

## Hampton 40797 Ocean Boulevard (NH Route 1A)

### Meeting Summary

**Event: Project Advisory Committee Meeting (PAC) #5**

**Date and Time: Thursday, November 17, 2022, 4:00 – 6:00 PM**

**Location: Hampton Town Hall, Hampton, NH**

### 1. Attendees

#### PAC Members

Johanna Lyons, NH Division of Parks and Recreation  
Seth McNally, NH Seacoast Greenway  
Nancy Stiles, Chairman, Hampton Beach Area Commission  
Jen Hale, Hampton Department of Public Works  
Dave Walker, Rockingham Planning Commission  
Michael McMahon, Chief, Hampton Fire  
Meredith Collins, NH Division of Parks and Recreation  
Cathy Silver, Resident  
Jay Diener, Hampton Conservation Commission  
Alex Reno, Deputy Chief, Hampton Police Department  
Senator Tom Sherman, New Hampshire State Legislature  
Mike Edgar, NH State Representative  
Betty Moore, Hampton Historical Society

#### New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT)

Tobey Reynolds, PE, Project Manager  
Anthony King, PE, Senior Design Engineer  
Trent Zanes, PE, Roadway Section Group Leader

#### Consultant Team

Keith Cota, PE, HDR  
Audrey Beaulac, PE, HDR  
Debbie Finnigan, PE PTOE, HDR  
Stephanie Dyer-Carroll, FHI Studio

### 2. Presentation and Discussion

NHDOT hosted the fifth PAC meeting for the Hampton 40797 Ocean Boulevard (NH Route 1A) Project on Thursday, November 17, 2022, from 4:00 – 6:00 PM at the Board of Selectmen’s Meeting Room at Hampton Town Hall, 100 Winnacunnet Road, Hampton, New Hampshire. Tobey Reynolds, NHDOT’s

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Project Manager, welcomed the PAC members and introduced the project team members. Mr. Reynolds explained that this meeting would be a continuation of the October 2022 PAC meeting, since they were not able to get through all of the material. He said that the October meeting focused on the revised corridor options and that the primary focus of this meeting would be on the intersections. However, the team would present one corridor refinement at the end of the meeting.

Mr. Reynolds next discussed the goals of this meeting. He said the team will present and receive input on the intersection options. With input from the PAC, they will identify intersection options for further study. He said they will also review a revised corridor option for the segment between I Street and Ashworth Avenue, near the casino to provide increased width for pedestrians.

Ms. Debbie Finnigan then presented the intersection options. Questions and comments received on each of the intersections are described below.

### *Intersection Option A: State Park Road*

Ms. Finnigan explained that the project team looked at several options at State Park Road. She said they looked at adding a fourth leg (toward the State Pier side) of the intersection without traffic signals (Option A1). This would provide alternative access via Old Ocean Boulevard to the State Pier, Bailey Avenue and Harbor Road resulting in reduced congestion at the Ocean Boulevard/Ashworth Avenue intersection. The layout would accommodate left turns from Ocean Boulevard southbound to Epping Avenue but restrict left turns from Ocean Boulevard northbound to Harbor Road. Harbor Road would be reconfigured to be a right in / right out layout. With an unsignalized condition, it would cause the intersection operation to fail (LOS F), and it would add additional traffic onto Old Ocean Boulevard which is under maintenance control of the State Pier. Nancy Stiles, with the Hampton Beach Area Commission, asked why they are considering shifting more traffic to Old Ocean Boulevard. Ms. Finnigan responded that it would support improvements at the NH 1A intersection with Ashworth Avenue, Ocean Boulevard and Duston Avenue.

