

Portsmouth 29640 – City of Portsmouth Status Meeting

US Route 1 - 29640 / 195350490

Date/Time: October 26, 2023 / 2:00 PM
Place: Portsmouth City Hall
Next Meeting: PAC Meeting #5 – TBD
Attendees: David Smith, PE – NHDOT
Curtis Morrill, PE – NHDOT
Eric Eby, PE – City of Portsmouth – City Engineer
Jillian Harris – City of Portsmouth – City Planner
Peter Britz – City of Portsmouth – Director of Planning and Sustainability
David McNamara, PE – Stantec
Tyler Gagnon, PE – Stantec
Absentees: N/A
Distribution: Attendees

A project status/refresh meeting was held at the City of Portsmouth on October 26th, 2023, for the Portsmouth Route 1 project. The meeting was held to regroup with the City of Portsmouth and discuss the current status of the project, introduce the newly assigned NHDOT Project manager and project team, and discuss progress since the previous Public Advisory Meeting (PAC #4, held December 16th, 2020). The current roadway alternatives, bike/ped. alternatives, project schedule, and the next Public Advisory Meeting were all discussed during the meeting.

Introduction:

D. Smith began the meeting with introductions and meeting agenda. He gave a brief recap of the current status of the project and the goal of the meeting.

Project History and Overview:

D. McNamara discussed the history of the project dating back from the original corridor study all the way through the most recent PAC meeting in December 2020. He explained that there has been four previous PAC meetings and a “blank slate” meeting during which challenges and needs along the corridor were solicited from the attendees. The prior meetings allowed for progress towards a consensus on the preferred alternatives, which will be presented at the next Public Advisory Committee (PAC) and Public Informational meetings.

Based on previous discussions with the City of Portsmouth and the PAC, bike/ped. improvements along the corridor were to be the main focus of the project.

He also discussed how the corridor had previously been broken up into four segments based on usage and abutting properties to aid with discussion and alternative analysis.

- Segment 1 – Ocean Road to Heritage Ave.
- Segment 2 – Heritage Ave. to Springbrook Circle

- Segment 3 – Springbrook Circle to West Road
- Segment 4 – West Road to Wilson Road

Roadway Alternatives:

D. McNamara briefly reintroduced the three full roadway alternatives, and one sub alternative, that had been discussed at PAC Meeting 3.

- Alternative 1 – The original 1984 corridor study typical; 5-Lane with a raised center median.
- Alternative 2 – Maximize the 5-lane section but without a raised center median; narrowed at critical points.
- Alternative 3 – Focus roadway improvements at deficient locations along the corridor, maintaining the existing configuration elsewhere.
- Sub Alternative – Segment 2 – Dual roundabout at the Walmart and Springbrook Circle intersections; could be incorporated into any of the other three alternatives.

It was explained that Alternative 3 had previously been preferred roadway alternative due to the fact that it minimized impacts and left more room for bike/ped. improvements along the corridor. The roundabouts also had some interest from members from the PAC.

D. McNamara explained that there have been some minor changes to the preferred alternative (Alt. 3) since the previous PAC meeting. These changes include some minor changes to turning lane queue lengths, shortening of the southbound departure lane at the Wilson Road intersection, extension of the southbound 2-Lane section from Springbrook Circle through Ocean Road, and the removal of the slip lanes at the White Cedar Blvd. intersection.

Discussion:

- E. Eby asked if there were any additional signals to be added as part of the preferred alternative. He also noted that there have been discussions about a potential signal or pedestrian crossing to be added at the Hoover Drive intersection. There are no additional signals proposed, outside of use of “rectangular rapid flashing beacon” (RRFB) or High Intensity Activated Crosswalk (HAWK) system as part of a potential pedestrian crossing in the West Street/Hoover Drive area.
- E. Eby pointed out that there has been work done to the Lang Road intersection since this previous meeting and that all left-turn traffic is now directed the signalized Longmeadow Road intersection.

Bicycle & Pedestrian Alternatives:

D. McNamara then went into discussion of the bike/ped. alternatives, reiterating that the PAC had previously made these improvements the focus of discussion. He went on to present the three alternatives that were discussed at PAC Meeting 4 and explained that any of these could be used with any of the roadway alternatives. He then noted that there have been some discussions with the NHDOT Active Transportation Group since PAC Meeting 4 and some minor changes to the alternative layouts have been made:

- Original Corridor Study – 5' Shoulder/Bike Lane, 5.5' Sidewalk, 5' Utility Panel
- Sidepath & Sidewalk – 5' Shoulder/Bike Lane, 2'-6' Utility Panel, 5' Sidepath, 0.5' Buffer, 5' Sidewalk
- Buffered Bike Lane – 3' in-road Buffer, 6' Bike Lane, 2'-6' Utility Panel, 5' Sidewalk

The outcome of PAC Meeting 4 was that a shared-use path was the preferred alternative on both sides of the roadway and a total preferred alternative of roadway alternative 3 with shared-use paths would be shown at the next PAC meeting and Public Informational Meeting.

