument/neighborhood ID signage and landscaping at Barclay Farm (Covered Bridge Rd) to replace existing. At all cost, preserve the entrance medians to Barclay Farm (Covered Bridge Rd and West Gate Dr).
- 7. Kingston and West Gate Drives.
  - a. Understand DOT is currently in design for changes to widen and 'straighten' the intersection and entrance to West Gate Dr... Two left-turn and one straight lane out of Kingston Dr?
  - b. Monument/neighborhood ID signage and landscaping at Kingston Estates (Kingston Dr) and Barclay Farm (West Gate Dr) to replace existing.
- 8. Kingston to King's Highway.
  - a. Between the two roads: stacking lanes eastbound opening nearest *Wills Eye* and westbound opening near the current Keswick Cycle bike shop.
  - b. Develop safe bike and pedestrian route connected to Rt 70 and surrounding neighborhoods that would allow for safe travel onto Brace Rd south of Rt 70. This is a beautiful roadway with little safety for pedestrians and little connectivity with Rt 70 or King's Highway South (to Haddonfield).
- 9. King's Highway to Georgia/Edison.
  - a. Monument/neighborhood ID signage and landscaping in Rt 70 median to welcome westbound travelers to Historic Erlton.
  - b. Mid-block 'call for green' pedestrian signal with textured crosswalk on Rt 70 in vicinity of Vermont Ave and Park Dr.
  - c. Stacking lane for left turns and U-Turns, westbound, between Harrison and Madison. Not to align into a street, not to encourage through-neighborhood traffic.
  - d. Stacking lane for left turns and U-Turns, eastbound, between Vermont and New Hampshire, just west of Vermont. Not to align into a street, not to encourage through-neighborhood traffic.
  - e. Preservation of all existing curbside or median shade trees, especially in the vicinity of Queen of Heaven Church. (Of course, integrate with added shade trees on curb line, on adjacent properties, or in Rt 70 medians).
- 10. Edison/Georgia to Cooper Landing Road.
  - a. For protected lefts for eastbound traffic crossing westbound lanes to access Cooper Landing Rd northbound: add new synchronized traffic light with the Georgia/Edison signal (queue some westbound vehicles between the signals).
  - b. Wayfinding signage to direct travelers to Cherry Hill Mall on Cooper Landing Rd north.
  - c. East and westbound: no turns allowed at the Edison/Georgia intersection.
  - d. For parking: the abandoned PSE&G substation at 3 Georgia Ave can be converted to a municipal lot. Streetscaping to encourage parking in new lot for local businesses and maximize safe pedestrian access to shops on Rt 70. DOT should dedicate lot to Twp when complete.
- 11. Cooper Landing Rd to Haddonfield Rd-Grove St
  - a. Eastbound stacking lane for left and u-turns
  - b. Eastbound stacking lane at Locustwood Cemetery should remain
  - c. Monument/neighborhood ID signage and landscaping in Rt 70 median to welcome eastbound travelers to Historic Erlton (probably in vicinity of Warren & Curtis Aves).
  - d. Wayfinding signage to Cherry Hill Mall, particularly for eastbound travelers needing to access jughandle or make u-turn to proceed north on Haddonfield Rd.

12. Haddonfield Rd-Grove St to Sayer Ave-Garden Park Blvd.
  - a. Two-way street travel is preferred on Sayer, tied to new signal at Garden Park Blvd to access Garden State Park
  - b. Wayfinding signage to Cherry Hill Mall and Garden State Park (Towne Place on Haddonfield Rd), particularly for eastbound travelers needing to access jughandle or make u-turn to proceed north on Haddonfield Rd.
13. Sayer Ave-Garden Park Blvd to Pennsauken Twp border
  - a. Monument signage and landscaping in median should welcome travelers to Cherry Hill Twp
  - b. Wayfinding signage should direct travelers to Garden State Pavilions and NJ Transit rail station, Garden State Park, and Cherry Hill Mall.

### **Consistent lane configuration**

From Evesham Twp to Haddonfield Rd-Grove St, Route 70 is mostly two lanes and a shoulder on each side. Occasional variations from two to three travel lanes are deemed dangerous and bottlenecks choke rush hour flow. Consensus (with the exception of the Task Force's Erlton representatives) recommends three lanes in each direction, narrower lane width as a traffic calming device, no parallel parking on Route 70, utilizing width from existing median strips to gain needed additional lane(s). Look at refurbishing all Erlton business district off-street parking lots. Most participants view the three lanes as the best compromise for safety and congestion: "It's about time we do this!"

### **Themes**

All participants agree that landscaping and hardscaping with an eclectic, generally neo-colonial theme will minimize a 'freeway' look and feel.

### **Pedestrian access**

At best, only the fleet of foot, young, and desperate manage the feat of crossing Route 70 without dread of death or dismemberment. Reviewing pedestrian-vehicle crashes most likely will indicate locations for safe ways to cross this busy resource. Overhead crosswalks are likely candidates since some of Route 70 will be close to one hundred feet wide.

### **Signal synchronization**

It goes without saying—synchronization of the traffic lights is a must. Nothing less than an strategic design of:

- Central clock times (each intersections' clocks show the same time).
- Each intersection is coordinated to the entire route.
- Turning lanes are secondary to through traffic when signalized.
- Manual override for emergency fire-police-medical vehicles.
- Review signal timing for feeder arterials (e.g. Springdale Rd, Brace Rd, King's Hwy) for traffic patterns.

### **Miscellaneous**

- 'Open graded' quieter paving material to reduce traffic noise
- Mile markers to help with business location; large enough to be visible for average driver.
- Community 'monuments' may be appropriate to document historical points of interest, or perhaps a Township war memorial in a central location to act also as a reference point and source of community pride.
- Even though last, maybe the most important consideration at the time of construction will be business and resident notification of construction timetables. Reduced business and traveler frustration is in everyone's best interest.