



MEETING MINUTES

Hooksett U.S. 3/NH 28 – Project 29611

Date: April 30, 2024
Time: 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM
Location: Town of Hooksett Administrative Office Building and Virtual Zoom Meeting
Re: Public Informational Meeting #3

Attendees:

NHDOT

Dave Smith, Project Manager
Jon Hebert, Senior Design Engineer
Sarah Healey, Design Engineer

WSP

Liviu Sfintescu, Project Manager
Tim Higginson, Deputy Project Manager
Erin Williams, Civil Engineer
Delia Makhetha, Public Involvement Lead

Working Group Members

Andre Garron, Hooksett Town Administrator
Bruce Thomas, Hooksett Town Engineer
Nate Miller, Southern New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission (SNHRPC)
William Rearick, Hooksett Schools Superintendent*
Jesse Frail, Resident
Michelle Canning, Pro Technologies
State Rep. JR Hoell, State Representative
Tom Osborne, Osbornes Farm and Garden Centers, LLC
Jake Robie, Hooksett Police Department*
Tony Crawford, Circle T Car Wash
Joseph Stalker, Hooksett Fire Department*
David Boutin, Hooksett Town Council*
Lawrence Yassanye, Southern New Hampshire University*

*Invited but not in Attendance

Other attendees

See attached attendees list.



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A total of 30 people attended the meeting in person and 4 attended online.

Meeting Discussion:

1. Welcome and Introductions (NHDOT)

- Dave Smith (NHDOT) welcomed all attendees.
- Dave Smith (NHDOT) outlined the goals of the meeting:
 - Provide presentation of preferred layout.
 - Gather public feedback on the preferred layout.
 - Discuss next steps.

2. PowerPoint presentation (NHDOT/WSP)

Dave Smith (NHDOT Project Manager) and Liviu Sfintescu (WSP Project Manager) presented the latest project design to the public. This presentation outlined the following main points:

- i. Recapped the previous public meetings and the members of the project working group.
- ii. Reiterated the Project Vision and Purpose and Need Statements.
- iii. Reiterated the existing corridor deficiencies.
- iv. Summarized the highlights of the preferred design alternative:
 - Expand US 3 to two lanes in each direction to increase traffic capacity
 - Add raised median islands at selected locations along the corridor to improve safety
 - Incorporate 5' shoulders along the entire project length
 - Add 6' sidewalks along both sides of the roadway for pedestrian safety from Alice Ave to Mammoth Rd
 - Add 6' sidewalk along the west side of the roadway for pedestrian safety from Mammoth Rd to Martins Ferry Rd
 - Convert Alice Ave and Mammoth Rd intersections to hybrid roundabouts to improve traffic flow and safety
 - Improve the signal at the Martins Ferry Rd intersection
 - Construct approx. 2,000 LF of retaining walls to minimize impacts
 - Acquire, at a minimum, ROW strips on most properties along corridor
 - Cost of construction approx. \$20M (including inflation & excluding ROW)
- v. Presented roll plots showing the preferred design alternative.
- vi. Discussed the water quality measures proposed for the project.
- vii. Discussed the proposed improvements at the three signalized intersections and their associated benefits/challenges.
- viii. Presented the natural and cultural resources impacted by the project.
- ix. Presented the anticipated project schedule.



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3. Public feedback/discussion

A questions and answers session followed the presentation. The following items were discussed:

Q = Question

A = Answer

C = Comment

C: State Representative Carol McGuire – The current design is much better than the one presented at the Public Informational meeting in October 2023 and provides much better business access.

C: State Representative JR Hoell – Acknowledged the good work done by the design team. Has concerns relative to the Alice Ave approach to the Alice Ave roundabout.

C: Alex Walczyk (Hooksett Town Council) – Appreciates the efforts and responsiveness of the design team. Knows that some of the Town Council members are concerned with the business impacts. Encourages the public to share input with the Town Council. If we need to use the NH National Guard property, there may still be time to do this, but time is running out.

