



Honorable Chris Christie
Office of the Governor
PO Box 001
Trenton, NJ 08625

July 24, 2013

RE: Route 35 Rebuilding Project

Dear Governor Christie:

We applaud the state's decision to invest federal highway funds to rebuild Route 35 as a result of storm damage from Superstorm Sandy. This project, which is 10 years in the making, has the potential to greatly increase the shore's ability to resist damage from future storms, and to improve quality of life for residents and tourists.

However, we urge the state to live up to the promise you made when announcing this project: "Rebuild better and stronger." Following the state's Complete Streets policy would provide economic benefits to the towns along the route and dramatically increase the safety of pedestrians, cyclists and other vulnerable users of this roadway, thereby meeting your promise of "improving on what we had before."

Each of our organizations has been meeting with local advocates, the Department of Transportation and the Department of Environmental Protection since the early spring of 2013 to review and assess the design for the Route 35 rebuild. While some Complete Streets improvements are included in the reconstruction plans, one notable exception is the complete absence of dedicated bike lanes in the design drawings.

There are significant economic benefits to providing bicycling infrastructure within the business districts of towns: people on bikes spend more money than people in cars. The state of North Carolina reports that the \$6 million that was spent on bike lanes in the northern Outer Banks has generated an additional \$60 million annually in economic benefits to the region; this is a 10-fold return on investment.

New Jersey's Route 35 corridor is analogous to the Outer Banks in that it is a beachside tourist destination; a similar investment in bicycling infrastructure has the potential to reap similar gains in economic value to the townships and businesses along this route. The Rutgers Voorhees Transportation Center reported in May of this year that active transportation generates an estimated \$497 million in economic activity annually in the state; this figure is nearly eight times the estimated \$63 million in annual infrastructure investment.¹ The \$497 million supported 4,018 jobs and generated an estimated \$49 million in total tax revenue. For your convenience, a copy of that report is included with this letter.

In addition, the need for bicycle safety improvement along Route 35 is well documented. The Tri State Transportation Campaign found that between 2008 and 2010, there were 49 bicycle crashes reported on Route 35 with most of them involving injuries to the cyclists.²

Your recent comment that "the road often feels like 40.5 miles [in length] due to the number of people" speaks directly to the need to follow the state's Complete Streets policy. Implementing key components of the state's CS policy, such as bike lanes, can help ease summer shore traffic. Every bicycle traversing Route 35 is roughly one less vehicle being driven along that corridor. After having experienced these 12.5 miles of Route 35 as both motorists and cyclists, it is evident that there is both the need for bicycle accommodations and there is room on the existing right-of-way to implement the accommodations.

The reconstruction of Route 35 is a litmus test for New Jersey's Complete Streets policy. There are few, if any, New Jersey state highways that have the same available right-of-way, volume of bicycle and pedestrian traffic, opportunity for economic impact and increase in pedestrian safety as Route 35 in Ocean County. Route 35 is ripe for a robust implementation of New Jersey's Complete Streets policy and the potential for payback on investment in bicycle lanes along this corridor is significant.

If bike lanes are not included in this project, then we have to question the validity, ability and intention of the state to implement its Complete Streets policy.

¹ <http://njbikeped.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Economic-Impacts-of-Active-Transportation-in-NJ.pdf>

² <http://tstc.org/reports/njibiking/>

We welcome the opportunity to meet with you and your staff to discuss the bicycle and pedestrian possibilities within the Route 35 project. We would be more than willing to visit the 12.5 miles of Route 35 with you to further explore the specific opportunities for bicycle infrastructure along the route. Please feel free to contact us: John Boyle at 215-242-9253 or john@bicyclecoalition.org; Janna Chernetz at 212-268-7474 or janna@tstc.org, and Cyndi Steiner at 973-886-4142 or cyndi.steiner@njbwc.org.

We look forward to hearing from you. Thank you.

Sincerely,

John Boyle
Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia

Janna Chernetz
Tri-State Transportation Campaign

Cyndi Steiner
New Jersey Bike & Walk Coalition

CC:
Lieutenant Governor Kim Guadagno
Maulik Sanghavi, Office of the Governor
NJDOT Commissioner Jim Simpson
Sheree Davis, NJDOT
Mike Russo, NJDOT
Borough of Seaside Park
Borough of Seaside Heights
Borough of Lavallette
Township of Brick
Township of Toms River
Borough of Mantoloking
Borough of Bay Head