

# I-95 COTTMAN/PRINCETON INTERCHANGE **NEWS** 2002

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## Categorical Exclusion being conducted for Cottman/Princeton Interchange

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), requires that all federally-funded highway projects undergo an environmental review to identify potential impacts to the natural, economic, cultural and social environments of the project area. There are three levels of review: Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), an Environmental Assessment (EA) and a Categorical Exclusion (CE).

The FHWA determined that the Cottman/Princeton Interchange project will not have significant environmental impacts and directed PENNDOT to complete a CE.

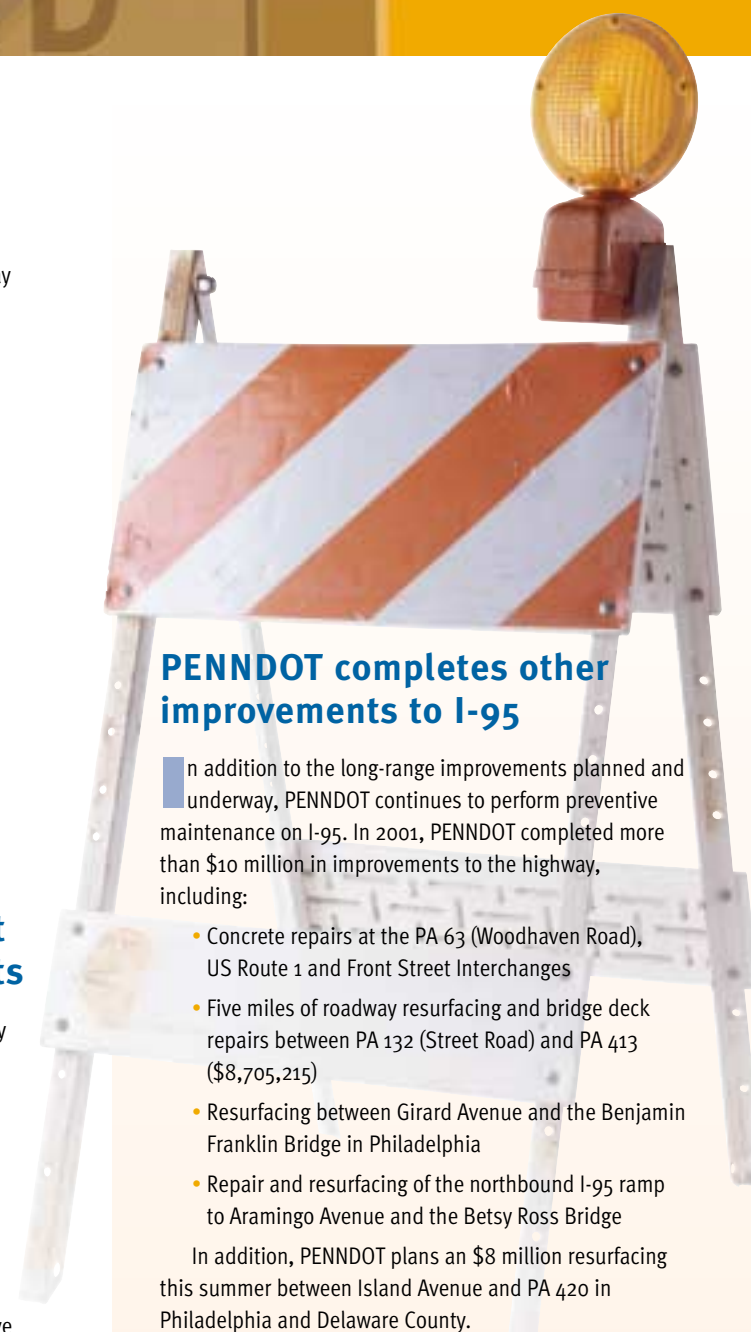
The FHWA defines a CE as an appropriate level of review for "actions which: do not induce significant impacts to planned growth or land use for the area; do not require the relocation of significant numbers of people; do not have a significant impact on any natural, cultural, recreational, historic or other resource; do not involve significant air, noise, or water quality impacts; do not have significant impacts on travel patterns; or do not otherwise, either individually or cumulatively, have any significant environmental impacts."

The project team will complete the CE documentation as part of the preliminary design phase and submit the study to the FHWA for approval.

## Historic property survey underway in Port Richmond for upcoming I-95 improvements

PENNDOT's consulting engineers are conducting an historic property survey this summer as part of preliminary engineering activities for upcoming improvements to I-95 in the Port Richmond section of Philadelphia. The survey is a routine part of the early environmental studies that will identify potential historic properties within the project area for improvements to I-95 between Ann Street and Wheatsheaf Lane.

Letters were distributed in the affected neighborhoods notifying residents that survey crews may need to enter private properties to conduct evaluations. The survey is among the first work items in a contract to prepare construction plans for a project to replace 10 bridges, repair one mile of roadway and improve the Allegheny and Castor Avenue interchanges.



