

Welcome to the Skinners Falls Project Advisory Committee Meeting No. 2

- The meeting will begin at 2:00 PM.
- This meeting will be recorded.
- Please log in using your first and last names.
- Use either your computer or phone for audio, not both.
 - Everyone is muted by default when they enter the room. If you are on a phone for audio - press *6 to unmute when you are ready to speak.
- Using video is encouraged, if available, especially when you are speaking.
- Email keyleigh.kern@aecom.com if you are having technical trouble.

Welcome to the Skinners Falls Project Advisory Committee Meeting No. 2 ^{con't}

Meeting Mission:

- Convene members of the PAC to present current findings and how they were used in the planning process
- Provide opportunity for major stakeholders to ask questions and discuss the project.
 - Presenters will pause at points throughout the presentation to accept questions from the audience. Questions in writing may be sent to the project email (Skinnersfallsbridge@aecom.com) after the meeting and will receive a timely response from the project team.



Skinner's Falls Bridge

Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study

Project Advisory Committee Meeting #2

September 23, 2021

Agenda



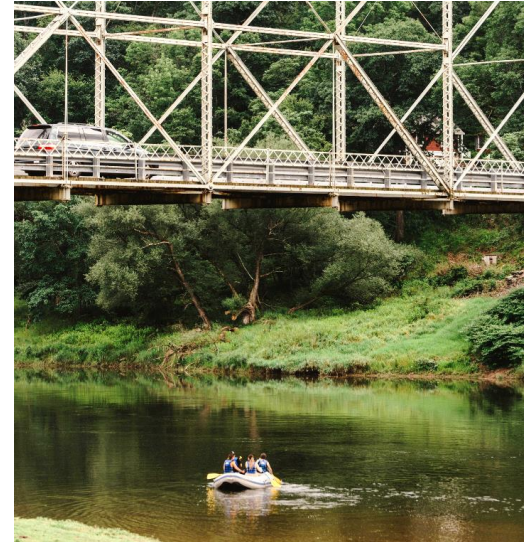
01

Introduction



02

Study Activities



03

Purpose and Need



04

Next Steps



Introduction

Skidders Falls PEL Study Team



PennDOT: Co-owner, primary responsibility for maintenance, manages the planning process



FHWA: Federal lead agency, primary funding source, provides regulatory oversight

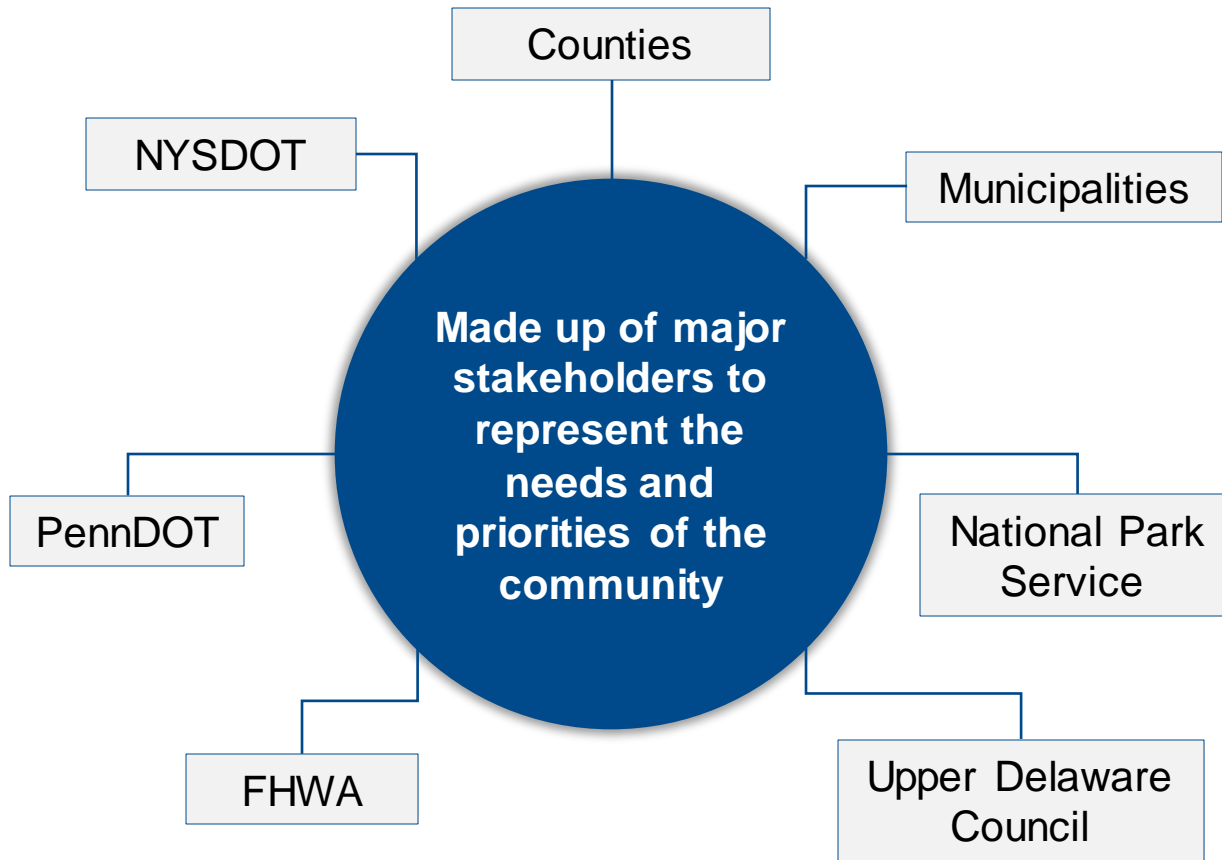


NYSDOT: Co-owner and partner in Joint Interstate Bridge Commission



AECOM: Consultant completing technical work on behalf of PennDOT

Project Advisory Committee



Committee Responsibilities

- Provide information on local and regional needs, issues, and activities related to Skinners Falls Bridge
- Advise Study Team on transportation needs
- Communicate with constituents about the project
- Encourage public participation

Project Advisory Committee (PAC)

Will meet twice to advise PennDOT/NYS DOT and the project team on local and regional needs, issues, and activities

Meeting 1 (February 22, 2021):

