

Public Advisory Committee Meeting

NH Project Route 1
Lafayette Road, Portsmouth

Date/Time: December 10, 2019 / 4:00 PM

Place: Portsmouth City Hall

Next Meeting: TBD

Attendees: Jennifer Reczek, PE – NHDOT
Cory Spetelunas, PE - NHDOT
David McNamara, PE - Stantec
Tyler Gagnon - Stantec
Eric Eby- Dept. of Public Works
Mark Allinson – Area Resident

David Walker- Rockingham Planning Commission
Juliet Walker- Planning Director
Steve Miller- Conservation Commission
Brenna Jennings – Area Resident
Mark Newport – Portsmouth Police

Absentees: Rep. Peter Somssich
Rep. Gerald Ward
Doug Roberts- Parking and Traffic Committee
Michael Williams- COAST
Sharon Nichols- Area Resident
Eric Kinsman- Portsmouth Police

Sen. Martha Fuller Clark
Robert Merner- Chief of Police
Rep. Jacqueline Cali-Pitts
Rep. Tamara Le
Todd Germain- Fire Chief
Dave Desfosses- Department of Public Works
Cliff Lazenby- Assistant Mayor

Distribution: Attendees

A second Public Advisory Committee meeting was held at Portsmouth City Hall on December 10, 2019 for the Portsmouth Route 1 project to discuss key takeaways from the first Public Informational Meeting, the proposed alternatives to the corridor, and to obtain feedback prior to the second Public Informational Meeting.

J. Reczek began by discussing the results of the surveys from the first PAC meeting. The discussion also clarified the understanding of the word safety in the context of the project. The PAC members who had been present at the initial meeting confirmed they viewed safety as largely relating to pedestrians and bicyclists within the corridor. A summary of the public's comments from the first Public Informational Meeting followed the PAC meeting recap.

PAC and PIM recap Discussion:

- City of Portsmouth Planning Director, Juliet Walker, stated that she had considered bike and pedestrian safety when completing the survey. She requested traffic accident data for the corridor.

- Capt. Mark Newport, said that his main concern had to do with bike and pedestrian safety, stating that the addition of sidewalks and bike lanes should be a priority. When discussing accidents along the corridor, he stated that a majority are related to driver distraction rather than corridor geometry/speed.
- Resident, Mark Allinson, expressed that one of his largest concerns had to do with speed discrepancy along the corridor. He stated that in some areas where additional lanes are added the roadway it becomes a “dragway”. He fears that the addition of lanes through the residential area of the corridor will lead to higher speeds.

D. McNamara then discussed the project's progress since the first Public Informational Meeting. This included: traffic counts, coordination with relevant agencies regarding natural resources, existing drainage research, potential locations for proposed drainage, roadway concepts, and the on-going Right-of-way research. The project's purpose and need statement was then discussed and PAC members were asked for their input regarding the purpose and need for the project.

Purpose and Need Discussion:

- Steve Miller emphasized the need to consider stormwater treatment as a part of the project. He noted that the project would be increasing the amount of closed drainage along the corridor. He would like to see drainage treatment and storage systems designed to handle increases in both future precipitation levels and impervious areas.
- He also noted that UNH recently completed a study on how the rising sea-level affects surrounding ground-water levels. He suggested that report be reviewed to determine if any sections of the project corridor are potentially impacted by the rising groundwater discussed in the report.
- Eric Eby stated that a goal of the project should be to keep regional traffic on US Route 1 rather than using surrounding roads such as Banfield Road. He also commented on the fact that the word 'congestion' is misleading and could be replaced with 'traffic flow' – multiple PAC members agreed. He stated the reason traffic tends to use surrounding roads has to do with the current traffic flow. He brought up the idea of 'smoother trip' vs. 'faster trip'.
- Brenna Jennings asked about the possibility of adding U-turns along the corridor. She stated that it is very difficult to make left turns in most locations along the corridor and it forces drivers to make unsafe decisions. The ability to make easy U-turns would remove the need to attempt cutting across traffic. A brief discussion followed, noting that the full 5-lane build out cross-section would have the width to allow U-turns at the signalized intersections, but the narrower potential roadway alternatives may not. Any allowable U-turns would need to be located at traffic signals.

D. McNamara then presented the three roadway concept designs and the breakdown of the corridor into four segments.

Conceptual Alternatives Discussion:

- J. Walker expressed her concern with the 5' bike lane/shoulder shown in all three of the concepts and stated that a 5' wide bike lane does not meet City of Portsmouth standards. She asked if there was a possibility to reduce the shoulder width to less than 5' and eliminate the bike lane when there is a shared-use path on the same side of the road.
- She also spoke about her concern with having the shared-use path crossing the roadway stating that she believes bicyclists and pedestrians will continue to travel along the same side of the road even if the path is no longer there.
- When discussing segment three, Walker stated that she was reluctant to consider the traffic issues related to Water Country when designing the corridor due to the seasonal nature of the traffic issues and short duration as well as questions about the future of the property.
- M. Allinson stated that the portion of the roadway just south of Wilson Road has the 2-lanes for too long making it difficult to turn and merge. He also stated that he prefers the shared-use path along the residential side of US Route 1 as long as the path does not encroach too far onto the properties – it would create a definitive edge of pavement and make maintaining the properties much easier rather than dealing with the current gravel shoulder. The PAC members all agreed that Concept 3 was preferred for Segment 4.
- The idea of converting Constitution Ave. to a right-turn only intersection was discussed. The concerns were how to accommodate current left turning traffic from Route 1, as well as pushing left turning traffic from Constitution into the adjacent plaza to use the existing signal. Access to that signal would require vehicles to use the private property parking lot access to the plaza. Early concepts or potential changes to the Constitution and US Route 1 intersection shown in the 2011 Corridor Study had shown a portion of the plaza being acquired and a public right of way established to connect Constitution Ave. to the signalized intersection.
- The possibility of adding a center island along portions of the corridor was also discussed and adding U-turns throughout. Generally, the additional lanes and turning restriction of this alternative was not viewed favorably.
- Mark Newport asked if a roundabout at the White Cedar Blvd. intersection would help with traffic flow and give drivers and chance to change direction. A roundabout was also suggested for the intersection at Springbrook Circle. This would allow for a center median between these two intersections. The PAC agreed that they would like to see this concept prior to the second Public Informational Meeting.
- David Walker noted an on-going project will reconfigure Lang Road so that it will tie into Ocean Rd. The intersection of Lang Rd and US Route 1 will become a right

December 17, 2019

Public Advisory Committee Meeting
Page 4 of 4

turn out only. He also noted that turning left out of Suzanne Dr. is difficult and the possibility of forcing them to use Ocean Rd. should be considered.

- The Ocean Rd. intersection was discussed and the need for a right turn lane from US Route 1 SB to Ocean Rd was agreed upon. Juliet noted that there will be future residential development in the area and that should be considered in the design.

Conclusions

- Overall, Concept 3, which involves minimal roadway changes, was preferred through each of the corridor segments.
- Stantec will develop roundabout alternatives at the Walmart and Springbrook intersections.
- Stantec will continue the traffic analysis and update Concept 3 accordingly.
- It was decided that the PAC would meet again sometime in February to review the discussed changes to the concepts and the second Public Informational Meeting would be pushed back into early spring.

The meeting adjourned at 5:45 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