ELIMINATING MORE THAN TRAFFIC TIE-UPS: THE ROUTE 30/130 COLLINGSWOOD CIRCLE PROJECT

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When the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) set out to eliminate the Route 30/130 Collingswood Circle in the boroughs of Collingswood and Woodlynne, the state’s objective was clear: remove a circa-1920s traffic circle along one of New Jersey’s oldest transportation corridors and improve safety and traffic operations.

Once an innovative approach to intersection design, the circle had become obsolete as development and associated traffic volume had increased through the decades. Yet the problems with the intersection were much more complex than simply the constant vehicle congestion. The corridor also experienced chronic flooding, causing even more traffic problems and plaguing the surrounding commercial and residential neighborhoods.

In addition, NJDOT sought a comprehensive approach to environmental remediation in the area. The agency had identified ten properties within the corridor as environmentally sensitive Areas of Concern (AOCs), with soil or groundwater contamination from past or current land use, including petroleum service stations. The corridor also contained concentrations of naturally occurring arsenic at levels that exceeded the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection’s Soil Cleanup Criteria.

FROM EYESORE TO GATEWAY

With a multi-disciplined team at work (NJDOT and its consultant, Dewberry) to address the many challenges presented with this circle elimination project, we were able to resolve problems that had frustrated local residents for years. A new traffic signal and efficient ramp network now serve the very tight corridor. Detention basins, four 60-inch pipes constructed atop a crushed stone bedding layer, and other special drainage features have eliminated the flooding issues.

A new pedestrian bridge with an attractive brick veneer is a highlight of the improvements, creating a pedestrian and bike-friendly crossing. Other context-sensitive design features include stamped concrete sidewalks and ornamental lighting. Once viewed as an eyesore, the improved area now serves as a gateway to Collingswood.

THE UNSEEN BENEFIT

Though less visible within the finished upgrades, the environmental remediation work is an exceptional part of this project. Remedial measures included the proper closure and removal of 19 underground storage tanks, the excavation and off-site disposal of nearly 161,000 tons of contaminated soil, installation of a soil-bentonite slurry wall to inhibit the migration of Light Non-Aqueous Phase Liquids from a nearby source area, and installation of cement groundwater baffles within and adjacent to parcels with identified groundwater contamination.

The successful completion of this project paved the way for the next phase of transportation improvements within this corridor. Construction on a $25.7 million federally funded project began in 2012 to reconstruct and improve the stretch of Route 30/130 from the PATCO rail bridge in Collingswood to just north of the North Park Drive intersection in Pennsauken, adding auxiliary lanes in both directions to facilitate better traffic flow and reduce the congestion coming in and out of Collingswood. The project also includes replacing the existing structurally deficient Route 30/130 bridge over the Cooper River and reconstructing the Route 30/130 bridge over Haddon Avenue Bypass to accommodate the highway widening.

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