- Introduce the PEL and the role of the PAC
- Review project history and how it led to the PEL
- Describe broad options to be evaluated and the decision process
- Facilitate a discussion of PAC priorities for consideration

Meeting 2 (September 23, 2021):

- Present current findings and how they were used in the planning process
- Present highlights from draft Purpose and Need document
- Facilitate a discussion to obtain PAC feedback

The Skinners Falls Planning & Environmental Linkages Study

- Planning and Environmental Linkages is a flexible process that can be used to aid decision-making for transportation projects
- The Skinners Falls PEL Study goal is to build agreement for a path forward
 - Work with key stakeholders and the public
 - Identify transportation needs
- The PEL Study starts with a “clean slate,” all options on the table
- Study findings become the foundation for the environmental review process

Skidders Falls PEL Study Timeline

- Currently, the study team is conducting investigations to determine the Purpose and Need.
- When ready, the Purpose and Need document and PEL Study will be made available to PAC, public, and State, local, Tribal, and Federal agencies for review.
- Following the approval and completion of the PEL Study, environmental clearances, NEPA, Section 106, and 4(f) processes may begin.



Past Skinners Falls Bridge Section 106 Consultation

- Posted Early Notification in **2012** to kick off then-current project
- Solicited for consulting parties (CPs) in **2012 & 2013**
- Identified historic properties in **2013** in consultation with CPs
 - Milanville Historic District: Individually listed in National Register of Historic Places (NR)
 - Skinners Falls Bridge: Individually listed in NR & contributes to Milanville HD
- Began Tribal consultation in **2016**
- Emergency repair projects over **last 15 years**

Current Skinners Falls Bridge Project Anticipated Section 106 Consultation

- PennDOT paused project until **2019**
- PennDOT Cultural Resource Specialist provided FYI project status update to consulting parties identified in 2012-2013 (**May 2021**)
- Current project is in planning phase—gathering data & identifying project needs
- Section 106 for current project has not started
- Upcoming Section 106 steps include, but are not limited to:
 - Solicit additional consulting parties
 - Confirm Area of Potential Effects & resources present
- PennDOT will consult with the PA & NY SHPO, existing and new CPs once Section 106 begins

Purpose & Need Shapes Alternatives

Establishes the transportation need for the investment



Drives the process for alternatives consideration



Alternatives that meet the established Purpose and Need can move forward into design

What is Transportation Purpose and Need?

The Purpose

is the primary objective of the project:

spells out the reason why a project is to be undertaken

summarizes the problem(s) to be addressed

does **not** identify a specific solution

The Need


is the transportation problem:

identifies the problems to be addressed and causes of the problems

is based on technical information

is the factual foundation that supports the purpose of the project

Transportation Purpose and Need Document



Identify past and projected future traffic demands

Identify safety needs, including those of emergency service providers

Identify circulation needs to support local economy

Obtain public feedback to understand the transportation needs of the area and associated goals for the project

A grayscale photograph of a truss bridge spanning a river. The bridge features a complex lattice of steel beams forming a series of trusses. The river below is calm, reflecting the bridge and the surrounding landscape. In the background, there are trees and a house on a hillside. The text "Study Activities" is overlaid in a bold, blue, sans-serif font on the left side of the image.

