This formal streamlining approach tightened time frames and committed decision makers to progress. With no written agreements in place, agencies were asked to commit key personnel to the process which would require genuine personal commitment including full-day meetings, the ability to contribute constructive comments, and the authority to make decisions that would stand the test of later challenges.

Agency coordination. NJDOT and Dewberry worked with agencies to select the appropriate methodology, verify field data, review results, and make decisions as the work progressed. Consensus points were built into the process and all parties were required to refrain from re-opening the issues agreed-upon, unless new and significant data were generated. While a conflict resolution process was developed, it was never needed.

It worked! In their own words: “This project charted new territory... by bringing together planners, engineers, resource and permit agency reps early and often as a means of producing an environmental document and a preferred alternative in a fully collaborative effort. The viewpoints of various disciplines were sought much earlier in the process than is typical. This streamlining of the process in no way diminished the consideration of natural and human resources. Nor did it allow engineering consideration to advance in a vacuum. On the contrary, the early consideration of all of these perspectives has led to a very balanced consideration of all resources and means of addressing the purpose and need of this improvement project.”

Barry Seymour, Executive Director, Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission

Redefining the NEPA Process in New Jersey

Faced with a critical need to redesign one of New Jersey’s interchanges amidst extraordinarily complex challenges, the NJDOT and Dewberry implemented an approach to streamline the environmental analysis and permitting process.

Lessons Learned. NJDOT staff received minimal community and stakeholder comments during the public hearings. Public education and balancing of various disciplines were sought much earlier in the process than is typical. This streamlining of the process in no way diminished the consideration of natural and human resources. Nor did it allow engineering consideration to advance in a vacuum. On the contrary, the early consideration of all of these perspectives has led to a very balanced consideration of all resources and means of addressing the purpose and need of this improvement project.”

Barry Seymour, Executive Director, Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission

FHWA approved this selected alternative in March 2009

Credits: Bruce Riegel, PE, NJDOT, bruce.riegel@dot.state.nj.us • Bruce Hawkinson, NJDOT, bruce.hawkinson@dot.state.nj.us • Jo Ann Asadpour, NJDOT, joann.asadpour@dot.state.nj.us • Ileana Ivanciu, PG, Dewberry, ivanciu@dewberry.com