The current Sidepath & Sidewalk Alternative most closely matches the previous shared-use path alternative and is what is currently shown on the preferred alternative plans.

D. McNamara explained that both the Bike Lane and Sidepath would be single direction use only and the bicyclists would move in the same direction as vehicular traffic. He also noted that the current alternative is showing bike boxes similar to other locations in the City of Portsmouth.

Discussion:

- P. Britz asked about the delineation of the 0.5' buffer and how it could possibly affect maintenance of the Sidepath/Sidewalk.
 - D. McNamara stated that the buffer would be flush and it would be visual delineation, not a physical one.
- P. Britz asked if this alternative had to have the same typical on both sides of the roadway and if multiple lanes of bike traffic was really needed on both sides of the roadway along this specific corridor.
 - D. McNamara stated that the current preferred alternative shows the bike lane and the sidepath having single direction bike traffic therefore the typical would need to be the same on both sides of the road to accommodate traffic in either direction. He also shared that in previous iterations the thought was that there could be different typicals for each side of the roadway, but this specific alternative does not allow for that.
- E. Eby questioned the use of bike boxes at the intersections. He stated that although they have been part of previous designs in the City, he's unsure how often they are actually utilized.
- P. Britz discussed some upcoming projects/potential projects along this portion of Route 1.
 - The Cinemagic location is to be replaced with a ~52-unit condo development.
 - The Burger King location is to be replaced with a combined Irving Gas Station & Common Man.
 - There have been discussions of a potential large residential development along Route 1 NB between the Robert Ave and White Cedar Blvd intersections. The site would potentially have access from Route 1.
- When asked, E. Eby stated that this project is not within "urban compact" limits.

Other Discussion:

D. McNamara also noted some other discussion points from previous PAC meetings.

It was noted that the bus stops along the corridor were to be maintained. A Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation (COAST) representative was previously on the PAC and has stated that they were not interested in pull-off locations; the preference is to have busses stop in the lanes and traffic stop behind them. The project can look to adjust bus stop locations in conjunction with COAST longitudinally along the corridor if needed.

Drainage concerns due to the proposed addition of curbing on both sides of the roadway for the length of the corridor were also briefly discussed. It was noted that finding locations for stormwater treatment areas will be challenging with the amount of development along the corridor.

Right of Way will be a significant element of the project. Stantec and NHDOT are in the process of re-establishing the ROW, as it is not possible to locate the existing ROW in field, as the original monumentation is no longer present. It was noted that there are many properties in the project area that have agreed to provide additional ROW to the State, via easement transfers, for widening purposes.

D. McNamara provided updates on the NEPA process. The Phase 1A/1B archaeology report has been submitted for final review. Other than construction monitoring for work adjacent to the cemeteries, no additional investigations are recommended. An Architectural Survey Plan (ASP) was submitted by Preservation Company, NHDHR provided comments. The team is setting up a meeting with cultural resource team at NHDOT to discuss responses and next steps in that process. Other resource coordination related to NEPA is underway, some will need to be re-engaged due to the time lapse of the project.

Project Schedule:

D. Smith stated that the immediate task is to figure out PAC membership and schedule PAC Meeting 5 as soon as possible – with the goal of having the meeting sometime in 2023.

Once PAC Meeting 5 occurs, the hope would be that there has been a consensus on a preferred alternative and Public Information Meeting 2 could be held early 2024. This would help meet the overall goal of having the Public Hearing in late summer/early fall 2024.

NHDOT noted it was likely 3 years after the Public Hearing until construction starts due to the extensive ROW process that is anticipated.

Discussion:

- E. Eby asked about when construction would potentially start for this project.
 - D. Smith stated that 2027 would most likely be the earliest start; R.O.W. process will be quite extensive.
- P. Britz asked about current PAC membership and explained that a majority of the positions have been replaced since the most recent PAC meeting and that there would most likely be a lot of new members seeing this project for the first-time during PAC Meeting 5.
- Project budget was discussed.

October 26, 2023

Portsmouth 29640 – City of Portsmouth Status Meeting

Page 5 of 5

- D. McNamara stated that the project was underfunded in previous discussions.
- D. Smith referred the City to the current TYP for the latest funding amounts.

Actions Required / Next Steps:

- Reengage the PAC and identify new members.
- Work to Schedule PAC Meeting 5 sometime the week of December 4th, 2023. Noted that previous PAC meetings were held during normal business hours.

The meeting adjourned at 3:30 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.

Stantec Consulting Services Inc.

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Attachment: N/A

c. Cc List Attendees