Study Activities

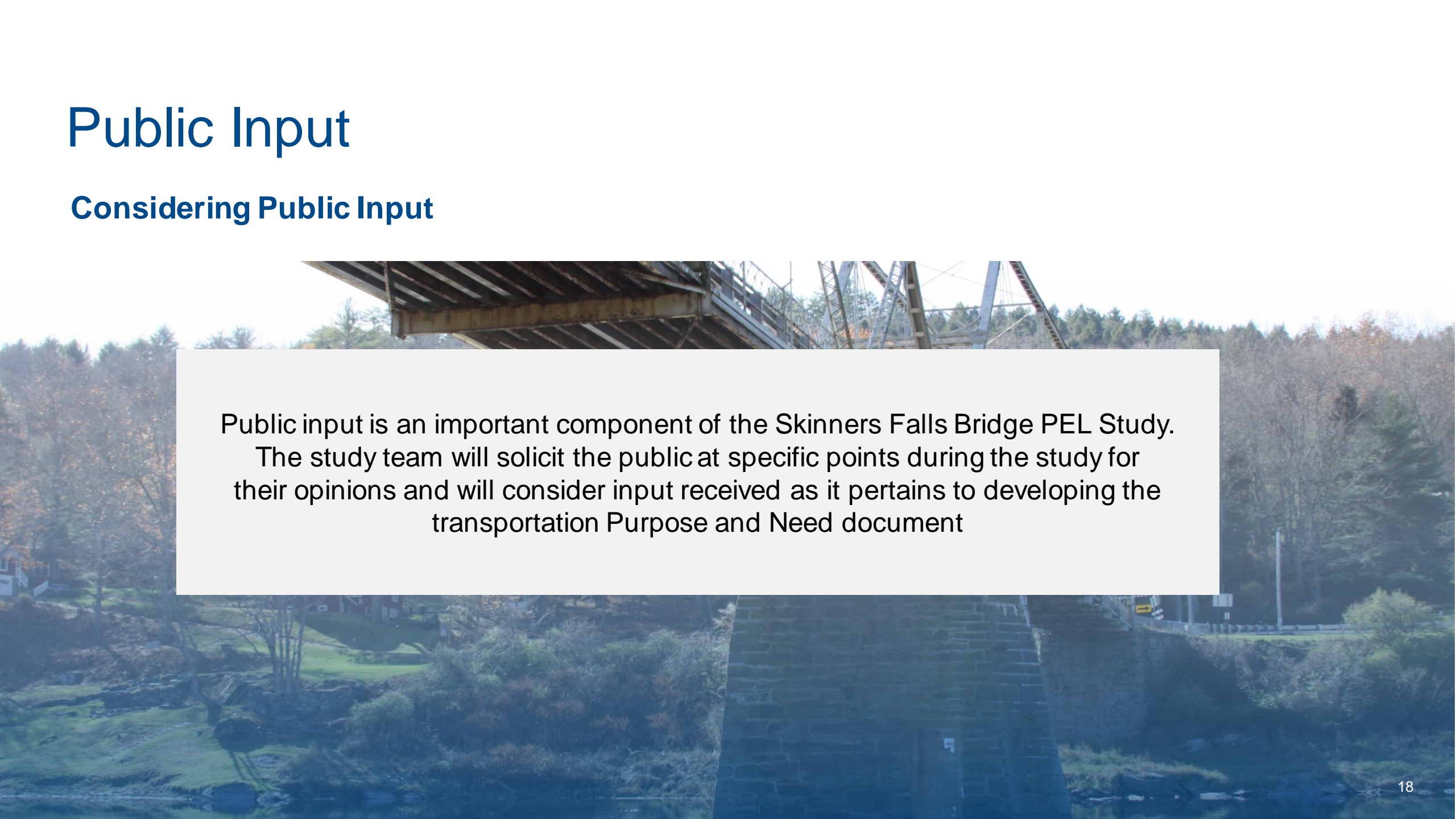
Completed Study Activities

- PAC Meeting- February 22, 2021
- Agency Coordination Meeting – February 24, 2021
- Public Meeting – March 30, 2021
- Public Survey – March 31 - June 1, 2021
- Public Comment – March 31 - Ongoing
- Stakeholder Meetings – June-July 2021
- Frequently Asked Questions Posted
- Additional Investigations
 - Vehicular Traffic History
 - Accident History
 - Bike/Pedestrian Use
 - Land Use/Planning
 - Economic Considerations



Public Input

Considering Public Input

The background image shows a bridge structure over a river. The bridge has a stone pier in the foreground and a steel truss structure further back. The surrounding area is lush with greenery and trees, suggesting a natural setting. A white text box is overlaid on the center of the image.

Public input is an important component of the Skinners Falls Bridge PEL Study. The study team will solicit the public at specific points during the study for their opinions and will consider input received as it pertains to developing the transportation Purpose and Need document

Public Input

Public Survey and Public Comment Period



Public Survey was open from **March 31 - June 1, 2021** and email comments were received through **September 3, 2021**



Survey was available **online** or via **mailed** paper survey, email comments were also accepted



286 survey responses and **192** email comments were received, primarily from residents, property owners, and business owners



Survey results were posted to the **project website** and the **FAQ** was updated with comments

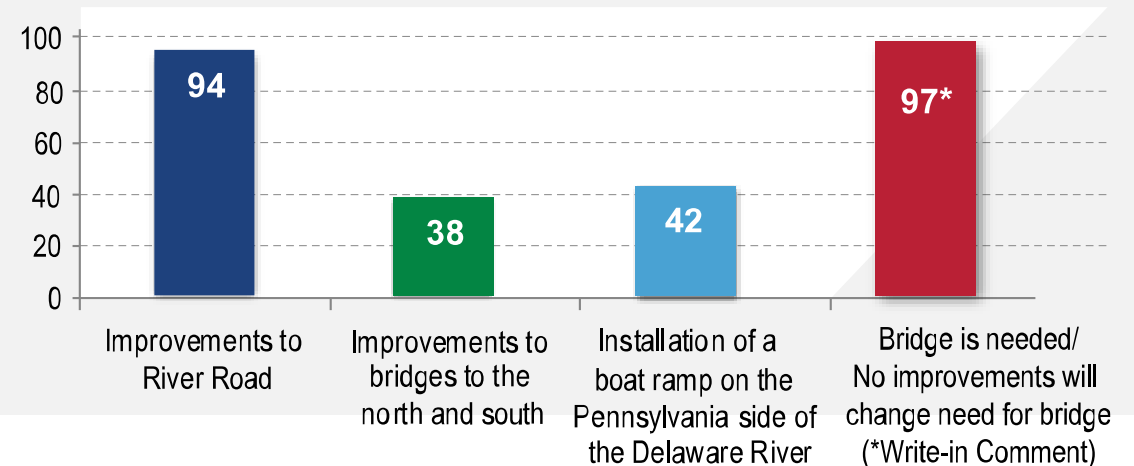
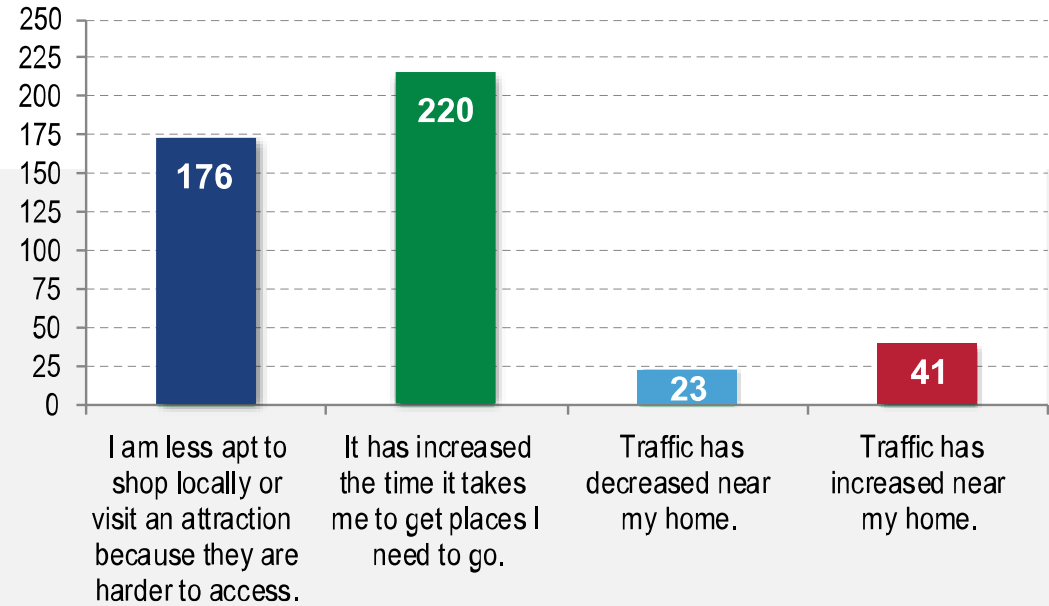
Full survey summary document is available on the project website

Public Input

Public Survey:

