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NEWS RELEASE

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WHITMAN ANNOUNCES \$1.25 MILLION IN "CENTERS" GRANTS TO MUNICIPALITIES

Governor Christie Whitman and Transportation Commissioner James Weinstein today announced the award of \$1.25 million in grants under the New Jersey Department of Transportation's Local Aid for Centers program. The grants were awarded for fiscal year 1999.

Local Aid for Centers grants are awarded for non-traditional transportation projects that advance the development agenda in municipalities designated as "urban, regional, town or village centers" under the State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP).

"These grants are a great example of how transportation funds can be used not just to build roads, but to help make our communities great places in which to live, work and raise a family," said Gov. Whitman.

"The Local Aid for Centers program creates an excellent opportunity for towns to use state transportation funding to advance projects that are outside the traditional concept of a transportation project, such as the creation bikeways, restoration of historic structures or beautification of downtown business areas," said Commissioner Weinstein.

The Local Aid for Centers program is administered through the NJDOT's Local Aid Program and supported by the New Jersey Transportation Trust Fund. Under legislation signed into law in 1995 by Governor Whitman, the Transportation Trust Fund was renewed and local aid funding was increased from \$100 million to \$130 million per year.

Whitman and Weinstein also noted that, in conjunction with the reauthorization of the Trust Fund, municipalities are able to receive 75 percent of the grant once a construction contract is awarded. The remaining 25 percent is released upon completion of the project. In prior years, a municipality had to pay for the construction up front, then seek reimbursement from the state.

A list of the projects receiving grants is attached.