C: Dave Smith clarified that the project will be presented at an upcoming Town Council meeting to determine the Town's support for the roundabouts and discuss other elements of the preferred design alternative.

C: Jesse Frail – voiced support for the Alice Ave roundabout alternative due to: 1) the level of services (LOS) improvements, 2) safety improvements, and 3) ability for all vehicles to make U-turns. Her property is impacted by the design but thinks that the benefits provided by the roundabout outweigh its impacts.

C: Tom Osborne – voiced agreement with Jesse Frail, highlighting that both roundabouts seem to be the best solution for the corridor. Agrees with prohibiting left turns out of Cinemagic Way due to safety reasons and the long wait associated with these left turns. The Mammoth Rd roundabout would provide a much safer alternative to reverse direction. Commended the design team for listening to input from the public and the Project Working Group.

C: Michelle Canning – Echoes Jesse's and Tom's comments and supports the roundabouts. Thinks that they provide a good opportunity for emergency vehicles to reverse direction and access the properties in areas where medians are proposed. Even though the former Bank of America property is losing some parking spaces, they will still be a significant number of parking spaces within the property.



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Q: Ray Ayotte (Manchester Manor) – Thinks that the roundabouts will pose concerns for tractor trailers, will increase speeds and pose concerns for crossing 4 lanes of traffic in their proximity. Prefers traffic lights and thinks that the roundabouts will confuse people. Thinks that roundabouts are less expensive to construct and maintain.

A: Dave Smith – Truck aprons will be provided to facilitate tractor trailer movements through the roundabouts. Pedestrian activated signals (overhead or pole mounted) will be used to alert drivers of pedestrian crossings. Clarified that roundabouts are more expensive to construct but less expensive to maintain.

Q: Steve Lawrence (Pro Technologies) – Agrees with the roadway design but concerned with the loss of parking and his property impacts. Shared feedback from previous discussion with NHDOT regarding the impacts onto their property and likelihood of full acquisition. Pro Technologies discussed the current impacts and mitigation options with an attorney. Concerned that the business will incur significant legal costs to find a solution for saving the property that may later be disapproved by the Town due to environmental impacts or other potential issues. Steve asked why the burden of acquiring the parcel to the south of the Pro Technologies site to construct replacement parking is their responsibility and not the NHDOT's to keep them a viable business. Also asked the Town and attendees to help find a solution to the current situation. If the property is fully acquired, Pro Technologies is not planning to relocate in Hooksett.

A: Dave Smith – Confirmed the accuracy of Steve's statements and recapped the previous conversations held to date with them. Explained that planning for a full acquisition prior to the Public Hearing is the best strategy for Pro Technologies based upon the prior discussions with Pro Technologies and the NHDOT's right-of-way agent. The NHDOT can step back from the full acquisition more easily, if a solution is found. It is more difficult to request and grant a full acquisition if not noted as such during the public hearing. The compensation for the various impacts has been discussed with the NHDOT's Right-of-Way agent in an attempt to provide as much information to Pro Technologies as possible to support their decision making. The NHDOT acknowledges that this property features the highest impacts along the entire corridor. The NHDOT has not contacted Apple Cinemas (owner of the property to the south) to discuss the acquisition of that property to construct a Best Management Practice (water quality-BMP) measure at that location. If Pro Technologies is able and can acquire that portion of their property to support expanded parking, the NHDOT has the flexibility to eliminate the water quality-BMP. The NHDOT cannot acquire a portion of the Apples Cinema property to construct an access for Pro Technologies due to its statutory regulations. NH State Constitution article 12-a restricts the NHDOT from buying property from one owner to give to another.

C: JR Hoell – Will try to contact Apple Cinemas. This issue should be discussed in more detail at a future working group meeting.



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Q: Dr. Ed Thurber (Hooksett Family Eyecare) – Disagrees with the proposed roundabouts in part due to safety concerns. Concerned that the Town will not properly maintain the sidewalks and that this will become a burden for the business owners.

A: Dave Smith – Roundabout engineering studies show that roundabouts typically decrease the severity of the accidents compared to signalized intersections.