Alternate Routes and Need for Crossing

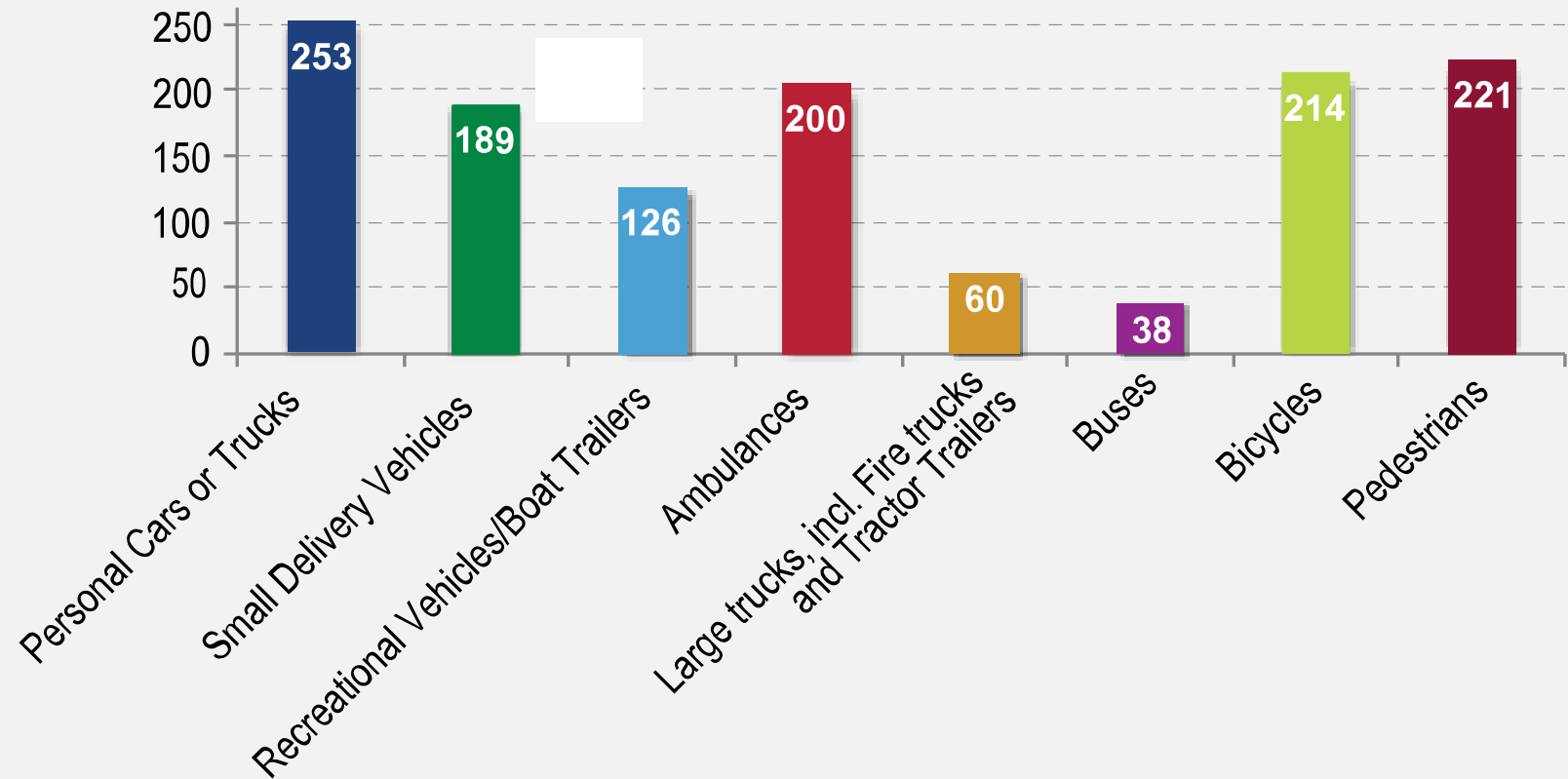
- Most respondents currently take either the Cochection-Damascus Bridge or the Narrowsburg Bridge to make their trips
- **220** respondents noted the Skinners Falls closure increases the time it takes for them to get where they need to go, and **176** people noted the closure makes them less apt to visit businesses or attractions
- **97** respondents commented that no transportation improvements to other routes would minimize the need for a bridge crossing at this location.



Public Input

Public Survey: Vehicle/Use Types

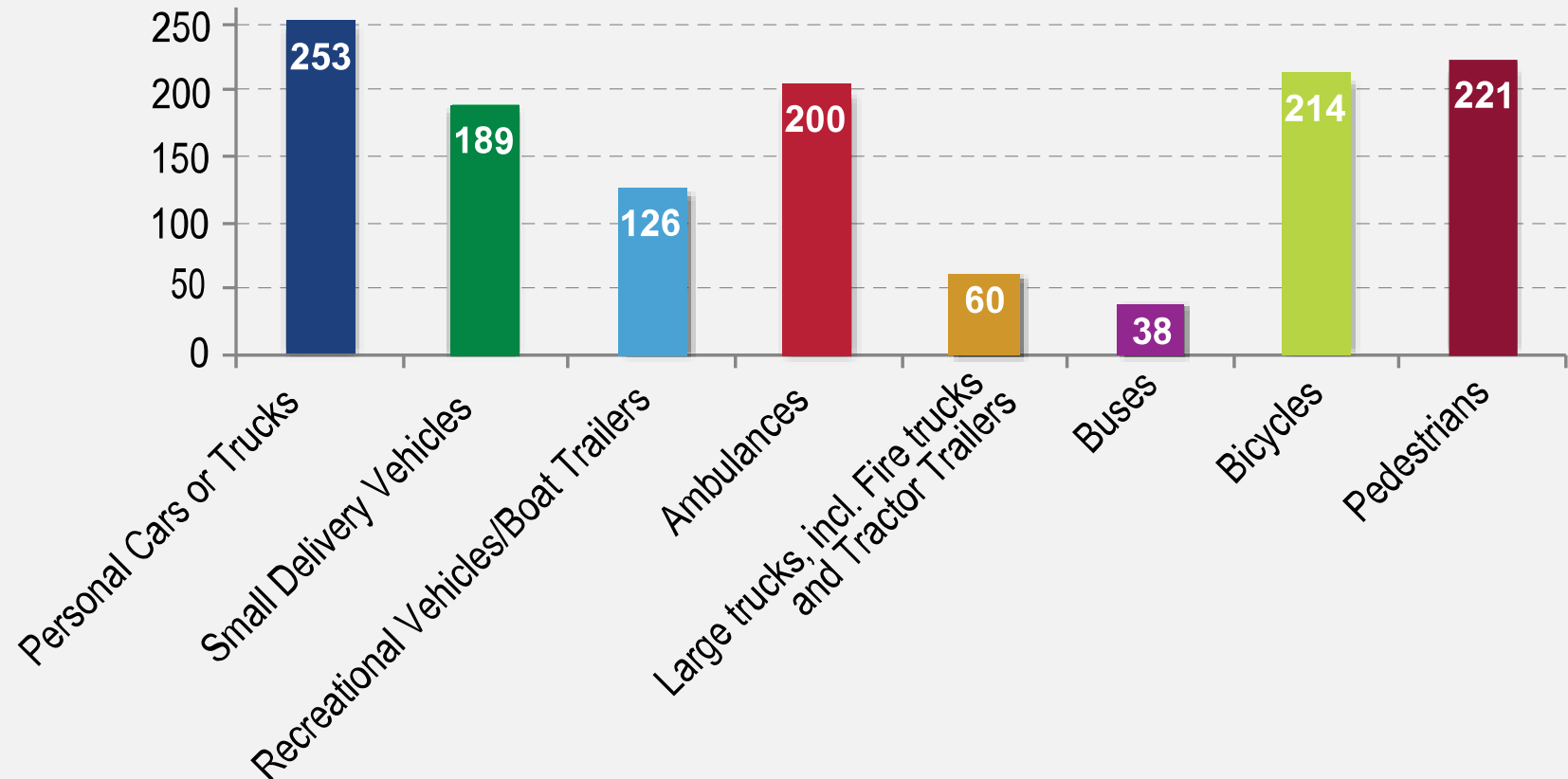
- Looking to the future, **221** respondents wanted pedestrian access and **214** respondents wanted bike access