Ms. Finnigan explained that they also looked at the same configuration but under traffic signal control (Option A2). She pointed out the signal at this intersection would not meet the national warrants for the average traffic conditions, but it would meet them for a seasonal peak flow. Mr. Reynolds noted that a signal is beneficial for the summer peak flow, but it doesn't make sense in the winter because there's less traffic. The Department's practice for consideration of traffic signals is the traffic warrants' need to meet the average year versus a seasonal peak flow. Drivers might get used to it being green in the winter and then be less likely to notice a red light in the summer. Ms. Finnigan noted that this option will be maintained for further study. Ms. Stiles asked if the signal could be turned off for the winter months. Mr. Reynolds said the Traffic Division at NHDOT generally does not favor this type of operation. By turning the signals off, the Traffic Division will get calls from members of the public thinking the signal is malfunctioning. Jennifer Hale, with the Hampton Department of Public Works, asked if it could be on a sensor control. Ms. Finnigan explained any installed traffic signals will have traffic sensors (i.e.: loop detectors, radar or video). Seth McNally, with the NH Seacoast Greenway, asked if the analysis considers possible vehicle backup caused by the payment booth on State Park Road. Meredith Collins, with the NH Division of Parks and Recreation, explained that a second toll booth had been added so delays had been eliminated. Cathy Silver, a Hampton resident, asked if there would be a crosswalk at State Park Road. Keith Cota noted that the signal control option, would accommodate a crossing, but they hadn't developed that part of the design yet.

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Ms. Finnigan said another option the team considered was a standard single lane roundabout, but it would be conditioned on maintaining the reverse directional flow (U-turn) at the southerly Ashworth Avenue intersection (Option A3). This would reduce congestion at the Ocean Boulevard/State Park Road intersection, provide traffic calming into the southern approach at Hampton Beach and reduce left-turn conflicts at State Park Road. Mr. Cota cautioned that this option would have right-of-way (ROW) impacts to Hampton Beach State Park, a Section 6(f) property and to the Hampton State Pier on the other side with a conversion of Old Ocean Boulevard for improved traffic maneuvers. David Walker, with the Rockingham Planning Commission, asked if there would be a similar issue if the State Park Road was widened. Mr. Cota said that it could be if it required additional ROW; in the end NHDOT may need to find replacement property to offset an equal loss of State property. Mr. McNally commented that there's a lot of boat traffic that accesses both the State Pier and the local marina off Harbor Way. Mr. Cota explained that the hatched area on the roundabout could be mountable by trucks and boat trailers. Senator Tom Sherman asked if a memorial could be put in the center of the roundabout. Mr. Cota said it could be considered but would likely require a town agreement for long term maintenance. Ms. Hale asked who owns Old Ocean Boulevard. Mr. Cota said it's currently owned and maintained by the State Pier under the Division of Ports and Harbors within the Pease Development Authority. Ms. Silver said that it's not properly plowed in the winter. Ms. Hale suggested that Old Ocean Boulevard should be more like a road, rather than a private entrance drive.

Ms. Finnigan said they also looked at a one-lane roundabout with no reverse flow permitted at the southern Ashworth Avenue junction with Ocean Boulevard (Option A4), but the single lane roundabout failed under this configuration due to the increased traffic resulting from the closure of the reverse flow U-turn. Therefore, this alternative is not being carried forward for further consideration.

Ms. Finnigan said they also looked at a two-lane roundabout with no reverse flow at the Ashworth Avenue junction with Ocean Boulevard (Option A5). While this option provided acceptable LOS through the intersection, reduced congestion at the intersection of Ashworth Avenue and Ocean Boulevard, and eliminated left-turn conflicts from Ocean Boulevard northbound to Harbor Road, it required the greatest property acquisition at Hampton Beach State Park, a Section 6(f) property. As a result, this option is not recommended for further study.

### *Intersection Option B: Ashworth Avenue/Ocean Boulevard*

Ms. Finnigan explained that three alternatives were considered for the southern Ocean Boulevard / Ashworth Avenue intersection. Option B1 would improve the existing flow by providing more definition and control at the intersection, maintaining a reverse flow (U-turn) at Ashworth Avenue, and providing a through-lane for northbound Route 1A. It would remove left-turn conflicts at Harbor Road while restricting left turning traffic making reverse direct movement from Ashworth Avenue to Dover Avenue. Ms. Hale asked if there would be one entrance at Harbor Road. Ms. Finnigan said there would be, but it would be restricted to right in and right out. She noted this intersection is a high crash location resulting from the turn conflicts. Ms. Silver explained that the restaurant at the corner of Ocean Boulevard and Harbor Road (Wok the Wok) doesn't own the front parking lot. She also said it's hard to see oncoming southbound traffic when cars are parked in the front parking at the restaurant which makes it difficult to go north on Ocean Boulevard. Mr. Cota noted that the restaurant operation appears to be benefiting from the use of the existing State ROW and indicated this encroachment will be reviewed in greater detail as the project is progressed. Chief Mike McMahan asked if they could eliminate Harbor Road access to Old