## PENNDOT completes other improvements to I-95

In addition to the long-range improvements planned and underway, PENNDOT continues to perform preventive maintenance on I-95. In 2001, PENNDOT completed more than \$10 million in improvements to the highway, including:

- Concrete repairs at the PA 63 (Woodhaven Road), US Route 1 and Front Street Interchanges
- Five miles of roadway resurfacing and bridge deck repairs between PA 132 (Street Road) and PA 413 (\$8,705,215)
- Resurfacing between Girard Avenue and the Benjamin Franklin Bridge in Philadelphia
- Repair and resurfacing of the northbound I-95 ramp to Aramingo Avenue and the Betsy Ross Bridge

In addition, PENNDOT plans an \$8 million resurfacing this summer between Island Avenue and PA 420 in Philadelphia and Delaware County.

## Why not take SEPTA?

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## Major improvements coming to the Cottman/Princeton Interchange



AERIAL PHOTO ABOVE SHOWS THE CONFIGURATION OF TODAY'S COTTMAN/PRINCETON INTERCHANGE.

Having completed a Point of Access Study (POA) to determine the most efficient way for traffic to enter and leave I-95 in the vicinity of Cottman Avenue, PENNDOT has begun engineering on a project to reconfigure the Cottman Avenue/Princeton Avenue Interchange.

A new interchange is necessary because use of the existing ramps has increased significantly since the highway's construction more than 30 years ago. This traffic growth has created substantial congestion on the local road network adjacent to I-95, particularly at intersections.

The disjointed configuration of today's interchange forces traffic to use a series of residential streets to access northbound and southbound I-95. This promotes speeding,

creates driver confusion and separates residential areas from the riverfront, resulting in a reduced quality of life for those living in the surrounding neighborhoods.

A new interchange will improve traffic flow and safety on I-95 itself, and the communities of Tacony and Holmesburg will benefit from better access to and from the interstate. The new interchange also will minimize traffic congestion on residential and commercial corridors, reduce truck impacts on the local street system, reduce speeding and through-traffic on residential streets, improve directional signing and reduce the barrier effect of I-95 on the community by reestablishing access to the Delaware River.

# Four options considered for the Cottman/Princeton Interchange

PENNDOT's Point of Access Study (POA) evaluated four potential design options for the new interchange. Each alternative evaluated the effects on the local road system of projected traffic conditions through 2025. One of those options, which federal law requires to be evaluated, was a **No Action Option**.

The **No Action Option** was determined unacceptable because all of today's traffic problems would be greatly intensified by 2025 if no changes took place. For this reason, it was used only as a comparative measure to analyze the other potential Design Options.

**Design Option 1** is recommended. Two other Design Options (2 and 3) were developed and evaluated as a result of input from the local community. However, **Design Option 2** would fail to move 2025 traffic through four critical intersections. **Design Option 3** also resulted in two failing intersections by 2025. For this reason, both options were dismissed as unacceptable.

## Design Option 1

The POA Study concluded that the best way to improve the interchange and surrounding road system was a plan known as Design Option 1. Under this scenario, all key intersections in the project area will operate efficiently in 2025.

This selected option comprises the framework for the Preliminary Design—which includes preliminary engineering and environmental analysis—that is now underway. Final Design will follow in 2003, with the new interchange expected to be ready for construction about two years later.

### Design Option 1 includes:

- 1 two-way traffic on a widened Cottman Avenue (two lanes westbound and one lane eastbound) with increased clearance under the Amtrak bridge
- 2 a new on-ramp to southbound I-95 from Cottman Avenue at Wissinoming Street
- 3 two-way traffic on Princeton Avenue with curb extensions at the intersections to discourage speeding
- 4 closing the existing Princeton Avenue on-ramp to southbound I-95
- 5 widening State Road (two lanes southbound and one lane northbound) between Cottman Avenue and New State Road
- 6 a new northbound on-ramp from Milnor Street to the existing on-ramp
- 7 a Princeton Avenue pedestrian walkway to reconnect the community to the waterfront, running from State Road to Milnor Street under I-95
- 8 a new southbound on-ramp at State Road just south of Longshore Avenue
- 9 lengthening and widening the southbound off-ramp at Bleigh Avenue



## Design Option 2

The main feature of Design Option 2 was the creation of a single-point urban interchange at Cottman Avenue and I-95. Other features included:

- 1 two-way traffic on a widened Cottman Avenue (two lanes westbound and one lane eastbound) with increased clearance under the Amtrak bridge
- 2 a new on-ramp to southbound I-95 from Cottman Avenue at Wissinoming Street
- 3 two-way traffic on Princeton Avenue with curb extensions at the intersections to discourage speeding
- 4 closing the existing Princeton Avenue on-ramp to southbound I-95
- 5 widening State Road (two lanes southbound and one lane northbound) between Cottman Avenue and New State Road
- 10 extending Princeton Avenue to Milnor Street for northbound I-95 access
- 11 a new southbound off-ramp directly to Cottman Avenue
- 12 direct access to and from I-95 from Milnor Street



## Design Option 3

The main feature of Design Option 3 was the creation of a split diamond interchange with Cottman Avenue and Bleigh Avenue. Other features included:

- 1 two-way traffic on a widened Cottman Avenue (two lanes westbound and one lane eastbound) with increased clearance under the Amtrak bridge
- 3 two-way traffic on Princeton Avenue with curb extensions at the intersections to discourage speeding
- 4 closing the existing Princeton Avenue on-ramp to southbound I-95
- 5 widening State Road (two lanes southbound and one lane northbound) between Cottman Avenue and New State Road
- 10 extending Princeton Avenue to Milnor Street for northbound I-95 access
- 12 direct access to and from I-95 from Milnor Street