Public Input

Public Survey: Emergency Access

- Looking to the future, **200** respondents noted the need for ambulance access, while **60** people noted fire truck access was needed

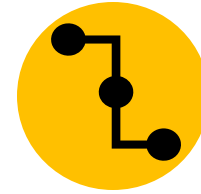


Public Input

E-mail Comments

- There were **192** email comments received between March 30, 2021, and September 3, 2021
 - More than one email was submitted by 23 respondents
 - Comments from respondents who sent multiple emails were merged and considered a single comment per each respondent
- Comments were reviewed for **reoccurring points of concern and interest**
 - A topic was considered recurring if it was mentioned by more than 10% of the respondents

Common Topics of Concern:



Need for the connection across the river



Bike/ped access



Emergency response

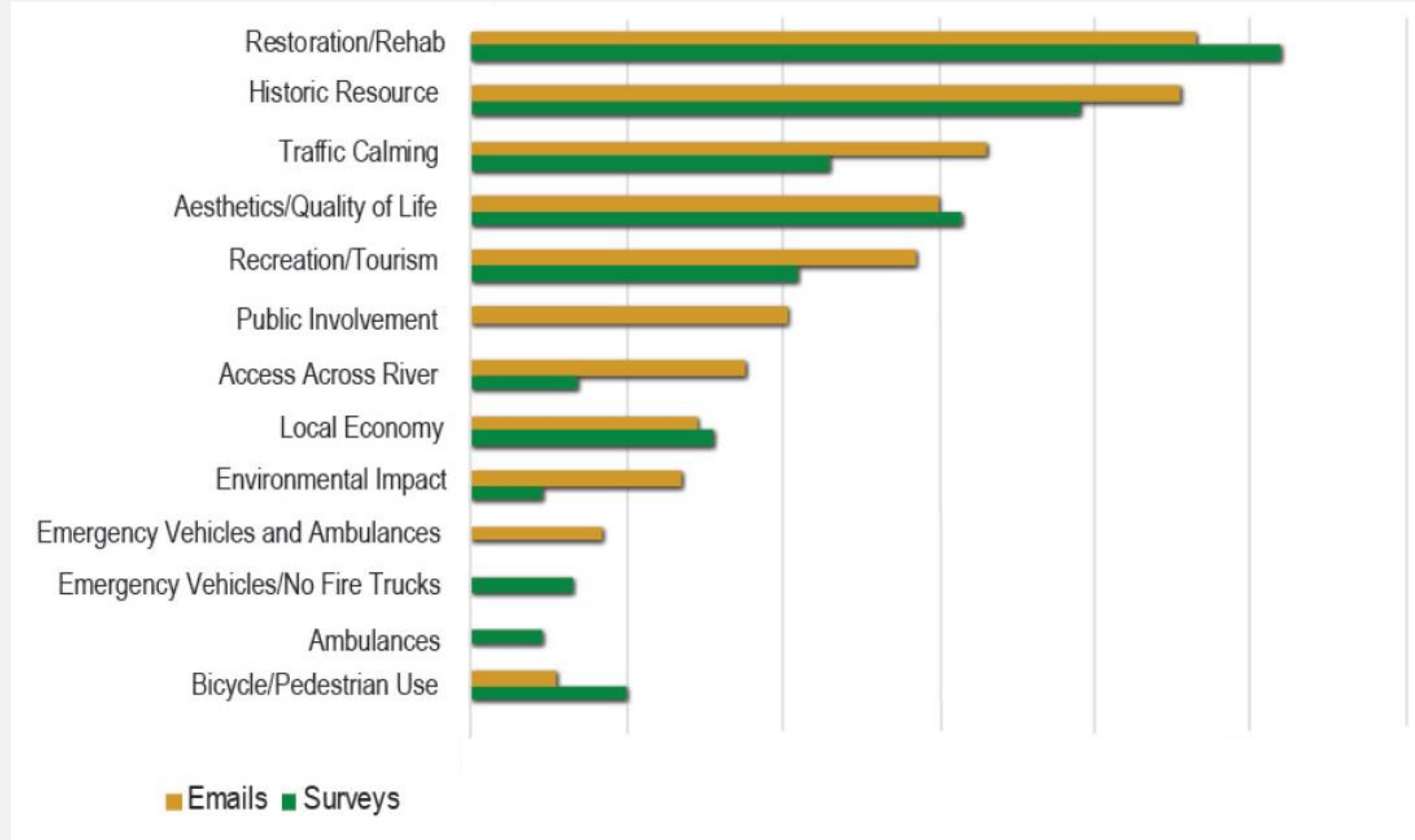


Historic preservation

Public Input Comparison

E-mail Comments and Survey Responses Summary

- Public input was accepted in a digital or paper survey (**green** in chart to right), or by calling the project hotline and emailing the project email with comments (**yellow** in chart to right)
- Recurring points of interest among email and survey respondents included:
 - Restoration and acknowledgement of bridge as a historic resource
 - Quality of life and local aesthetics
 - Role of bridge in the local economy



