

Public Advisory Committee Meeting

US Route 1 - 29640
Lafayette Road, Portsmouth

Date/Time: December 16, 2020 / 4:00 PM

Place: Zoom Meeting

Next Meeting: TBD

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

David Walker – Rockingham
Planning Commission
Juliet Walker – Planning Director
Barbara McMillan – Conservation
Commission
Michael Williams - COAST
Matt Glenn – Seacoast Association
of Bike Riders
Jonathon Sandberg – Parking and
Traffic Safety Committee

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

Peter Whelan – City Council
Sharon Nichols – Area Resident
Brenna Jennings – Area Resident
Mark Allinson – Area Resident

Distribution: Attendees

A fourth Public Advisory Committee meeting was held over a Zoom video conference call on December 16, 2020 for the Portsmouth Route 1 project. The meeting was held to discuss the proposed bicycle and pedestrian facilities options along the corridor, begin the discussion on existing transit facilities and how they could be impacted, and obtain feedback about how to move forward with the upcoming Public Informational Meeting.

Introduction and PAC 3 Recap:

J. Reczek began the meeting with introductions and meeting agenda. She gave a brief recap of the previous PAC meeting held in November 2020 and then opened it up to discussion but there were no questions or comments.

Bicycle & Pedestrian Design:

D. McNamara presented four bicycle/pedestrian design options, noting that the discussion and critical sections used in the presentation are all based on using Roadway Alternative 3, which focuses on improvements at deficient approaches and maintains existing configuration elsewhere. He explained that the existing Right-of-way along the corridor is typically 66-feet wide – Roadway Alternative 3 includes 32-feet of travel/turning lanes and an additional 5-feet for utility panels/curbing, leaving a maximum of 29-feet available for bicycle/pedestrian facilities within the ROW. The bicycle/pedestrian options include:

- Base Option (29' – 30') – includes a 10' shared-use path, a 0'-4' grass panel, and a 5' shoulder on the west side and a 0'-3' bike lane buffer, a 6' bike lane, and a 5' sidewalk on the east side.
- Experienced Bicyclists Option (28') – includes a 3' bike lane buffer, a 6' bike lane, and a 5' sidewalk on each side of the roadway.
- Family/Recreational Option (30') – includes a 10' shared-use path and a 5' shoulder on each side of the roadway,
- Original Corridor Study Option (20') – includes a 5' shoulder and a 5' sidewalk on each side of the roadway.

Bicycle & Pedestrian Design Discussion:

- Assistant Mayor, Cliff Lazenby, stated that he liked how the bike/ped. options were named based off the options and thought this was useful when presenting to the public.
- Matt Glenn from the Seacoast Association of Bike Riders said that he appreciated that there was now an option that showed a shared-use path on the west side of the roadway for the full length of the corridor.
 - Matt also commented on the 'Experienced Bicyclists' option, stating that experienced bicyclists avoid riding on Lafayette Road and will continue to do so. He believes that the 'Family/Recreational' Option best meets the needs of this corridor.
- Eric Eby from the Department of Public Works stated that he also prefers the 'Family/Recreational' Option for the corridor. Due to high speed and traffic volume of Lafayette, he thinks it would be the best option to remove all bike/ped. traffic to a shared-use path and remove them from the roadway.
 - He also questioned options that included a grass buffer between the shared-use path and the roadway – wondering how wide it would need to be for it to be properly maintained. C. Lazenby agreed with his concern.
 - City of Portsmouth Planning Director, Juliet Walker, stated that she agreed with E. Eby about the importance of having a shared-use path on both side but did not want to dismiss using a grass buffer. She believes the public will want a grass buffer for safety and for increased aesthetics.

- J. Walker also questioned why the options are still showing the minimum shoulder width as 5-feet.
 - J. Reczek answered that this is NHDOT standard and in place for maintenance and emergency access.
- Barbara McMillan from the Conservation Commission was also concerned about the purpose of the grass strip. She questioned if it would be used for stormwater treatment, safety, or is it strictly for aesthetics.
 - Jonathon Sandberg also questioned the purpose of the grass strip. He stated that he would not want the grass strip if it took away any width from the shared-use path. He would like to see the grass-strip removed if the width could be added to the shared-use path, stating that the wider the shared-use path is, the safer it is to its users.
- Police Chief, Mark Newport, asked to confirm that all options included curbing to separate pedestrians from the roadway.

Roadway Critical Sections:

D. McNamara presented various critical sections along the corridor using Alternative 3 for the roadway section while showing each bike/ped. option to show how the impacts can differ based on the option selected. He then opened it up for discussion.

