

MERCER COUNTY
Local Concept Development for
NJ 29, Landing Street to North of Calhoun Street (CR 653)
City of Trenton, New Jersey
Purpose and Need Statement



Project Needs

The NJ 29 expressway, with fast moving traffic, wide cartways, and very limited crossing locations, is a barrier that separates Trenton's downtown from nearly all the Delaware River waterfront. This separation is compounded by the large footprint and limited street connectivity of the NJ state office complex and its large surface parking lots in the study area, which are served by and complement the expressway. Together, this system of state infrastructure severely limits connectivity, access, and economic opportunity for Trenton's downtown, and by extension its neighborhoods.

Project Purpose

The project purpose is to restore community connectivity within Trenton's downtown and between the downtown and Delaware River, provide facilities that safely accommodate all modes of travel within and across the study area, create and provide connections to green space or park areas, and improve Trenton's community quality of life and opportunity for economic development.

Background

Since it was built in the late 1960's, Route 29 has acted as a barrier to the public for access to the Delaware River. Before Route 29 was built and the State office complex was expanded, Trenton residents enjoyed a gracious waterfront park connecting the State House grounds with the Delaware River. In the 1950s and 1960s, adapting to the age of automobiles, many cities built freeways through less developed areas, typically at the expense of parks and open spaces, which frequently existed along waterways. The construction of Route 29 in Trenton cut residents off from their waterfront connection.

In 1987 the Capital City Redevelopment Corporation (CCRC) was created by an act of the New Jersey State Legislature and was charged with revitalizing Trenton's Capital District for the benefit of all citizens of the State. As required by the legislation, the CCRC adopted a 20-year Capital City Renaissance Plan in 1989 to guide "the use of lands within the district in a manner which promotes the economic vitality of the district and enhances the quality of the public environment". This plan contained recommendations for improving and simplifying traffic flow on the local streets and major highways (including Route 29) that access the Capital District, as well as providing improved pedestrian access between downtown Trenton and the Delaware River waterfront. As part of the redevelopment effort, the CCRC and the City of Trenton adopted a redevelopment plan for the downtown that called for the conversion of Route 29 from a freeway to an urban boulevard. In February 2009, the City of Trenton, the Capital City Redevelopment Corporation (CCRC), Mercer County, the New Jersey Department of Transportation, Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission and several other state and bi-state agencies signed a historic memorandum of understanding. The Trenton Waterfront Area Revitalization Initiative Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) created a Joint Coordinating Committee led by the City and CCRC, of which each of the signers are members that work collaboratively to support the realignment of Route 29, the reclamation of the City's waterfront, and the revitalization of Downtown Trenton. For a multitude of reasons these previous initiatives were paused. Now, in partnership with the City of Trenton, Mercer County is completing the LCD Phase, to re-evaluate possible alternatives, and develop a new preferred alternative for advancement.

Community Needs

The City of Trenton, New Jersey's state capital, is an urban city of approximately 91,000 people and is the 10th most populous municipality in New Jersey. Since the completion of NJ 29 and other freeways circling the city, population and economic activity have declined from Trenton's high of 128,000 residents in 1950, and minority and low-income neighborhoods have expanded. While the City's population increased by 7% between 2010 and 2020, retail and



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commercial development has not begun to rebound. Without restricting parking for State employees, mixed use development of the acres of the State’s surface parking lots in the core of downtown Trenton—an area declared by the City to be blighted and an area in need of redevelopment—would contribute to both population growth and economic vitality, to the benefit of the City as a whole.

Aside from economic development, the City of Trenton wishes to reclaim its disconnected Delaware River waterfront. Converting Route 29 to a boulevard, along with converting the underused parking areas into a city street grid with developable parcels, would improve land uses by reclaiming areas currently used for transportation and parking. This provides not only for safe and convenient access to the river from downtown and adjacent neighborhoods, but also provides opportunities for residential, commercial and economic development. A reconnected Trenton will provide possibilities for enhanced recreation, open spaces and mobility, stronger communities, and a more prosperous downtown.

Goals & Objectives

- ***Stimulate economic development*** in the immediate project area and city-wide by changing parking lots into developable parcels and attracting developers to build multi-use facilities that include housing, retail, parking, and business.
- ***Improve traffic connections*** to the downtown street network by redesigning NJ 29 into a better connected facility and building a street grid connected to the existing street grid to the east.
- ***Provide increased open space*** by reevaluating NJ 29’s footprint and making new space available for a riverfront park with passive and active recreation that connects the County’s Old Wharf Park and South Riverwalk Park (or Lamberton Tunnel Park), south of Cass Street, to the City’s Stacy Park, north of Calhoun Street.
- ***Increase the resiliency*** of NJ 29 and the street network it connects with so they can withstand flood events, without eliminating the floodways of the Delaware River and Assunpink Creek.
- ***Improve pedestrian access*** to the Delaware River by addressing the barrier that the freeway created. This includes enhancing bicycle and pedestrian opportunities throughout the project corridor and providing opportunities for intermodal use within the project area.