Public Input

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

- FAQs have been developed as an opportunity to address areas of concern that have been identified in the survey responses and emails in an efficient way
- FAQs will continue to be updated throughout the planning process as new concerns and comments are voiced



Stakeholder Meetings

National Park Service

- 151 major incidents responded to at Skinners Falls since May 2017
- Largest vehicle in response fleet is an SUV with a boat/trailer (~10,000 lbs/5 tons)
- Milanville serves as a life flight landing zone for both PA and NY
- Importance of Milanville Ranger Station
 - Milanville Ranger Station is one of only two stations along 72 miles of river
 - Houses river response boats for all emergencies in PA and NY, law enforcement, EMS, search and rescue, fire, and water rescue for the Upper Delaware



Stakeholder Meetings

Emergency Responders

- Interviews with:
 - Lake Huntingdon (NY) Fire Dept
 - Narrowsburg (NY) Fire Dept
 - Lava Volunteer Fire Dept (NY) deferred to Narrowsburg Fire Dept
 - Equinunk (PA) Fire Dept
 - Welcome Lake (PA) Volunteer Fire and Rescue
 - Wayne County (PA) 911 Dispatch

The project team reached out to Beach Lake (PA) Volunteer Fire Company, but they were not available for comment.



Stakeholder Meetings

Key themes from emergency responders:

- High interest that this location have fire truck capacity
- Inability to use the Skinners Falls Bridge increases emergency response time
- Additional river crossing facilitates mutual aid response
- Due to terrain, river rescues are more feasible for emergency responders with equipment from PA side of the river
- Equinunk Fire Rescue uses river water to fill tankers for fire suppression, and can only access the river on the NY side



Stakeholder Meetings

Local businesses

- Held phone interviews with four local businesses near the bridge
- One business cited a desire to use the bridge mainly as a scenic background and bike/ped connection
- One business noted a need for the bridge to accommodate personal vehicles and ambulances
- Two businesses noted a need for truck and trailer access across the bridge



Additional Investigations



Vehicular Traffic
History



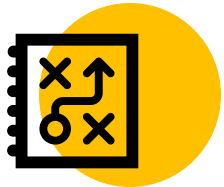
Accident
History



School Bus
Traffic



Bike/Pedestrian
Use



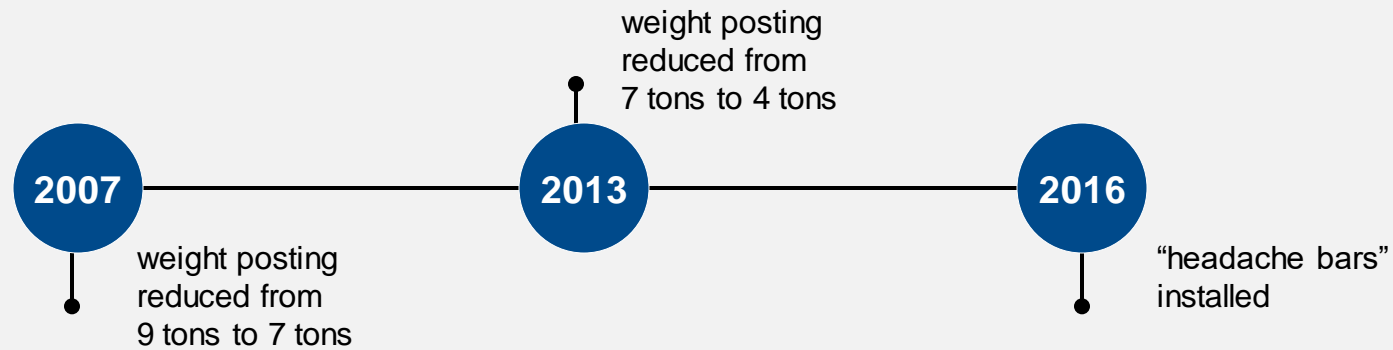
Land
Use/Planning



Economic
Considerations

Vehicular Traffic History

Year	Volume	Volume of Vehicles > 10 Ton	Volume of Heaviest Truck Counted
July 27, 2017	379	13	13 (2-axle w/ 6 tires) 8+ tons
July 18, 2012	384	29	1 (4-axle) 30+ tons
September 6, 2007	412	39	3 (5-axle semi) 40+ tons
September 10, 2002	368	37	3 (5-axle semi) 40+ tons
July 15, 1998	913	83	7 (5-axle semi) 40+ tons



