

ROUTE 59 AREA TRANSPORTATION & LAND USE STUDY-EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Route 59 Area Transportation & Land Use Study (the study) identified and evaluated transportation and development issues and future improvement recommendations in the 4.5-mile stretch of Route 59 that runs from Airmont Road in the Village of Airmont east through the hamlet of Monsey and Town of Ramapo to South Pascack Road in the Village of Spring Valley. The distinct mixture of land uses, number of lanes, and congestion along the corridor differentiated the study area from segments east and west. The study utilized a variety of methods to engage in two-way communication with stakeholders and interested public, including four formal community planning workshops, targeted meetings, pop-up sessions at community events, and one-on-one sessions. These outreach sessions gathered public input on existing conditions, gaps and needs pertaining to transportation modes, and alternative transportation and land-use improvement scenarios that address these issues. Route 59 is the only east-west arterial roadway serving southern Rockland County from Suffern in the west to Nyack in the east. The communities adjacent to Route 59 are some of the fastest growing in Rockland County. Residential and commercial development along Route 59 has placed growing stress on Route 59 as is evidenced by regular congestion, especially within segments that pass through hamlets and villages that have traditionally served as community economic centers. As growth in both population and development in the area have greatly increased, so have rush hour travel and congestion, creating a need to plan for the long-term future of the road.

The diverse commercial and residential land uses within this study area generate a variety of home-based and work-based trips using a variety of modes, with a significant pedestrian presence. Residents use Route 59 for many daily shopping needs as well as visits to a variety of businesses. Residents also use Route 59 to get to and from work, whether they drive the full distance or drive to a transit stop located on or near Route 59. The travel markets that move within and through the area are complex, being a mixture of regional and

local person and goods movement and modes including truck, bus, car, commuter rail, pedestrian, and bicycle. Due to its configuration as a parallel route to Interstate 287 (I-287) with interchanges at Exit 14 just east of the study area and Exit 14B at Airmont Road, Route 59 also provides access to the limited access highway as well as relief during times of congestion on I-287 (a portion of the New York State Thruway system).

The land-use and transportation recommendations were developed through consideration of the input and suggestions of stakeholders and the interested public. The recommendations were evaluated through county and local master plans, along with regional and county transportation plans, discussions with local elected and appointed officials, and through the deliberations of the SAC and the PSC. Some of the recommendations that have emerged include concepts through which future development proposals might be evaluated and accommodated more sustainably.

The recommendations in the report are presented in four categories – Community Design/Process, Roadway, Bicycle/Pedestrian, and Transit – for each of three implementation timeframes: short-term (implemented within a five-year timeframe); medium-term (implemented in a five- to ten-year timeframe); and long-term (implemented in more than ten years). The short-term recommendations utilize existing mechanisms to shape the corridor into a safer, more pedestrian friendly environment with increased efficiency for vehicular traffic, emergency responders, and transit through the corridor. The medium- and long- term recommendations identify additional options that may require more detailed studies or larger funding to implement. Communities within the study area as well as transportation agencies serving the corridor can use this report and its recommendations as a basis for further coordination and discussions about a sustainable future for the Route 59 corridor.

The Route 59 Study was initiated in 2019 and almost all



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of the community engagement, data collection, analysis and development of recommendations was completed in draft before the emergence of COVID-19 and the resulting public health emergency became a major concern in the study area. Therefore, the recommendations of the study reflect the results of pre-COVID-19 planning and outreach efforts. However, as the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected many aspects of daily life from school to work to shopping and housing, the transportation conditions defined and analyzed during the study have themselves been altered.

The course of the pandemic and subsequent recovery is difficult to anticipate at the time of this writing. Since March 2020, community life in the study area has been radically altered by emergency orders enforcing social distancing and limiting all but essential activities. Although the nature of these emergency restrictions has changed over time based on monitored infection rates, conditions over the coming months and years are unpredictable. Future spikes in infection rates are still possible and emergency restrictions will be tightened in response. As a result, travel in and through the study area will likely be altered for most if not all of the immediate implementation period of the study recommendations.

Given these emergency conditions, implementation of the study recommendations will need to be adjusted based on conditions in the short-term. Some aspects of the response to the public health emergency, such as extensive reliance on telework, may have significant impacts on mobility and travel demand in the longer-term. This is also true of increased reliance on e-commerce with the resulting higher commercial vehicle volumes in the study area for deliveries. Longer lasting impacts of the pandemic may also impact real estate markets in unpredictable ways.

Despite this uncertainty, the recommendations identified through the study process remain valid for the future of the corridor. However, these recommendations should be revisited on a regular basis throughout the implementation process so that adjustments may be made in response to future conditions that cannot be currently foreseen.