

**Public Advisory Committee Meeting**

Portsmouth 29640  
Lafayette Road (US Route 1), Portsmouth

---

Date/Time: November 18, 2020 / 4:00 PM

Place: Zoom Video Conference

Next Meeting: December 16, 2020

Attendees: Jennifer Reczek, PE – NHDOT  
Stephanie Micucci, PE – NHDOT  
Corey Spetelunas, PE – NHDOT  
David McNamara, PE – Stantec  
Tyler Gagnon – Stantec  
Rep. Peter Somssich  
Rep. Gerald Ward  
Eric Eby – Dept. of Public Works  
Cliff Lazenby – Assistant Mayor  
Todd Germain – Fire Chief

David Walker – Rockingham Planning Commission

Juliet Walker – Planning Director

Barbara McMillan – Conservation Commission

Michael Williams - COAST

Mark Newport – Portsmouth Police

Matt Glenn – Seacoast Association of Bike Riders

Mark Allinson – Area Resident

Peter Whelan – City Council

Sharon Nichols – Area Resident

Brenna Jennings – Area Resident

Absentees: Sen. Martha Fuller Clark  
Rep. Jacqueline Cali-Pitts  
Rep. Tamara Le

Distribution: Attendees

---

A third Public Advisory Committee meeting was held over a Zoom video conference call on November 18, 2020 for the Portsmouth Route 1 project to finalize the project's purpose and need statement, discuss the refinements made to the roadway alternatives, present their costs, and obtain feedback about how to move forward with the upcoming Public Informational Meeting.

**Introduction and PAC 2 Recap:**

J. Reczek began the meeting with introductions and outlined the meeting agenda. She gave a brief recap of the previous PAC meeting held in December 2019 and presented the project's updated purpose and need statement which now includes goals of minimizing bypass traffic and improving resiliency and stormwater quality. The meeting was then opened up for preliminary discussion, but there were no questions or comments.

### **Concept Design:**

D. McNamara presented the four roadway concept designs, noting the focus of this meeting was to work towards narrowing these alternatives down to preferred alternative(s). The bicycle and pedestrian facility alternatives could be discussed as they relate to the preferred alternative(s) at the next PAC meeting. The roadway alternatives include:

- Alternative 1 – Original 5-lane, raised median from 1984 Corridor Study
- Alternative 2 – Maximize the 5 lane section, without a raised median, narrowed at critical points
- Alternative 3 – Focus roadway improvements at deficient approaches, maintain existing configuration elsewhere
- Alternative 4 – Dual roundabouts at the Walmart Drive and Springbrook Circle.

The roadway alternatives are broken down into four segments:

- Segment 1 – Ocean Road to Heritage Ave./Roberts Ave.
- Segment 2 – Heritage Ave./Roberts Ave. to Springbrook Circle
- Segment 3 – Springbrook Circle to West Road
- Segment 3 – West Road to Wilson Ave.

The segments were individually presented with a brief description of each segment and existing roadway conditions before evaluating each of the alternatives within the respective segment. To illustrate constraints and potential impacts, each segment included critical cross-sections and included an Alternative Comparison Matrix.

### **Concept Design Discussion:**

- City of Portsmouth Planning Director, Juliet Walker, questioned why the typical sections for Alternatives 2 & 3 show a 6'-0" shoulder rather than a bike-lane. She asked if the shoulder can be used as a bike-lane, and if the typical sections can be labeled as such moving forward.
  - Stantec responded that the 6'-0" shoulder does not meet the City's standard bicycle lane for this segment, so it was labeled as a shoulder, but the intent is it could be used for bicyclists. The labeling will be adjusted for the next meeting.

### **Segment 1 Discussion:**

- Assistant Mayor, Cliff Lazenby, asked if there were cultural resource impacts other than the cemeteries, and if not, why is Alternative 2 listed as 'red' for this category.
  - Even if direct impacts are avoided, work will likely be within 25 feet of the cemeteries, and thus require construction monitoring at a minimum. Additionally, there is on-going coordination to determine if there are any other potentially historic features along the corridor.