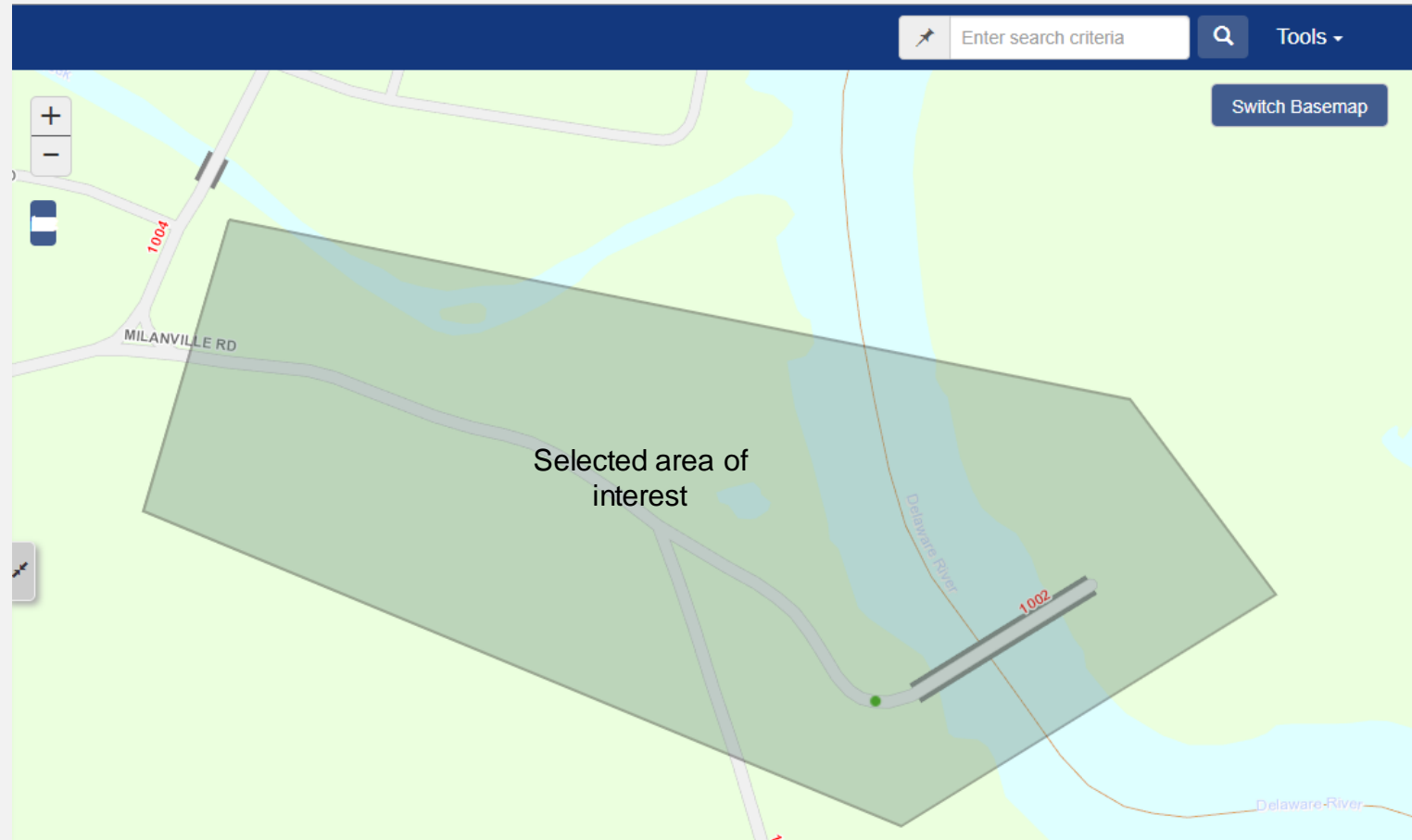
Source : PennDOT

PA Crash History (Jan 2001 – Sept 2019)

- One reported crash in 18-year history
- No evidence of significant crash pattern

NY crash data not readily available

Source : PennDOT



School Bus Usage

- Two School Districts in project area
 - Sullivan West Central School District (NY)
 - Wayne Highlands School District (PA)
- One bus route crosses the river
 - Sullivan West to Honesdale
 - Utilizes Narrowsburg Bridge
- Damascus Elementary in proximity to bridge
 - Utilizes River Road for bus service
 - Buses stay in PA even when River Road is periodically closed (slides/washouts)
 - Distance too far to utilize alternate routes in NY

Source : Sullivan West Central School District



Bike/Ped Use

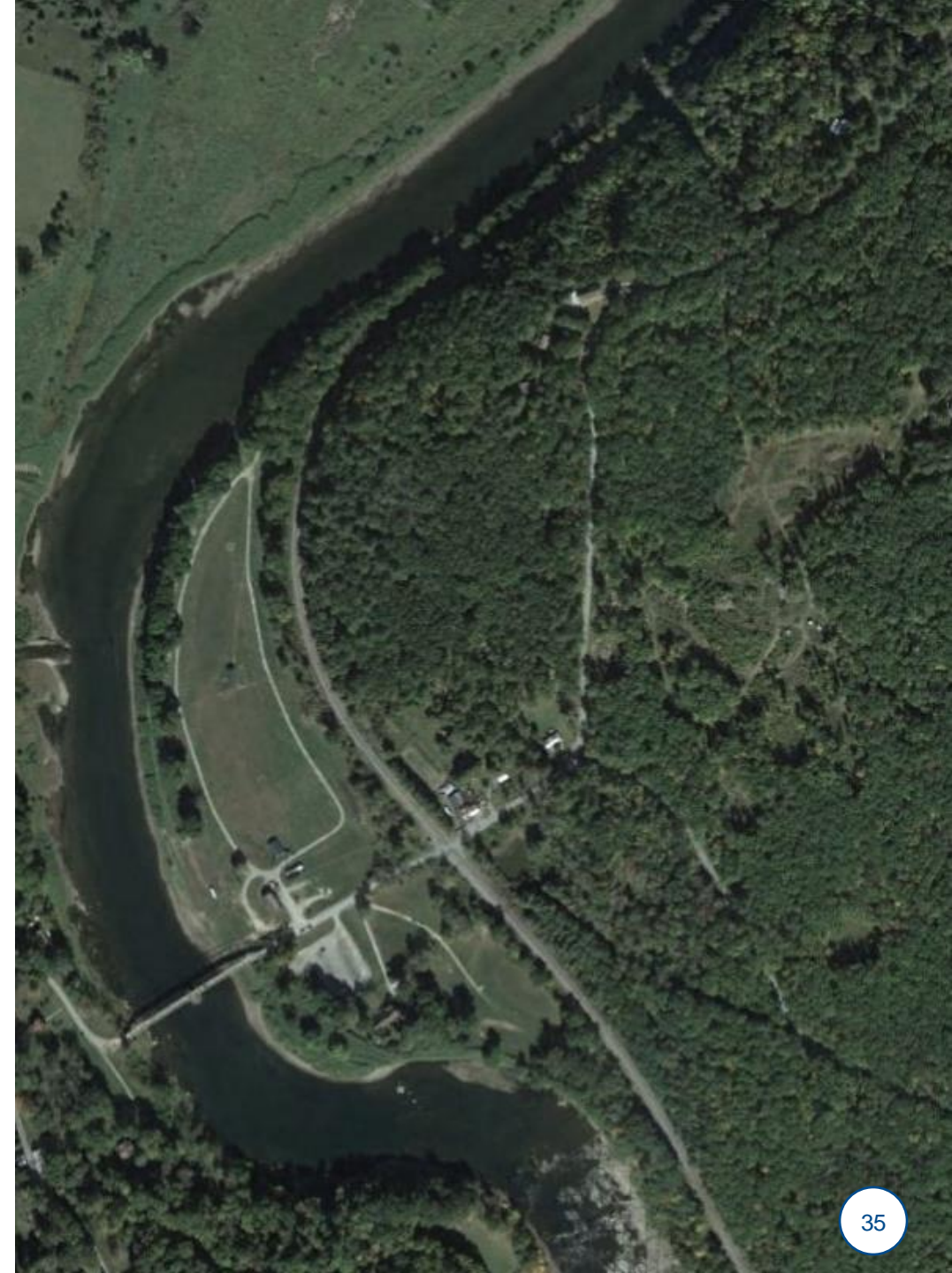
- No current or historical data available
- Public survey and email comments identified bike/pedestrian access needs
- Nearby bicycle/pedestrian routes

