

New Jersey: Building for the Future

A regional overview of projects.

With nearly 8.7 million people living in 8,722 square miles, New Jersey is among the most densely populated states in the union. Daily, many of those people – and their guests – travel state and local roadways.

“Our job is to enable drivers to get around smoothly,” says John Maida, a project manager with the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT). To support that job, among its various construction projects the DOT continually widens roads, resurfaces highways and replaces bridges.

Since 1996, NJDOT has used Primavera software to plan and schedule both the design and construction of capital projects.

THEN AND NOW

Before Primavera, the DOT had no central database for these projects, and designers and contractors often submitted printed Gantt charts to provide scheduling information. The scheduling process was manual, which delayed reporting and could introduce errors.

Today, critical data for the lion's share of the DOT's projects resides in Primavera. The data – schedule and budget information for the design process as well as schedules for the construction process – includes information from both in-house and contract designers and builders. Schedulers update design schedules monthly, unless more frequent updates are needed. “The project engineers then have read-only access to the planning information, which they can use to determine the next steps in projects as well as to produce reports,” explains Maida. “Primavera shows how long a particular process will take and can reveal when and where conflicts could arise.”

The software also enables managers to have a regional overview of projects throughout the state. Thus, says Maida, on

a program-wide basis, upper management can view when projects will complete, which allows them to set fiscal programs and ensure that funding is in place.

Because projects exist on a timeline in Primavera, they can be tracked and their progress closely monitored. This enables more timely construction, allows for efficient use of staff because the information reveals who is doing what when, avoids multiple projects occurring on the same area of road, and provides quicker and more accurate information for reporting to government agencies. By eliminating delays and enabling funding to be requested for projects as needed, electronic scheduling enables the DOT to save costs.



Photo courtesy of NJDOT

Burlington County's damaged Race Street Bridge was redesigned and constructed with the help of Primavera.

“This is the most important factor for us, as we are a government agency receiving federal funding for our work on the state highway system,” says Maida.

Because funding is a key element of SAFETEA-LU, Maida predicts that for whatever new projects are added as a result of the new transportation bill, the DOT will use Primavera to handle its project management. •

Roseann McGrath Brooks is a business writer based in West Chester, Pa