

Office of the Governor

PO BOX 004
TRENTON, NJ 08625

NEWS RELEASE

CONTACT: Jayne O'Connor
Julie Plocinik
609-777-2600

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GOVERNOR INSPECTS OVERPASS CONSTRUCTION AT ROUTE 4 AND FARVIEW AVE., CITES URGENT NEED FOR TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS

Gov. Christie Whitman today, while inspecting the overpass construction site at Route 4 and Farview Avenue in Paramus, emphasized the urgent need for continued 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 open space.

"The overpass at Route 4 and Fairview Avenue and the Route 4 and 17 interchange are striking examples of the many intersections in New Jersey that need to be repaired or redesigned to improve safety and traffic flow," the Governor said. "In replacing the overpass, and upgrading the Routes 4 and 17 interchange, we'll make sure it serves the traffic needs of this area for the 21st Century. Making sure our bridges and roads are sturdy and safe is a basic function of government. But the fact is, we have a lot of work to do to give New Jersey the transportation system it deserves."

Construction on the overpass began in fall 1997 and is expected to be completed in April 2000. The \$4.3 million project includes the replacement of the Fairview overpass, the doubling of traffic lanes from one to two lanes in each direction, the creation of a sidewalk in each direction on the overpass and the widening of Route 4 from the ramps at Route 17 to the west of Spring Valley Road. The overpass replacement is part of a larger project to redesign the Routes 4 and 17 interchange, one of the busiest intersections in the nation, which handles nearly double its expected traffic volume. Construction on the intersection is scheduled to begin in October 1998.

"While I am happy to report that we have funding available for this Paramus intersection, which will relieve tremendous congestion for those who live and work in this part of the state, we must recognize that there is a lot of work that needs to be done across this state to give New Jersey the transportation system it deserves," said the Governor.

"We hope to ask the voters this fall to dedicate a new, stable funding source to make transportation improvements like this -- improvements that will enable New Jersey citizens to travel more safely and spend less time in traffic jams," Gov. Whitman said. "The stable source of funding I have proposed -- a seven-cent increase in the gas tax -- will also help meet our goal of preserving one million acres of New Jersey open space and farmland within the next decade."

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 Bergen County that could be completed under the Governor's transportation vision, called New Jersey FIRST, include:

- Upgrading the dangerous intersection of Route 1 and 9 at River Street in Ridgefield
- Replacing two structurally deficient bridges on Route 4 at Windsor Road and Broad Street in Teaneck
- Replacing the Passaic River Bridge and adding auxiliary lanes for bridge traffic on Route 17 from Clifton to Rutherford to help alleviate traffic and improve safety
- Eliminating the circle and redesigning intersection of Route 46 and the Bergen Turnpike in Little Ferry to reduce accidents

"Preserving open space and farmland is a quality of life issue for our families and for generations to come," the Governor said. "And so is improving our rails, roads and bridges. New Jersey citizens deserve a convenient, efficient, and safe transportation system. With the help of the Legislature, we'll give voters this November a chance to vote 'yes' for better transportation and a better New Jersey."

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 % from \$700 million in FY 98 to \$1 billion in FY 01-03. 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 for 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.