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NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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RIO GRANDE AVENUE GATEWAY IMPROVEMENTS

Public Information – Open House Format Meeting Scheduled for October 2, 2017

CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE, NJ--The Wildwood Convention Center will be the site of a Public Information Center, an Open House format meeting, on the Rio Grande Avenue Gateway Improvement Project entering the City of Wildwood. The Public Information Center will be held on **Monday, October 2, 2017 from 2:00 to 6:00 PM** at the Wildwood Convention Center, Meeting Room 1-3, 4501 Boardwalk, Wildwood, NJ.

Cape May County, the municipalities of Five Mile Beach, and Greater Wildwoods Tourism Improvement and Development Authority (GWITDA) are collectively interested in making substantial improvements the Rio Grande Avenue entrance onto the island. Our goals for the project are to reduce traffic congestion, address left turn movements, enhance pedestrian and bicycle usage, and alleviate frequent roadway flooding by raising the roadway profile and improving deficient existing drainage systems. As part of the drainage system improvements, a pump station is being designed in conjunction with roadway improvements that will serve the neighborhoods adjacent to the Rio Grande corridor. Also, the desire is to significantly enhance the appearance of the City's gateway by adding streetscaping elements and destination signing.

The Public Information Center will provide the public with information about the proposed design for the section of Rio Grande Avenue (County Road No. 661) from the George Redding Bridge to Park Boulevard and to gather public feedback on the project.

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The public is invited to attend the open house format meeting at a time convenient for them between 2:00 and 6:00 pm and they are encouraged to comment on the project. The County and Michael Baker International (County's design consultant for the project) representatives will be on hand at different display stations to discuss and answer questions regarding the project.

One station is the project overview that shows the entire limits of the project. A second station will highlight the raising of the profile and the impacts along Rio Grande Avenue. A third station explains the proposed drainage and the operation of the stormwater pump station. This station show the differences in flooding inundation between the existing conditions and the proposed. And a final station will feature the aesthetic improvements, such as streetlights, signage, and landscaping to the Gateway. In addition to the display stations, a slide presentation of the general overall project will be offered at different times during the open house.

Historically Rio Grande Avenue is the first of the three roadways leading onto Five Mile Beach to close due to flooding and as recently as September 20th, the roadway was closed for approximately 3 hours due to coastal flooding associated with Hurricane Jose. The flooding occurs at the intersection of Susquehanna Avenue, the lowest point along Rio Grande Avenue. This area of Rio Grande Avenue will be raised by approximately three feet, thus eliminating the nuisance type flooding.

A large multi-staged stormwater pump station will constructed at the northwest corner of Rio Grande Avenue and Susquehanna Avenue. Separate pumps will be installed to address flooding in the neighborhoods adjacent to the Rio Grande Avenue corridor and another set of pumps is to address the runoff from Rio Grande Avenue. The separate pumps are necessary due to the elevation differences between the neighborhoods and the roadway. The discharge for the pumps will be along the north side of Rio Grande Avenue adjacent to the George Redding Bridge embankment.

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Though Rio Grande Avenue is four lanes wide, it operates more as a de-facto two-lane roadway as motorists wait for gaps in this heavily travelled corridor to turn left. This greatly reduces the capacity of the Rio Grande Avenue and results in motorists to using parallel residential streets. The proposed design of Rio Grande Avenue more

adds a center turn lane to facilitate left turns and improve movement along the corridor. The traffic signal at Hudson Avenue is being removed and the southern side of the intersection will become a dead end. At this location, a bus pullover will be created to move the stopping buses out of the travel way.

A major part of the project is to enrich the appearance of this gateway to Five Mile Beach communities. Large sidewalks are being proposed throughout the corridor to encourage pedestrian use as well as create space for ample streetscaping. The sidewalks, retaining walls, and border areas will be upgraded to fit the Wildwood aesthetic and create art on the street. Bike paths will be added along the corridor to the west of Susquehanna Avenue. These will help bikes leave and enter the City with traffic and also direct them to the adjacent streets for a route to other bikeways on the island.

A roadway project requires typical features be included, such as, curbs, pavement, traffic signals, street lights, etc. This project is taking each of those needed features and incorporating the City's "Doo Wop" theme into the design. A new marque message sign shaped like a giant wave, welcome surf board sign, decorative street lighting and sidewalks that look like the boardwalk are a few of the signature elements being included in the design.

Permit applications for the project are to be filed with the various regulatory agencies in October. Construction of the project will begin in September 2018 and be completed by summer of 2019. During construction, traffic will be reduced to one lane in each

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direction on Rio Grande Avenue. Access to adjacent properties will be maintained as much as possible.

Wildwood has secured a \$2,000,000 grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency for the stormwater pump station. The County anticipates using Federal Highway Administration and other funds for the roadway improvements. The Greater Wildwoods Tourism Improvement and Development Authority is assisting in design more and funding of the aesthetic of the corridor.

In the event, that someone cannot attend the Public Information Center, the information be displayed can be viewed after the meeting by going to the following link on the Cape May County's website at <http://www.capemaycountynj.gov/1069/Reports-and-Studies>.