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Ocean Boulevard. Ms. Finnigan noted that this could be restricted but would put more demand on the improvements at the State Park Road intersection. Ms. Lyons said she was concerned about more traffic on Old Ocean Boulevard because it isn't well maintained. A member of the public said vehicles can get stuck on Ocean Boulevard at Harbor Road on nice days, and that it would be good to have two lanes southbound to empty the beach in an emergency. Mr. Cota said the direction could be altered with an emergency management plan to allow for closure of the northbound lane with two lane emergency use southbound. Chief McMahon said the bridge is not currently part of the emergency management plan because of the lift bridge operation, but with the fixed bridge being installed, it will allow a review of the emergency plan for evacuation in the future. Ms. Hale noted that under this emergency use approach, the police would typically use officers, cones and barricades to assist in directing traffic. This option is recommended for further evaluation.

Ms. Finnigan further noted the team looked at two other options for the southern Ocean Boulevard / Ashworth Avenue intersection. Option B2 provides a single lane roundabout with a southbound by-pass lane along Ashworth Avenue. This option was not recommended for further consideration because the intersection operation would fail due to no designated Ocean Boulevard bypass lane and result in private property impacts to potential historic properties protected under Section 4(f) of the US Department of Transportation Act. She said Option B3 is similar but would have a two-lane roundabout (oval). This option was not recommended for further study because it would have substantial property impacts and operational challenges.

### *Intersection Option C: Ashworth Avenue/Nudd Avenue*

Ms. Finnigan explained that the project team just looked at one option at the intersection of Ashworth and Nudd Avenues. It would re-establish a northbound reverse movement to southbound Ashworth Avenue and maintain two northbound travel lanes. Mr. Reynolds asked the PAC why this movement was eliminated in the past. Ms. Lyons said it was removed to reduce the street cruising that was occurring along the beach front. A member of the public said there are backups at the parking adjacent to the Ashworth Hotel. The participant said it will get worse if the road goes from two lanes to one lane southbound. Deputy Chief Alex Reno noted that a single lane southbound will create a traffic problem along this section of NH Route 1A. Mr. Reynolds explained that U-turns through the central parking area would be eliminated if the parking is moved to the beach side. He said the project team wants to get public comments on adding the U-turn at Ocean Boulevard and Ashworth Avenue. Ms. Stiles said the center parking should not be moved. Ms. Lyons asked if any traffic analysis had been completed to assess how many U-turns occur through the parking area. Mr. Cota noted that no specific traffic data is available for how many vehicles are reversing direction through the central parking lots. A member of the public said there are a lot. Ms. Lyons said it doesn't have to be all or nothing; there could be central parking and parking along the seawall. Mr. McNally said the pedestrian crossing in this location would be safer without this reverse direction U-turn.

### *Intersection Option D: Highland Avenue*

Ms. Finnigan explained the team evaluated three options at the Highland Avenue intersection. The first, Option D1, would shift northbound and southbound traffic to the west, place parking on the east side and create an unsignalized intersection. However, this unsignalized intersection would result in a failed traffic operation with long traffic delays for turning traffic from Highland Avenue. A member of the public said north of Ashworth Avenue the condo-owners would not want to have to cross four lanes of traffic. Mr.

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Reynolds clarified that the intersection changes would provide a single lane southbound and two lanes northbound with a raised median refuge.

