

NEWS RELEASE

County of Warren, New Jersey



Study Shows Major Impacts to Roads from Warehouse Buildout

(WHITE TOWNSHIP, NJ – September 9, 2020) – A long-awaited study from an independent consultant, received by the Warren County Board of Chosen Freeholders tonight, shows that development under current local zoning allowing warehouses would have a major impact on County Route 519.

The study evaluated a build-out scenario of property zoned for industrial use at 15 sites in Warren County, and concluded that “Roadway levels of service would deteriorate to unacceptable conditions at most analyzed intersection locations and mainline segments of CR 519, as well as other key intersections throughout the County.”

To mitigate those impacts, Route 519 would have to be widened to two lanes in each direction from Route 46 in White Township to the Route 646 split in Harmony Township with turning lanes added to many intersections, and the road would still get a “D” rating, or just above failing, the report found.

“Local leaders have an opportunity now to reexamine their master plans with this study in mind,” Freeholder James R. Kern III said.

“I’m glad we’ve started the ball rolling with this report, and I think this is going to kick off some really good discussions in the near future,” Freeholder Jason J. Sarnoski said.

The freeholder board hired consultants WSP USA, Inc. of Lawrenceville, NJ to perform the Light Industrial Site Assessment, using a \$60,000 grant from the New Jersey Highlands Council.

“Several months ago, Warren County announced a countywide traffic study for industrial zoning. We determined these sites from current zoning as well as input from local leaders,” Kern explained. “Thanks to the New Jersey Highlands Council, we were able to receive full funding for this report. I thank the Council and Executive Director Lisa Plevin for their funding and partnership. It has been outstanding,” he added.

“The data provided in this report shows that the proliferation of industrial zoning, specifically that of warehouse development, will have a significant impact on Warren County’s infrastructure. While New Jersey law allows municipalities to have the say when it comes to

zoning, this study hopefully will allow towns to see beyond their own borders. While some of these properties have active applications, which are subject to current zoning, many do not,” Kern noted.

“Planning is defined ‘the establishment of goals, policies, and procedures for a social or economic unit.’ I hope all leaders across the county take the necessary time to read this full document and digest the findings so that they can plan for their future and not be in a constant reactive state. I also encourage municipal officials to also take advantage of the Highlands Council for potential funding opportunities,” Kern added.

“It is very important, not only for us to understand, but also for our municipalities, because they need to know what we are facing given the current zoning and potential for development within our county,” Sarnoski said.

“Zoning begins at the municipal level but has countywide effects,” Sarnoski said, adding, “I see challenges in the future given the potential for development that we face.”

Sarnoski noted the freeholders during the meeting also approved a contract not to exceed \$20,900 with WSP to conduct a traffic engineering services weight restriction study of Route 519 between US Route 46 in White and the village of Hope, and County Route 521 from the village to the I-80 interchange in Hope Township. Both studies are pieces of the county’s transportation infrastructure planning and show the challenges ahead, he remarked.

Plevin, the Highlands Council’s executive director, commented, “The Highlands Council is very pleased to be working in partnership with Warren County, and to have provided funding for development of the Light Industrial Site Assessment. Ensuring that municipalities and counties in the Highlands Region have the information they need to make informed decisions about land use planning and management is a critical component of our work. This report certainly aligns with that goal and the overall goals of the Regional Master Plan.”

The 15 areas zoned as industrial were selected based on their location and size, and only areas located outside of the Highlands Preservation Area were analyzed. The areas contain more than 4,000 acres of land, and have the potential to accommodate over 45 million square feet of industrial space.

Car and truck volumes were distributed throughout the network and a capacity analysis was performed along selected segments and at selected intersections. In addition, a turning movement analysis was performed at many intersections to see if trucks would be able to negotiate turning movements without infringing in opposing lanes or straying off the roadways.

Among the study’s conclusions, in addition to the finding that Route 519 would need to be widened to four lanes to prevent total congestion, were:

- Both truck and automobile traffic from employees would contribute to the congestion.
- Intersection improvements, such as additional turning lanes, would be needed at most intersections along Route 519 from Route 46 to Route 57.
- Transportation demand management (TDM) strategies such as staggering employee hours, shifting deliveries to off-peak hours when possible, and alternative transportation modes for employee traffic such as shuttles and public transit, could help.
- Development should be located near or next to State and Interstate highways that serve regional function to lessen demands on county and municipal road systems.
- Developers should pay a fair share of improvements.

The report suggests creating a countywide freight advisory committee that would consist of citizen members, industry members, and government officials to discuss and address concerns of and needs of freight carriers.

The report is available to the public on the Warren County government website.

For the report:

http://www.co.warren.nj.us/emp_pub_info/Warren%20County%20Light%20Industrial%20Site%20Assessment_Draft%20Report_090920.pdf

For the appendices:

http://www.co.warren.nj.us/emp_pub_info/Warren%20County%20Light%20Industrial%20Site%20Assessment_%20Appendices.pdf

The report also is being forwarded to all municipalities so that local leaders, who enact the land use ordinances, can see the potential impact of current zoning.

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