

**Public Advisory Committee Meeting #6**

Project/File: US Route 1 - 29640  
Date/Time: February 29, 2024 / 4:00 PM  
Location: Portsmouth Department of Public Works  
Next Meeting: TBD  
Attendees: David Smith – NHDOT  
Curtis Morrill – NHDOT  
David McNamara – Stantec  
Tyler Gagnon – Stantec  
Lee Carbonneau – Normandeau Associates  
Eric Eby – Department of Public Work  
David Walker – Rockingham Planning Commission  
Joanna Kelley – Assistant Mayor  
Jillian Harris – Portsmouth Planning & Sustainability Department  
Michael Williams – Cooperative Alliance of Seacoast Transportation (COAST)  
Jonathan Sandberg – Seacoast Association of Bike Riders (SABR)  
Anne Poubeau – Seacoast Association of Bike Riders (SABR)  
Captain Nick Small – Portsmouth Police Department

Absentees: Kathleen Corliss – NHDOT  
Meli Dube – NHDOT  
Mark Newport – Portsmouth Police Department  
William McQuillen – Portsmouth Fire Department  
Peter Britz – Portsmouth Planning & Sustainability Department  
Barbara McMillan – Conservation Commission  
Andrew Bagley – Parking and Traffic Safety Committee  
Ben VanCamp – The Chamber Collaborative of Greater Portsmouth  
Rad Nichols – Cooperative Alliance of Seacoast Transportation (COAST)  
Matthew Glenn – Seacoast Association of Bike Riders (SABR)  
Brenna Jennings – Corridor Resident  
Sharon Nichols – Corridor Resident  
Janet Stevens – Executive Council  
Senator Rebecca Perkins Kwoka  
Rep. Rebecca McBeath  
Rep. Gerald Ward  
Rep. Kate Murray  
Rep. Joan Hamblet  
Rep. David Meuse  
Rep. Ned Reynolds

Distribution: Attendees

A sixth Public Advisory Committee (PAC) meeting was held at Portsmouth Department of Public Works on February 29<sup>th</sup>, 2024 for the Portsmouth Route 1 project. The meeting was held to recap the fifth PAC meeting, discuss the outstanding questions asked during that meeting, and obtain a consensus among the PAC members about the preferred corridor alternative to move forward with and present at the upcoming Public Informational Meeting (PIM).

**Presentation – Introduction:**

D. Smith began the meeting with introductions, a brief project history explanation, and the meeting agenda. He discussed the previous PAC meeting (held 02/15/2024) and touched on the goals/decision points for the meeting.

D. McNamara presented the project limits, some existing corridor data, and the project's purpose and need. He then opened it up to discussion/questions.

**Discussion – Introduction:**

No questions/comments.

**Presentation – Roadway Part 1:**

D. McNamara then briefly presented the roadway concept designs. He specifically focused on Alternative 3 as the current preferred alternative and opened discussion on the PAC's feelings on adding a consistent SB 2-Lane section from the Walmart intersection through Ocean Road. He showed the worst-case property/ROW impacts to multiple abutting properties along this portion of the corridor.

**Discussion – Roadway Part 1:**

- Assistant Mayor Joanna Kelley asked about impact to Heritage Commons (the property just south of the Heritage Ave. intersection with US Route 1) and if they would be different if the existing 1-Lane alternative was maintained. She also questioned the exact location of the lane-drop south of the Heritage Ave. intersection and where the lane would be added at the approach towards Ocean Rd.
  - Impacts are rather limited along this frontage and consist of a strip acquisition of right-of-way, driveway match construction. No business sign or parking lot/space impacts are anticipated.
  - The start of the lane drop SB is 300' south of Ocean Road and the lanes are fully added 300' south of the Ocean Road intersection in the NB direction.
  - D. Smith noted that there would be a difference of 11' between the 1-lane vs 2-lane layouts, however no matter the 1-lane or 2-lane alternative, all the properties along the corridor would have some sort of ROW impacts and acquisitions due the addition of the multi-use path on both sides of the roadway. He also stated that there would potentially be full acquisitions of some properties along the corridor based on the severity of the impacts.
- J. Kelley then asked if the design team knew which properties would have significant impacts and would possibly be considered for full acquisitions.