Q: Bud Paquette – Disagrees with the Mammoth Rd roundabout due to uncertainty of how trucks will use it. Mentioned that it is currently very difficult to turn left out of the property even though only one lane of traffic needs to be crossed and the red light provides some traffic gaps. Concerned that the roundabout will promote a continuous flow of traffic that will make left turns out of the property even more difficult.

Q: Ray Ayotte (Manchester Manor) – Will the Embassy Ave sight distance issue be addressed? It is currently very difficult for vehicles to make left turns at that location.

A: Dave Smith – The project currently proposes to lay back the slope and demolish the Shuttles Auto Sales building to provide for adequate sight distance looking north along US 3.

C: Jenna Paquette – Concerned with left turns out of the Paquette Pools and Spas due to the roundabout. Anyone in Town she speaks to does not want the roundabout. Noted she has spoken to her tractor trailer drivers who note that roundabouts don't work.

A: Dave Smith – Committed to setting up a meeting to discuss the operations of roundabouts with her drivers and to bring NHDOT drivers to support the discussion.

Q: Michael Soucy (owner of Shuttles Auto Sales) - Acknowledges that the left turns out access for Pro Technologies is a difficult issue to resolve. Is a total acquisition an option for his property as well?

A: Dave Smith – Noted that based upon our discussions with Mr. Soucy, it is likely that support for the complete acquisition request may be a challenge, however that this may be requested at any time by any property owner. The existing site is approximately 0.8 acres in size and the remainder of the site will be 0.7 acres after the strip acquisition along the US 3 frontage. Further discussions can be held with the NHDOT to support decision making for Mr. Soucy.

Q: Dr. Jeanne Thurber (Hooksett Eye Care) - Doesn't like the roundabout, especially at Alice Ave. Would like to see an example of how truck turns function on a similar roundabout. Where will be the \$20M construction funding coming from and who would reimburse the property owners for legal expenses? What would be tax impact of the Town maintenance of the sidewalks?

A: Dave Smith – The NHDOT will work to provide video or simulations of roundabout operations at the Exit 17 location. The project is 80% federally funded and 20% State funded. The NHDOT will setup a meeting with Dr(s). Thurber to discuss the specifics of benefits and impacts to their property with a NHDOT right-of-way agent at which time we



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will discuss all the compensable aspects. Regarding the local tax impact, the NHDOT does not know this, Town Officials in the audience were asked for insight however no insight was able to be provided.

C: JR Hoell – encourages the public to reach out to NHDOT with any concerns. The NHDOT has been very responsive to date.

Q: Fred (online attendee) – There are hundreds of cars accessing the Community Plaza property at the south end of the project. Need to develop a better access for these businesses.

A: Dave Smith – The NHDOT acknowledges this and trying to strike a balance between providing safety while maintaining convenient access to all properties. There have been 478 accidents over a 12-year time period, with 25% of them in the southern limits, therefore the raised island is proposed to address this safety challenge.

C: Alice Obdell - Doesn't like roundabouts. Mentioned that Mammoth Rd has become a racetrack with vehicles travelling at 50mph although the roadway is posted at 35mph.

Q: Dianne Ayotte – Previous design provided an alternate access to Community Plaza across the former Bank of America property that business owners seemed to favor. What will be project's impact on taxes? Has experienced a 45% tax increase at the last assessment. Concerned that taxes will increase.

A; Dave Smith - The access that was previous shown across the former Bank of America was developed and shown as a concept that could have been developed by private developers to address access challenges to Community Plaza. This cannot be proposed by the NHDOT as part of the project as NH State Constitution article 12-a restricts the NHDOT from buying property from one owner to give to another. Regarding the local tax impact, the NHDOT does not know this, Town Officials in the audience were asked for insight however no insight was able to be provided.

Q: Cathy Longfellow – Will U-turns be accommodated at Silver Ave?

A: Dave Smith – Yes, U-turns could be accommodated for smaller vehicles, however anything larger than a passenger vehicle would have to progress north to the roundabout at Mammoth Road to make a U-turn.