- Rep. Peter Somssich asked if the center median in Alternative 1 can be considered as pedestrian safety. He also questioned why bicycle/pedestrian safety was considered 'yellow' for Alternative 1 but considered 'green' for Alternatives 2 & 3
  - The median does reduce some potential conflict points, but the two lanes in each direction would encourage faster speeds in Alternative 1.
  - Alternative 1 was also yellow as it provides the minimum bicycle and pedestrian accommodations, while the other alternatives provide additional accommodations.
  - J. Walker asked if total roadway width was part of the consideration when grading that category.
    - That was also a factor, as the additional lanes would encourage higher speeds.
- Portsmouth Fire Chief, Todd Germain, expressed concern with the center median in Alternative 1 causing access issues along the whole corridor and specifically in front of the Fire Station on the corner of Ocean Rd. He also wanted to confirm that the signal would still accommodate emergency fire vehicles.
  - D. McNamara confirmed the Fire Station access would remain open and retain the exclusive signal.
- Matt Glenn from the Seacoast Association of Bike Riders stated that he would prefer Alternative 3 and that Alternative 1 does not include any accommodations for bicyclists. He also noted that roadways with more than a single lane in each direction causes motorists to race each other and not pay attention to bicyclists. He also wanted to know the reasoning for having the shared-use path of the west-side of the roadway for Alternatives 2 & 3 – he stated crossing the least amount of driveways as possible is most desirable for bicyclists, as well as avoiding the need to cross US Route 1 to stay on the multi-use path.
  - These issues will be discussed in more detail at the next PAC meeting. For the purposes of presenting consistent impacts for the roadway alternatives at this meeting, the bicycle and pedestrians facilities were shown with a 6 foot shoulder and a 5 foot sidewalk on one side and 5 foot shoulder and 10 foot multi-use path, with a 4 foot buffer on the other side.
- C. Lazenby expressed that he would prefer to move forward with Alternative 3 and to scrap Alternative 1 due to the proposed changes being unnecessary and causing more difficulty to drive and access points along the corridor.
- J. Walker wants to be able to mix and match Alternatives along the whole corridor. She stated that she would support either Alternative 2 or 3 for segment 1 and expressed that trying to avoid pushing traffic to adjacent roads is one of her main goals.
- Barbara McMillan from the Conservation Commission asked how much consideration has been put into drainage up to this point. She also wanted clarification about the comparison summary tables and questioned what factors dictated the color designations.

- J. Reczek answered by stating that generally the red indicates significant impacts or minimal improvements over existing. Green is minimal impacts or more substantial improvements over existing.
- Stormwater management is being reviewed and potential solutions identified.

### **Segment 2 Discussion:**

- C. Lazenby asked if cost considerations are currently more important/stressed in current economic climate.
  - J. Reczek responded that it was a factor, but that the current funding was in place, and there is no expectation that it would be impacted by the current climate. The State is committed to maintaining their program, and has been successful to date.
- Rep. Gerald Ward stated that he would like to get rid of Alternative 4 immediately and expressed that he does not think roundabouts are as useful as people say they are. He would like to proceed with Alternative 3.
  - J. Reczek asked for more specific reason. G. Ward explained that he thinks they are confusing and expensive.
  - Rep. Peter Somssich said that he liked Alternative 4 due to the increased aesthetics and traffic calming qualities that come with roundabouts. He also stated he thinks spending more money now to make productive long-lasting changes would be the right decision due to the fear that this roadway's issues may not be addressed again for many years.
  - J. Reczek noted that, if committee members were interested in seeing an example of a hybrid roundabout, one was recently construction on Route 4 as part of the Newington/Dover project.
- J. Walker expressed that she would like bicycle and pedestrian safety to be separated in the comparison summary table moving forward.
- Police Capt. Mark Newport said that the median in Alternative 1 limits access and would not be ideal for emergency vehicles. He also believes that restricting the turning movement from Constitution Ave would encourage traffic to cut through the plaza.
- C. Lazenby pointed out that Alternatives 2 & 3 do nothing to address Constitution Ave. issues and would like that to be noted in future presentations.
  - Eric Eby from Dept. of Public works asked if it would be possible to still eliminate turning left out of Constitution Ave. without adding a median.
    - While this is something that could be designed into the project, it's typically very difficult to get vehicles to actually abide to the medians if they are determined to turn left.