- D. Smith said once the preferred alternative progresses, we would have a better understanding of the impacts and could share that information with the PAC.
- J. Kelley followed up on a discussion point from the fifth PAC meeting, questioning what the total multi-use path width would be compared to just a standalone sidewalk, and would the City have the ability to maintain something wider than a standard sidewalk.
  - The multi-use path (MUP) is 10.5' wide and a typical sidewalk is 6' wide. The City noted that they will be able to maintain the wider widths associated with the MUP.
- J. Kelley stated that as a resident of Suzanne Dr., at first glance, she is in favor of adding a second SB lane along the southern portion of the corridor. She stated that it can be difficult attempting to turn in and out in the existing condition. She also asked the if the center turn-lane would be maintained in the proposed alternatives.
  - Eric Eby (Portsmouth DPW) stated that adding a second lane would most likely make left-turns more difficult to Suzanne Dr. and other driveways along the corridor.
  - D. McNamara stated that in both alternatives, the center turn-lane would be maintained.
- Michael Williams (COAST) asked if there was an anticipation of increased speeds in 2-lane sections when compared to single lane sections.
  - J. Kelley stated that the current configuration already feels like a 'raceway' and the addition of a second lane may slow drivers who are currently racing to merge ahead of competing vehicles.
  - D. McNamara stated that a second lane could lead to higher speeds, but need to consider against the elimination of the merge that also leads to higher speeds as vehicles race ahead to get in front.
- J. Kelley asked if the design team had any information on the traffic movements at the Ocean Rd. intersection – is a majority of the traffic traveling through the intersection or making turns?
  - D. McNamara stated that we can get back to her with that information.
- J. Kelley stated that some drivers traveling SB will use Suzanne Dr. as a cut through to Ocean Rd. to bypass the light at the intersection. She also stated that City has added speed bumps to Suzanne Dr. to deter drivers.
- D. Smith reiterated that none the alternatives are definite at this time. All alternatives are subject to change based off public input.
- David Walker (Rockingham Planning Commission) asked if there has been any research into the need of 2-lanes SB through the Walmart intersection. If it is not needed, is it possible to change the alternative to show a single lane through the corridor and just widening at the intersections.
  - D. McNamara stated that the design team would explore this alternative. The single lane option does not address the challenges associated with the lane drops downstream of the intersections noted as concerns at the prior public meetings.

- Members of SABR stated that they would prefer a single lane in both directions along the length of the corridor. They fear that 2-lane sections encourage higher speeds. They also questioned if the design team is suggesting that a 2-lane section would increase safety.
  - D. McNamara explained the pros/cons of adding a second SB lane. The two-lane sections could increase speeds and make left turns onto Route 1 more difficult. Maintaining the two-lane section will eliminate merge and diverge sections departing and approaching signalized intersections.
- J. Kelley asked about the impacts to ROW would change if we show a single SB lane as the preferred alternative.
  - D. Smith stated that it would pull in the work limits approximately 11-FT along the western side of Route 1.
- J. Kelley asked if there has been crash studies on left turns crossing 2-lanes of traffic vs. a single lane.
  - D. Walker stated that he is not sure if there is a increase in total number of accidents but the severity of the accidents increases with lanes.
- D. Smith states that it seems the PAC consensus would be to show a single SB lane on the preferred alternative for the PIM.
- J. Kelley asked if the second SB lane is removed from the alternative, would the lane configuration at the Ocean Road intersection be affected.
  - D. McNamara stated that the lane configuration would be the same at the intersections regardless of what is carried through the corridor in-between the intersections.
  - After discussions of the two lane layout SB south of Heritage Avenue, it was decided by the NHDOT to retain both lanes SB through Ocean Road given past support from the public.