Critical Section Discussion:

- J. Walker stated that if there are any locations where the shared-use path narrows to be less than 10-feet wide, it must be noted and not labeled as a shared-use path. She stated that in these locations, the shared-use path may need to split into an on-road bike-lane and sidewalk for pedestrians.
- J. Walker also noted that the critical section that shows in the area of the new Westerly condo complex will most likely not be an issue as shown – a shared-use path has recently been constructed on the east side of the roadway. There is on-going coordination with the development, as a portion of the retaining walls may have been built too close to the road.
- M. Glenn noted that once you pass Hoover Dr. to the north, there are other bicycle traveling options along roadways that run parallel to Lafayette. Because of this, a shared-use path may not be needed on both sides of the roadway once you pass Hoover Dr. and this would help address concerns with having a shared-use path abutting many residential properties to the north.
- J. Sandberg stated a desire to connect to the rail trail from Ocean Road, or utilizing Banfield Road.
- J. Walker stated that the public may like to see a shared-use path on one side and a buffer/bike lane/sidewalk on the other side along the residential segment of the corridor.

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.

There will be incremental cost changes from the original estimate, based on the desired bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Feedback and Next Steps for Bike/Ped. Options

- Based on previous comments, D. McNamara asked the PAC if an option that includes a 10-foot shared-use path with a 5-foot shoulder on each side of the roadway that incorporates a grass buffer when it can be accommodated would be the preferred option going into the Public Informational Meeting.
 - The general consensus was to move forward with that highlighted as preferred at the Public Informational Meeting.
- B. McMillan asked how the information would be presented at the Public Informational Meeting, wondering if there would be any advancements on visuals to include to renderings. J. Walker requested that example photos or real-life examples of each option be included in the PIM presentation.
 - The Department and Stantec will be looking at opportunities to provide additional graphics, sample photos of similar corridors and renderings as part of the next PIM.
- B. McMillan also asked if there was any opportunity for low-impact-development improvements to any impacted parcels and how the state would go about maintaining these options on private property. She questioned if the state would buy any properties for this reason
 - J. Reczek answered it is likely that stormwater treatment ponds will need to be placed outside the Right of Way. The Department will need to follow their ROW process in obtaining any necessary easements or land in order to meet the needs of the project.
- C. Lazenby asked if there was a best practice for corridors similar to Lafayette Rd. that have many commercial and residential driveways on both sides of the roadway.
 - He stated that he believes if there are examples of similar corridors, they should be shown early in the PIM presentation. Explaining which options work and showing what they look like will immediately alleviate some concern he anticipates the abutters will have.
- M. Glenn stated that he is less concerned about accidents between vehicles and bicyclists at residential driveways when compared to driveways into

- businesses. He asked if there was any opportunity to tighten any of the wider drives along the corridor or even paint the bike paths/sidewalk crossings at driveway to draw attention to them.
- The design team will look at signage and marking options for these types of situations.
 - M. Glenn also questioned if the right-turn lane at the Walmart Intersection was needed. He believes that the intersection is currently too wide since it was built out to match the corridor study typical section. He asked if the removal of that lane would make more room for bike/ped. facilities.
 - He also stated that he thinks the slip lanes at the White Cedar Blvd. Intersection are not needed. Removing them would create more room for bike/ped. options and create more pervious area for stormwater treatment.
 - M. Glenn asked how shared-use path roadway crossings work.
 - J. Reczek answered roadway crossings will be at signalized intersections with pedestrian signals. There has also been discussion of a dedicated pedestrian signal in the vicinity of Hoover Ave to provide an additional crossing at the start of the residential area.
 - M. Glenn asked if adding a mid-block crossing along Constitution Ave creates a safety issue to bike/ped. traffic. He stated that drivers turning onto Constitution Ave from Lafayette would not likely expect a crossing so close to the intersection. He asked if an RRFB had been considered in this location.
 - The need for additional signage or signalization of this crossing will be looked at as the design progresses, and the final layout is known.
 - E. Eby asked who has the right-of-way at driveway/shared-use path crossings. He recommended that an answer is known prior to the PIM – expects it be a concern to abutters.
 - M. Glenn asked if there has been any more consideration to adding a bike/ped. crossing at the West Rd. intersection.
 - J. Reczek stated that the state has discussed the addition of push-button stop at that intersection.
 - E. Eby stated that he believes sightlines may be an issue approaching the West Rd. intersection. He believes that if anything is added, mid-block crossings to the north or the south of the intersection would be safer options.
 - C. Lazenby stated that driveway crossings will be a major discussion point during the PIM, so preparation for all possible related questions is very important.

Transit Facilities Discussion:

- Michael Williams from COAST gave some background information about the existing transit facilities along Lafayette Rd.
 - Bus route stops at each of the 6 stops along the corridor once per hour.

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- COAST conducted a major redesign to their routes/timings recently and decided the stops along the corridor were sufficient. Only possible changes would be to frequency, not layout.
- Although there are six designated stops along the corridor, the bus only stops at each if it is requested by a passenger. There is a mandatory stop in the Walmart Plaza, but this is considered off-site.
- A 'Full-Build' transit facility would include a shelter, bench, and pull-off, but not all stops warrant this.
- Recently they have been adding solar powered lights to stops based on a user-survey stating lighting while waiting was passenger's largest concern.
- COAST hopes to have sidewalk at each of their stops.
- COAST is happy with their current layout along the corridor but will listen to any recommendations/requests for reconfigurations if needed, as long as safety is considered.

Discussion of Next Steps:

The next step in the process is to work towards a Public Informational Meeting, sometime during the winter of 2021.

The meeting adjourned at 5:30 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.

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