**Segment 3 Discussion:**

- M. Glenn wondered if there has been any thoughts on putting a traffic light or signal crossing at the West Road intersection. He claims that there is a large gap in signalized intersections making it difficult for bicyclists and pedestrians to cross and use West Road. He also stated that a lot of bicyclist traffic comes from the neighborhoods off Hoover Dr. and that both Springbrook Cir. and Wilson Rd. are too far away to be the only safe crossings.
  - The potential to add a Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon (PHB) was discussed. It was noted one recently was installed along Route 4 as part of the Newington/Dover bridge project.
  - E. Eby said he was open to the idea of adding a bike/ped. crossing in this location and would consider all options including a signalized intersection or a push-button crossing. He also stated that sight lines in both directions would need to be examined before adding a crossing in this location.

**Segment 4 Discussion:**

- Resident, Mark Allinson, was concerned with adding bike/ped. facilities to the east side of the roadway along residential properties. He stated that backing in or out of these driveways is already difficult, so adding another hazard to look for could be unsafe. He would be in favor of moving the shared-use path to the opposite of the roadway and he prefers Alternative 3 along the whole corridor.
  - It was noted that experienced bikers would likely use a shoulder/bike lane to ride in and not a shared-use path.
- J. Reczek asked the PAC if they want to remove Alternative 1 from future discussions/presentations. Throughout the presentation, Alternative 1 was the least preferred alternative for each segment. The PAC members agreed.

**Project Cost Discussion:**

J. Reczek provided discussion on the estimated project costs as well as available budget. Currently, the project is underfunded for any of the proposed alternatives. It was noted that each segment could have a different alternative as the preferred solution. Potential alternative funding sources were discussed, including working towards getting the project additional funding through the 10-year plan and utilizing CIP funds within the City to contribute towards specific components, such as the bicycle and pedestrian improvements.

Finally, J. Reczek asked for feedback regarding segment priorities.

- M. Newport stated that he believes that Segments 1 & 2 are the more important, specifically the Constitution Ave. intersection. If segments need to be removed due to budget reasons, he would eliminate Segments 3 & 4.

December 1, 2020

Public Advisory Committee Meeting  
Page 6 of 7

- He was also concerned about how long the design/construction schedule would be. On-going construction and improvements on Banfield Road is causing traffic to move from Route 1.
- J. Walker stated that one of the priorities should be connecting bike/ped. facilities to bike trails near the southern project limit and future bike/ped. facilities near the northern project limit. She also stated the city has funding included in their CIP to support bike/ped. costs.
- Dave Walker from the Rockingham Planning Commission stated that a budget increase for this project is not out of the question and believes more funding could be made available if there is a good case.
  - J. Walker stated that she would like to push for additional funding to be able to complete the whole corridor.
- C. Lazenby said that he would much rather spend some money on each of the segments rather than spending a lot of money on Segment 2 and roundabouts.
  - E. Eby stated that he believes the Constitution Ave. intersection is the most important along the corridor and he supports the roundabout concept because it directly deals with its issues.
  - C. Lazenby then stated that skipping Segments 3 & 4 at this time to only spend on Segment 2 would be a missed opportunity.

### **Discussion of Next Steps:**

- J. Walker wanted to know the plan for the PIM. She expressed concern with holding a PIM over Zoom.
- B. McMillan asked if there would be any progress made to drainage and water quality considerations prior to the PIM.

December 1, 2020

Public Advisory Committee Meeting  
Page 7 of 7

### **Conclusions**

- Overall, Alternative 3, which involves minimal roadway changes, was preferred through each of the corridor segments. Alternative 4 will also be kept for possible future consideration.
- A fourth PAC meeting will be held prior to the second PIM to discuss bicycle, pedestrian, and transit facilities along the corridor.
  - Subsequent to the PAC #3 meeting, PAC #4 was scheduled for December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020 to discuss these aspects.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 PM

The foregoing is considered to be a true and accurate record of all items discussed. If any discrepancies or inconsistencies are noted, please contact the writer immediately.

**Stantec Consulting Services Inc.**

David McNamara, PE

Project Engineer

Phone: 603-263-4653

Fax: 603-669-7636

david.mcnamara@stantec.com