

Office of the Governor

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NEWS RELEASE

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GOVERNOR INSPECTS DELILAH ROAD BRIDGE IN ABSECON; CITES NEED FOR TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS IN STATE

Gov. Christie Whitman today toured the obsolete Delilah Road Bridge over Route 30 in Absecon to highlight the need for improvements in New Jersey's transportation system and the need for further preservation of open space. The Governor highlighted the importance of improving highways and replacing substandard bridges to transport commuters more safely and efficiently and protecting the state's declining farmland and open space.

New Jersey deserves a better transportation system and we need to keep sprawl from clogging our roads and complicating our lives," the Governor said. "We have to fix what's broken in the Garden State. We have to keep New Jersey a safe, convenient, and attractive place in which to live, work and raise a family."

The Governor said her "NJ First" proposal to invest \$30 billion in needed transportation improvements and expansions. NJ First will help repair crumbling roads and deficient bridges, ease congestion and ensure safe and efficient transportation for commuters.

The 62-year-old Delilah Road Bridge has been determined to be functionally obsolete by the state Department of Transportation because it does not meet today's standards for carrying traffic, providing pedestrian access and providing proper under clearance. The bridge is current in a study and development phase by the DOT and is not currently included in DOT's Five Year Capitol Program. Once adequate funding is identified, a course of action for the bridge--replacement or reconstruction -- will be determined.

"Our NJ First proposal targets deficient bridges that need replacement or reconstruction, and dangerous roadways and intersections as well as improvements in our rail and bus infrastructure to enable New Jerseyans to travel safely, quickly and conveniently from destination to destination," the Governor said.

Under the Governor's proposal, New Jersey voters would decide in November on whether to dedicate funds from a seven-cent increase in the gasoline tax, a surcharge on certain short-term car rentals, and general revenue contribution exclusively for transportation improvements and open space preservation.

Projects in Atlantic County slated to be completed under the Governor's transportation vision include:

- Improvement of intersection of Route 30 and Indiana Avenue, Atlantic City.
- Replacement or reconstruction of deficient bridge on Route 152 in Egg Harbor Township.

The funding proposal would support the first five years of the Governor's comprehensive transportation vision. It will also achieve Gov. Whitman's inaugural pledge to preserve 300,000 acres during her second term and 1 million acres over the next decade. Five of the seven cents would be dedicated to fund transportation projects and two cents would be used to save open space.

The gas tax increase would be included in legislation to reauthorize the Transportation Trust Fund. Under the proposal, TTF spending from state revenue sources would increase by nearly 50 percent from \$700 million in FY 98 to \$1 billion in FY 2003. When combined with federal funds, total TTF spending over the next five years will exceed \$10 billion.

Funding for the preservation of farmland and open space would total \$170 million annually over ten years. Of that amount, \$130 million would be utilized for the acquisition of open space and farmland and \$40 million would be used for development and maintenance of parks in cities and towns, and for historic purposes.

The gas tax would make up half of the Governor's stable funding plan. \$50 million would come from existing general fund revenue and \$36 million from a \$3 per day surcharge on certain short-term rental cars. The 2 cents for open space would revert to the TTF after ten years.