Q: Tom Osborne – Is there any data available that would show how the I-93 Exit 17 roundabout currently functions?

A: Dave Smith – No operational statistics are available. Roundabouts may be a learning curve but will provide benefits due to reduced speeds and accidents severity. NHDOT will work to collect and share video of roundabout operations. If feasible they will be placed on the NHDOT project website.

Q: Dr. Jeanne Thurber (Hooksett Eye Care) – Why not provide 3 lanes along the corridor in conjunction with wider shoulders and new sidewalks? Is concerned with promoting high speeds. Can the design team look back at the 3-lane alternative? Will the efficiency of the existing traffic signals be assessed before the construction of the project?



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A: Dave Smith – This project completes improvements in the gap that currently exists between two 5-lane sections located to the south and to the north of the project limits. The Town voted unanimously on the 5-lane section. NHDOT as previously committed will work to assess the existing signal timings to enhance short term operations prior to the project.

A: Liviu Sfintescu – Clarified that additional lanes would still need to be added at the intersections to improve traffic operations even if only three lanes were provided along the corridor.

Q: Fred (online attendee) – Turning lanes are better for businesses. 15 businesses impacted by the addition of median from Alice Ave to Silver Ave. This should be a center turning lane.

A: Dave Smith – The media in this area was introduced for safety reasons to reduce the number of traffic conflict points between left turn and thru traffic. We will however work to assess this request along with other items from tonight's meeting at future Town discussions.

C: Alice Mandeville (resident of Sterns Ave by Alice Ave) – Would utilize the Alice Ave roundabout twice a day. Would strongly prefer the safest movements that the roundabout would offer rather than a signalized intersection. Left turns out of many businesses are already very difficult and unsafe in the current condition. The roundabout would improve this. Turning right and proceeding to the roundabout would seem a small compromise to improve traffic safety. It takes her daughter approximately 30 minutes to get from Alice Ave to Shaw's on Thursdays or Fridays afternoon due to the sequence of all the traffic signals. The current design would improve this situation.

Q: Bud Paquette – Why were roundabouts not utilized on the Route 101 project in Bedford?

A: Liviu Sfintescu – Route 101 in Bedford has different characteristics than US 3 in Hooksett. There are a lot less businesses and driveways along Route 101 in Bedford and the need for U-turns is less important. Therefore, long sections of median islands with very few openings were acceptable in Bedford. These median islands decrease the number of traffic conflict points and promote safety.

Q: Jenna Paquette – Can the NHDOT show the current design to truck drivers and get their perspective?

A: Dave Smith – Yes, the NHDOT can show the current design to CDL drivers that work for the NHDOT and can include Jenna in those discussions as well, if required.

Q: Jr Hoell – Is it possible to obtain a drone footage of the I-93 Exit 17 roundabout to demonstrate to the public how that roundabout functions?

A: Dave Smith – The NHDOT will work to obtain drone footage at this location and share with the public. These will be posted to the NHDOT project website if feasible.

Q: Tom Osborne – Will left turn truck turning movements be accommodated at Zachary Dr, Leonard Ave and other similar locations where medians are present?



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A: Dave Smith – Yes, all medians will be designed to accommodate truck turning movements.

Dave Smith (NHDOT) thanked the public for their time and feedback and closed the meeting at 8:30 pm.

4. Schedule/Next Steps

- i. Formal meetings
 - The design team will plan to attend the Town Council meeting on May 22 to present the preferred alternative and discuss the feedback received at this Public Informational meeting.
 - Project Working Group meeting – Jun 2024
 - Public Hearing – Winter 2024
- ii. Ongoing Efforts
 - i. Property/Business Owner discussions
- iii. Actions
 - i. Obtain drone footage of the I-93 Exit 17 roundabout and share with the public.
 - ii. Setup a meeting with the Paquette family to discuss roundabout operations.
 - iii. Setup a meeting with the Thurber family to discuss benefits and impacts to their property; NHDOT will have the right-of-way agent attend this meeting.