The second option, Option D2, would be the same layout, but with a traffic signal. Ms. Finnigan noted the traffic volumes for the average seasonable flow would meet the signal warrant criteria at this intersection. Ms. Hale asked if a signal is necessary at Highland Avenue no matter what. Ms. Finnegan said that a signal would be required due to signal warrant criteria. Senator Sherman said the most common complaint he receives from public constituents is the safety of pedestrian crossings north of Ashworth Avenue. In the summer, most have to compete with and cross from the center parking lot. People with children don't feel safe. Ms. Stiles suggested a flashing pedestrian signal. Mr. Cota said the project team is trying to balance safe access and traffic movement, while designing to NHDOT practices and expectations which under this consideration would require a traffic signal. Ms. Hale suggested giving crosswalks priority at certain intersections. Ms. Collins said that placing parking on the beach side may be safer, but the sidewalk is narrow on the east side. Ms. Stiles said that they should keep parking in the center north of the Marine Memorial to preserve the view of the ocean for northbound traffic. NH State Representative Mike Edgar said that signalization would be beneficial for pedestrians and should be included as part of the project if it's determined it's preferable. Mr. Reynolds said it is NHDOT's intention to include them, but they will want to establish a sidewalk maintenance agreement with the local community. Deputy Chief Reno noted that they experience traffic backups with two lanes in the summer for special events like fireworks every Wednesday night along Ocean Boulevard southbound from Boar's Head to Church Street. Going to one lane south of Boars Head would have significant traffic impacts. U-turns would create gridlock in certain areas and when there is gridlock, the police receive more traffic and disturbance complaints calls. Ms. Finnigan said the traffic counts suggested the roadway needs to have two lanes northbound north of the Church Street intersection, but the traffic could be handled in a single southbound lane. This will be reviewed again as the design progresses. Mr. Reynolds said designing for a worst-case condition will create infrastructure that is underutilized and adding more lanes or wider pavement will result in increased speeds and longer pedestrian crossings. Mr. McNally said adding more pavement will just spread the traffic out to a broader area. Senator Sherman shared that North Beach residents say the opposite of the Deputy Chief, that the width of the road contributes to its use as a drag strip.

Ms. Finnigan then shared the third option, Option D3, a roundabout with two lanes northbound, but said it would impact the NH Marine Memorial and therefore isn't being carried forward. Mr. Walker said the encroachment on the sidewalk would be minor. Ms. Lyons said this layout would impact the State's equipment access ramp making it very challenging for maintenance vehicles to access this section of the beach.

### *Intersection Option E: Church Street*

Ms. Finnigan said two options were evaluated at Church Street, one unsignalized and the other with a signal for both an easterly shift in parking and maintaining parking in the center median. In both options, property acquisition would be required to improve the turning movements from Ocean Boulevard to Church Street (NH Route 101 west). In the unsignalized condition (Option E1) with central parking, the intersection would fail in the PM peak hour and therefore would not be carried forward for further evaluation. Under the signalized condition (Option E2) with parking shifted to the easterly (beach) side, the intersection would operate at an acceptable LOS for seasonal peak flow, however it would not meet average year signal warrants. Mr. Reynolds said the project team designed the intersection to

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accommodate large trucks (WB-67) as the design vehicle and perhaps this may be too large a design vehicle. Ms. Stiles said that the owner of the property on the northwest corner of the intersection has the property up for sale and has offered to sell. Mr. Reynolds explained that at this time either property could be encroached on to improve the approach access to Church Street. Ms. Finnigan noted from an operational perspective the signalized intersection performs well. She asked if any PAC members had problems signalizing it. Ms. Hale suggested consideration of a hybrid parking layout with central parking north of the Church Street intersection and beach parking south of the Church Street intersection. Otherwise, she said signalization would be problematic. Ms. Stiles said she is okay with some beach-side parking near Highland Avenue and Church Street for improved pedestrian safety, however, she would not like to see the beach-side parking extend too far north.

### *Intersection Option F: Dumas Avenue*

Ms. Finnigan noted that the Dumas Avenue skewed intersection is optimal for a single lane roundabout (Option F1). It would allow midpoint reverse direction at a critical point in the corridor. Mr. Reynolds explained that the roundabout would be a good traffic calming measure. Ms. Hale said that the Little Jack condo owners would like the crosswalk. She also commented that there's a significant grade increase at the driveways in this area. Senator Sherman shared that the house in the "V" at Ocean Boulevard and Dumas Avenue floods regularly. The designers need to look at the grade in this area. Mr. Diener asked if there could be two lanes in each direction. Mr. Cota said traffic volumes do not support a two-lane roundabout and it would also result in property impacts. Mr. Walker shared that this area is subject to sea level rise which has the potential to impact NH Route 1A. One of the concerns for localized flooding is due to the terminus of the seawall located along Dumas Avenue. Mr. Cota noted that the other concern is high groundwater in this area due to the location of the salt marsh on the westerly side of NH Route 1A. Mr. Reynolds noted it is the intent of the project to look at sea level rise as part of the project and determine if the design can reduce its impacts.