### **Presentation – Roadway Part 2:**

D. McNamara continued the roadway presentation by showing a few more critical sections along the corridor. Next, he moved on to discussing the two different roundabout alternatives for the Walmart & Springbrook Cir. Intersections.

### **Discussion – Roadway Part 2:**

- E. Eby stated that Portsmouth DPW supports the roundabout alternatives. He believes they will be good for traffic flow and decreased the amount/severity of the property impacts.
- J. Kelley stated that she also likes the roundabouts but is very worried about bringing them to the public as the preferred alternative. There are many who vocalize their dislike of the Portsmouth Traffic Circle and often cannot differentiate the difference between a traffic circle and a roundabout. She also asked if the design team brought the traffic simulation that was discussed during the fifth PAC meeting.

- D. McNamara shared the simulation – showing a single lane roundabout at the Walmart intersection and a 2-lane roundabout at the Springbrook Cir. Intersection. The simulation showed traffic conditions of the projected future peak.
- D. Smith stated that the NHDOT supports the roundabout alternatives as well and would look more into the alternatives if they are supported.
- D. Walker asked if the traffic modeling being used by the design team takes into account the addition of bike/ped. facilities when projecting vehicular traffic. He explained that if there are more people using the corridor as a pedestrian or bicyclist, would that possibly reduce the numbers of users traveling in vehicles. He stated that he recognizes that this impact would be minimal.
- M. Williams stated his concern with the simulation is that it does not show any gaps in the traffic for the pedestrians to cross. He also asked if the design team has ever seen a roundabout with a full signal system that is associated to bike/ped. traffic – he envisioned a full-stop of traffic entering/exiting the roundabout so bike/peds. could make their movements without conflicts.
  - E. Eby countered that ped. crossings at roundabouts are safer than signalized intersections due to the fact that peds. would only need to cross one lane at a time.
- Members of SABR asked about who would maintain the bike/ped. crossing facilities along the Route 1 corridor. In the past they have encountered issues along the corridor and struggled to get in touch with the responsible parties.
  - The City is responsible for multi-use path maintenance and bicycle related pavement markings; the NHDOT is responsible for maintenance between the curb lines along US 1 to include the intersections/roundabouts.
- M. Williams stated that COAST would potentially have concerns with bus stops in proximity of the proposed roundabouts. The preferred bus stop alternative would be to not include a pull-off, causing the traffic to slow/stop when the bus does. The existing stop just south of Walmart on the SB side of the roadway would potentially cause traffic to back-up into the roundabout – so this stop location would potentially need to be relocated.
- Members of SABR suggested a ‘serious’ marketing campaign by the City and the design team if they want the public to buy-in to the roundabout alternatives. This is based on how previous roundabout concepts have been received.
- E. Eby stated that the Foye’s Corner (Rye, NH) roundabout is a good example of a location where originally the public was very much against the design, but now years later, the public opinion seems to be mostly positive.
- D. Smith stated that the NHDOT would like to include the roundabout alternatives in the preferred alternative that is presented at the PIM.
- J. Kelley asked if the design team would be able to show the pedestrians in the roundabout simulation.
  - D. McNamara noted that since there are no pedestrians facilities along the this portion of the Route 1 corridor currently, the pedestrian number used are a guess at this time.

- Members of SABR noted that if the bike/ped. facilities are constructed, they will be used.
- J. Kelley asked about the traffic impacts during construction.
  - D. Smith stated that at a minimum, a single lane of traffic would be maintained in both directions throughout construction. Also, all homes and businesses would maintain their access to Route 1. More in-depth traffic control plans are developed as the project progresses.
  - J. Kelley asked if there would be opportunities for abutting properties to have meetings with the design team about site access during construction.
  - D. Smith stated that the goal would be for the design team to have meetings with the properties with significant impacts – meeting with all 70 +/- property owners privately is not likely.

