



**NEW JERSEY STATE LEGISLATURE
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June 26, 2026

Commissioner Priya Jain
New Jersey Department of Transportation
1035 Parkway Avenue
P.O. Box 600
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0600

Dear Commissioner Jain:

On behalf of the Borough of Lavallette and its Mayor, Walter LaCicero, as well as the residents and businesses of the 10th Legislative District, we write to formally respond to the New Jersey Department of Transportation's (NJDOT) Concept Development Study for safety improvements along Route 35, Barnegat Avenue (Seaside Heights) to Kerr Avenue (Lavallette), a two-mile corridor in Ocean County. We appreciate the Department's commitment to enhancing safety for motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians along this vital coastal corridor, and we commend NJDOT for extending the proposed project to encompass the entire length of the Borough of Lavallette upon our request.

However, after careful review of the Department's recommendations as outlined in Table 3 of the concept study, the Borough of Lavallette has significant and substantive objections to several proposed measures. Local officials have expressed serious concerns that highway engineers unfamiliar with the seasonal nature of this community may not fully appreciate the unique conditions that exist here. We urge the Department to carefully weigh the following responses before advancing any recommendations to a formal design phase.

RESPONSES TO TABLE 3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Item #4 – Driveway Revisions

The Borough strongly opposes any proposed driveway revisions along the Route 35 corridor within Lavallette. Lavallette is entirely built out. Residences and commercial properties have been constructed over generations to accommodate vehicular access exactly as it currently exists. NJDOT has no history of approving or requiring driveway modifications along this stretch, and imposing them now would cause serious hardship to property owners with no meaningful safety benefit. We respectfully request that Item #4 be removed from further consideration.

Item #5 – Highway Speed Limits

The Borough finds the existing highway speed limits to be entirely appropriate and acceptable as currently posted, including the seasonal adjustment from 45 mph to 35 mph on Route 35 South during the peak summer season. This seasonal regulation is well-established, understood by regular visitors, and enforced by the Lavallette Police Department. As noted in published local reporting, NJDOT planners were initially unaware that speed limits change seasonally in Lavallette – an important local condition that must be factored into any final plan. We do not support any reduction of year-round speed limits to 25 mph as has been informally discussed.

Item #9 – Roadway Configuration Change Ending at Kerr Avenue

The Borough has deep concerns about any plan to alter the one-way directional flow of Route 35 North and Route 35 South, particularly one that terminates mid-borough at Kerr Avenue – a residential street with no capacity to serve as a transition point for reversing traffic flow. Creating a traffic interchange on a residential street would generate dangerous conditions, confusion for unfamiliar visitors, and gridlock – especially during the summer season when Route 35 is heavily congested. We believe any reconfiguration of directionality must only be considered if and when a sensible through-route plan exists for the entire corridor.

Item #13 – Proposed Barrier Installation (Route 35 North)

There is insufficient physical space to construct any barrier of the type planned along Route 35 North through Lavallette's downtown. The installation of such a structure would necessarily eliminate all on-street parking along Route 35 North, which is essential to the economic vitality of the borough's business district. Businesses along this corridor depend upon accessible parking, particularly during the summer months when visitor traffic peaks. The elimination of parking would cause irreparable harm to local commerce. The Borough respectfully requests that Item #13 be withdrawn and that any safety improvements in this area instead focus on enhanced signage, pavement markings, and pedestrian crossing improvements that do not require physical barriers.

Item #15 – Two-Way Bicycle Traffic on a One-Way Roadway

The Borough objects to any proposal permitting two-way bicycle traffic on what is designated as a one-way motor vehicle roadway. This configuration is contrary to New Jersey Title 39, which requires bicyclists to travel in the same direction as motor vehicle traffic. Implementing contra-flow bicycle lanes would create confusion among both cyclists and motorists, introduce unpredictable conflict points, and expose the State and Borough to unnecessary liability. We urge the Department to maintain consistency with state traffic law and to design any bicycle accommodations that conform to Title 39.

Item #25 – Reverse (Back-In) Angle Parking

The Borough strongly opposes the introduction of reverse angle or back-in only parking along Route 35. During peak summer weekends, Route 35 experiences stop-and-go, bumper-to-bumper traffic conditions. Requiring drivers to execute reverse-angle maneuvers under these conditions would cause significant traffic delays, increase the risk of rear-end and side-impact collisions, and frustrate both local residents and seasonal visitors. As widely reported, this proposal has already drawn public criticism. Back-in parking is unsuitable for a high-volume coastal highway with heavy seasonal traffic and should be eliminated from the project scope entirely.

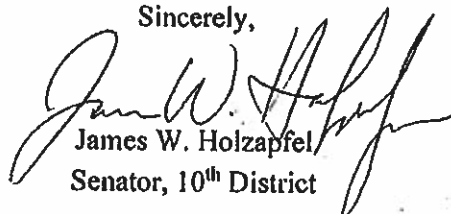
While we have outlined significant concerns above, we also wish to take this opportunity to advocate for an improvement that the Borough wholeheartedly embraces. Mayor LaCicero and the Borough Council formally request that the NJDOT safety improvement project include the upgrading and replacement of handicapped access ramps throughout the project corridor. The ramps that currently exist along Route 35 in Lavallette fall short of ADA standards and, frankly, fall short of what our residents and visitors with disabilities deserve. This project represents a rare and meaningful opportunity to correct that. We would ask the Department not to let it pass.

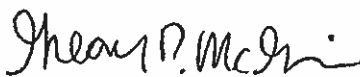
We hope the Department will take to heart that Lavallette is not a typical highway corridor. Route 35 is a state highway, a neighborhood main street, a lifeline for local businesses, and the sole evacuation route for a barrier peninsula community. The character of this road changes with the seasons in ways that are difficult to appreciate without spending time there during a summer weekend, when the population multiplies and the highway becomes the beating heart of a very busy shore town.


It is for precisely this reason that we ask NJDOT to sit down with Mayor LaCicero, borough officials, and local business owners before any of the concepts in Table 3 are carried forward into a formal design. We are not opposed to progress, we actively welcome improvements that make Route 35 safer and more accessible for everyone who uses it. We simply ask that those improvements be shaped by people who know this community, not designed around it.

The Borough stands ready to meet at a time of the Department's choosing. We are grateful for the Department's willingness to engage, and we look forward to a continued dialogue that results in a project the Borough and the State can both be proud of.

Sincerely,


James W. Holzapfel
Senator, 10th District


Gregory P. McGuckin
Assemblyman, 10th District


Paul M. Kantra
Assemblyman, 10th District

cc:

- Mayor Walter LaCicero, Borough of Lavallette
- Lavallette Borough Council
- Ocean County Board of County Commissioners
- New Jersey Senate, 10th District