### *Intersection Option G: Winnacunnet Road*

Ms. Finnigan then explained that the project team considered three options at Winnacunnet Road. The first, Option G1, was a standard unsignalized "T" intersection. In an unsignalized condition, the intersection would have operational failures due to the volume of left turning traffic and therefore it isn't recommended for further evaluation.

Option G2 is similar but with a signalized "T" intersection. This option provides only a right-in/right-out layout at King's Highway. This option would have acceptable operational conditions (LOS C) but would cause issues with property access and result in additional operational issues and long-term maintenance costs. Ms. Finnigan explained that Option G2 is not recommended to be advanced for further study.

The third option (Option G3) would be a conversion of the intersection to a single lane roundabout. It would improve the operations over the existing configuration and have fewer points of conflict than a traditional T intersection, but it would need to maintain the proposed right-in/right-out movement at King's Highway. Ms. Lyons and Senator Sherman both commented that it looked large. Ms. Beaulac explained the design team is looking to accommodate larger vehicles and accommodate driveway access, but they could look at reducing the size. Mr. Reynolds asked the PAC if they generally preferred a signal or a roundabout in this location. A majority of the members said they preferred a roundabout. Mr. Walker commented that the challenge is to provide better access to King's Highway with a roundabout. Ms. Hale



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said it may be less of an issue than everyone thinks as this parallel roadway to NH Route 1A has multiple access points north of this intersection. Senator Sherman advised that the North Beach neighborhood liked the idea of a boulevard feel to the roadway. He said roundabouts give this feeling when compared to signalized intersections and they can also accommodate monuments.

### *Intersection Option H: High Street*

Ms. Finnigan explained that a review of the existing operation of the intersection at High Street indicates that it can operate under the existing signal control for the foreseeable future and as a result, no changes are recommended other than improving shoulders for bike access. Mr. Reynolds said the intersection currently works well. Mr. McNally said he'd like to see the southbound right turn spur be adjusted to either remove it or pinch it because of conflict with pedestrian traffic crossing and the high speeds of traffic. The current slip lane creates speeds that are too high for turning traffic. Mr. McMahon said there used to be a spur through the parking lot located in the southwest quadrant some 40 years ago. Mr. Diener suggested they remove the slip ramp and replace it with a tighter right-turn lane.

### *Revised Corridor Option: I Street to Ashworth Avenue*

Mr. Cota then presented a revised option for the corridor segment between I Street and Ashworth Avenue. He said the PAC discussed the narrowness of the westerly sidewalk in this area at the last PAC meeting (PAC Meeting #4). He said the revised cross-section would replace the flex zone with a four-foot buffer, allowing additional space for pedestrians and raised island separation of the westerly parking lot. The parking island will allow for safer, uninterrupted northbound bike access. Depending upon the configuration of the parking lot along the beach side (90-degree or 45-degree angle parking) additional width can be accommodated for the westerly sidewalk as well as a dedicated area for some type of positive barrier to control pedestrian crossings. With the 90-degree parking lot configuration, it is anticipated that a total of 66 parking spaces can be accommodated (equal to existing) and with a 45-degree angle parking configuration, 60 spaces can be accommodated to allow for up to a 10-foot sidewalk along the westerly side of Ocean Boulevard. Ms. Lyons noted that the raised parking lot island may cause issues with the annual street use during the Seafood Festival when large tents span the roadway.

Mr. Cota wrapped up by summarizing next steps including the team summarizing the project design status at the natural and cultural resources agency meetings at NHDOT and scheduling a Public Information Meeting for January 2023. Ms. Stiles recommended that the Public Hearing for the project be held in September 2023 before the snowbirds leave. Mr. Walker asked when NHDOT would have the costs ready. Mr. Cota said they should have rough order of magnitude costs at the next public informational meeting in January. Mr. Edgar said once they have the costs, priorities for construction can begin to be established. Ms. Stiles asked if the federal government could pay more for the project. Mr. Reynolds said NHDOT will get the same amount of money for the next four years. Senator Sherman asked if there's federal money targeted to environmentally impacted communities. Mr. Reynolds said there may be grant opportunities that can be explored. Ms. Stiles asked if there's a State-level policy to consider four feet of sea level rise. Mr. Walker said it's a practice but not a policy at this time. Mr. Edgar commented that currently federal funds are targeted for the priority bridge project at the Hampton Harbor crossing.

### 3. Attachment (presentation)