### **Presentation – Roadway Part 3:**

D. McNamara asked the PAC members about the Water Country site access and how it affects traffic along Route 1. He asked when it's the worst, and in which direction.

### **Discussion – Roadway Part 3:**

- Portsmouth Police Department representative stated that the traffic back-up occurs in both directions, and it is dependent on the weather. If it's nice out during the summer months, no matter the day of week, there will be back ups along the corridor around 9-10 AM.
- J. Kelley concurred that it begins around 9-10 AM and added that it will back up the NB traffic all the way through the Springbrook Cir. Intersection. She also stated that a Common Man site will be constructed across the street from the Water Country site access, which will now adding competing traffic movements.
- E. Eby stated that Water Country is aware of the issues it causes to Route 1 traffic and is currently considering changes they could make to assist. He stated that City and Water Country have an open discussion about alternatives.

### **Presentation – Bike/Peds**

D. McNamara presented the current preferred bike/peds. alternative – a multi-use path with a sidepath for bicyclists and a sidewalk for pedestrians, that includes a grass buffer along the curb line. He also showed two different alternatives for crossings at the intersections; bikes boxes and a 2-stage alternative. He then presented a potential mid-block crossing in the proximity of Hoover Dr. and Campus Dr.

The design team inquired about a bike/ped. alternative that showed a single shared-use path on one side of the roadway and a sidewalk on the other. They also questioned the PAC on their preferred grass buffer location.

### **Discussion – Bike/Peds:**

- E. Eby stated that he liked the 2-stage alternative for bike crossings at the intersection. He stated that there are bike boxes in other locations within the city that are not used as designed. He also noted that he currently uses the 2-stage approach when turning at intersections as a bicyclist.
- Members of SABR noted that they are not in favor of bike boxes. They are not used correctly in other locations.
- E. Eby stated that he is in favor of a HAWK beacon for the potential Hoover Dr. crossing.
- J. Kelley stated that it needs to be noted that she has noticed at public meetings, many of the vocal residents tend to not care about bike/ped. facilities.
- Members of SABR stated that a single shared-use path is not desirable and would prefer the same accommodations on both sides of the roadway.
- E. Eby stated that the DPW would prefer to have a multi-use path on both sides of the roadway.
- Members of SABR stated that they would prefer the grass utility/signage strip to be between the multi-use path and the curb. Any chance to maximize the space between bike/peds. and vehicular traffic should be utilized.
- E. Eby agreed that the grass strip would be preferred along the curb line as it works well for snow storage.

**Presentation – Miscellaneous Topics:**

D. McNamara went on to note the ongoing discussions with COAST about the existing bus stops and route in proximity to the project corridor. He then presented information regarding the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) – this was followed by L. Carbonneau (Normandeau Associates) explaining project specific cultural/natural resource concerns and how someone can become a ‘consulting party.’ D. McNamara then discussed the current status of stormwater management.

**Discussion – Miscellaneous Topics:**

- J. Kelley noted that there is a cemetery committee in the City – they may be interested in the ongoing research.

**Presentation – Schedule:**

D. Smith concluded the meeting discussing the upcoming project schedule and what the immediate next steps should be.

**Discussion – Schedule:**

- J. Kelley stated that she would like to have the PIM then a meeting with City Officials. She recommends sending information about the alternatives to the City Officials prior to the PIM.
- J. Kelley questioned how the NHDOT goes about notifying the public about the PIM.

- D. McNamara noted mailing to everyone on our abutter list as well as potential for direct mailing to all abutting properties based on mail routes and that the design team will work in coordination with USPS.
- J. Kelley asked where the design team is anticipating the PIM will be held. She noted that has found when public meetings are held close to the actual project area, there is a better turnout.
  - D. Smith stated that the design team would work in coordination with the City when planning time/location/notification.

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.

Thank you,

**STANTEC CONSULTING SERVICES INC.**

**Tyler Gagnon**

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