EGG HARBOR TOWNSHIP – County residents got their first look at a state plan to alter the traffic patterns along a 1.5-mile stretch between exits 36, 37 and 28 on the Garden State Parkway Tuesday, Dec. 11.

Displays of the $83 million plan, aimed at alleviating congestion and traffic incidents at those connections, were set up in the Egg Harbor Township Community Center and officials from the New Jersey Turnpike Authority were on hand to answer questions.

The improvements are intended to address three problem traffic areas:

At Interchange 36, traffic exiting onto Tilton Road often backs up onto the southbound Parkway. The authority plans to build an acceleration lane on Tilton Road so vehicles exiting the southbound Parkway will not have to stop to merge into the local traffic. The authority also plans to build a full deceleration lane on the southbound Parkway to clear traffic exiting at Interchange 36 from the through travel lanes.

At Interchange 38, the ramp connecting the eastbound Atlantic City Expressway to the southbound Garden State Parkway reduces from two lanes to one before it reaches the Parkway. That causes backups. The authority plans to extend the two-lane ramp all the way to the Parkway.

And because Interchanges 38 and 37 are so close together, there is weaving among the vehicles entering the Parkway at Interchange 38, and those attempting to exit the Parkway onto Washington Avenue at Interchange 37. The authority plans to eliminate that weaving by building a ramp to separate traffic entering the southbound Parkway at Interchange 38 from traffic exiting at Interchange 37.

According to Tom Feeney, spokesman for the authority, before these proposed improvements can be made, the authority will need permits, certifications and approvals from the state Department of Environmental Protection, the Pinelands Commission and the Cape-Atlantic Soil Conservation District. The authority is also required to perform an environmental analysis and submit an environmental impact statement to DEP before it submits permit applications, he

said.

The input gathered at Tuesday's informal information session, and a formal town hall style public hearing to be set at a later date, will be recorded into the state's report on the project as a way of informing officials' decisions.

Construction is expected to take place from 2014 to 2017.