Source : NYS Bike Routes Viewer



Land Use Planning

- Review of numerous planning documents in the area **identified no significant current or planned growth in the project area** (Sullivan County 2020 Comprehensive Plan)
- **No development or designated growth areas identified** in the immediate vicinity of the Skinners Falls Bridge (Wayne County Economic Development Corporation)
- Anticipate **economy continuing to evolve** from agriculture/manufacturing to rural residential/tourism in Wayne County (Wayne County Comprehensive Plan Update)
- River access improvement planned, **including for the Skinners Falls Access** (Sullivan County Site Design for Six River Access Points)
- Documents emphasize **preservation of open space** in the Delaware River Corridor (Sullivan County Open Space Plan)





Purpose and Need

What is Transportation Purpose and Need?

The Purpose

is the primary objective of the project:

spells out the reason why a project is to be undertaken

summarizes the problem(s) to be addressed

does **not** identify a specific solution

The Need

is the transportation problem:

identifies the problems to be addressed and causes of the problems

is based on technical information

is the factual foundation that supports the purpose of the project

Project Purpose

The purpose of the project is to provide a safe and efficient crossing of the Delaware River at Skinners Falls for cars, trucks, trailers, emergency response vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians.

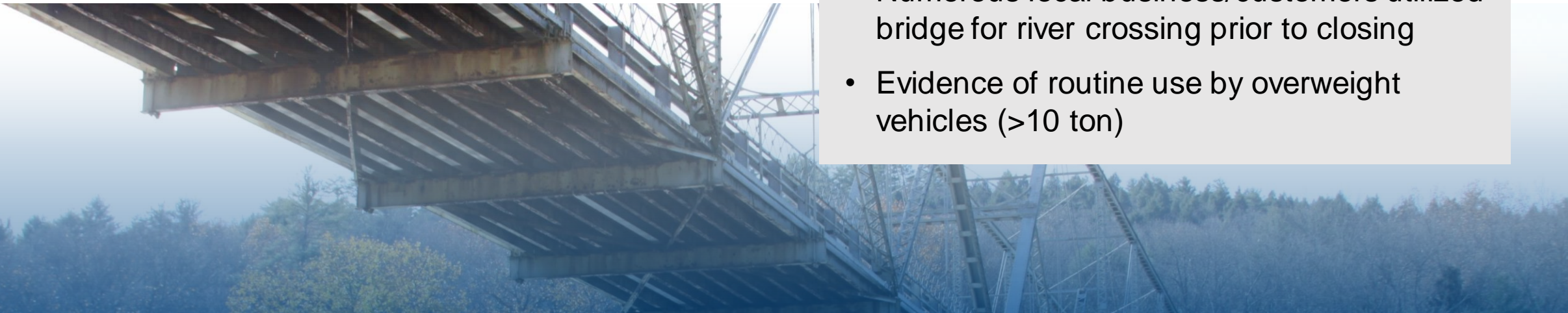
Note: *Emergency response vehicles are vehicles that support ambulance service, fire/rescue service, and law enforcement.*

Project Needs

Project Need:

The Skinners Falls Bridge is currently closed to traffic due to its condition, which limits efficient access for residents, businesses, and recreational users.

- There was a small but consistent usage of the bridge (~400 vehicles/day)
- Closure in 2019 resulted in alternate routes totaling an additional 6.6 to 11.6 miles in travel distance
- Numerous local business/customers utilized bridge for river crossing prior to closing
- Evidence of routine use by overweight vehicles (>10 ton)



Project Needs ^{con't}

Project Need:

Emergency response is negatively affected by the absence of a functional bridge in the vicinity of Skinners Falls.

- Skinners Falls Bridge closest to National Park Service Ranger Station, the primary responder for all river emergencies
 - Respond to all river emergencies in concert with other emergency service providers in area
 - Utilize both PA and NY sides of river for access
- Life flight helicopter utilizes Milanville as landing zone for both PA and NY emergencies. Skinners Falls Bridge is closest crossing
- Mutual aid between local emergency service providers used to meet community needs in both PA and NY
 - Lack of bridge access adds 10 minutes to response time to Milanville
 - Compounded by need to fill tanker trucks multiple times during fire responses
- Local emergency service provider vehicles weigh between 4.5 and 31 tons

Project Needs ^{con't}

Project Need:

The Skinners Falls Bridge does not provide adequate accommodations for pedestrians, bicyclists, and recreational users in the area.

- Survey responses and stakeholder interviews identified substantial use of the bridge by pedestrians and bicyclists when open and a desire to continue this use in the future
- Current bridge does not have bike/ped accommodations, such as a sidewalk, shared lane, or bike lane
- Current bridge condition does not provide access across the river for recreation opportunities at adjacent campground or NPS Skinners Falls public river access



Purpose & Need Shapes Alternatives

Establishes the transportation need for the investment



Drives the process for alternatives consideration



Alternatives that meet the established Purpose and Need can move forward into design



Next Steps

PEL Study Next Steps:


Transportation Purpose and Need Statement made available to PAC, public, and State, local, Tribal, and Federal agencies for review and 30-day comment period

Project Team to consider input from PAC, agencies and public and refine Transportation Purpose and Need document

Finalize Transportation Purpose and Need Document



PEL Study Next Steps



Continue PAC and
Public Outreach

Planning Studies,
Preliminary Engineering,
and NEPA

Identify potential
funding sources

Contact Information

Neil Shemo via Project Email Address

Skinnersfallsbridge@aecom.com

610-234-5148



Discussion

Discussion

- Are there comments / input on the project Purpose and Need?
- Have you received feedback from the community?
- Are you aware of other information that is pertinent to the Purpose and Need?