

Poughkeepsie 9.44.55

Advisory Committee Meeting #6

Date: Friday, December 18, 2020 at 10:00 AM

Location: Zoom Virtual Meeting

Attendees:

	AFFILIATION
Mark Debald	Dutchess County Transportation Council (DCTC)
Emily Dozier	DCTC
Dan Coots	New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT)
Vincent Grella	New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT)
Michael Welti	Town of Poughkeepsie
Paul Hesse	City of Poughkeepsie Planning
Heather LaVarnway	Dutchess County Planning
Lisa Mondello	NYSDOT
Jeff Wright	New York State Bridge Authority
Mark Nadolny	Creighton Manning Engineering (CME)
Hannah Brockhaus	Fitzgerald and Halliday, Inc (FHI)
Mark Sargent	CME

Purpose: The purpose of the meeting was to discuss recommendations for the Interchange based on further analysis and results of the virtual meeting, and provide the Advisory Committee with an update on the traffic analysis that will precede concept development for the Arterials.

OVERVIEW

Interchange Recommendations

Mark Debald welcomed attendees to the sixth Advisory Committee meeting for the project. Following introductions, Mark Sargent and Hannah Brockhaus presented findings from public feedback and detailed constructability analysis, to inform a discussion of Interchange recommendations. Hannah Brockhaus provided a summary of public feedback on each of the concepts. She briefly reviewed the methodology for obtaining feedback and thanked the Committee for distributing the virtual workshop link – overall this was very successful, with a huge spike in visits to the project website (almost 1,000 visits over the course of the Fall). While there was an overall increase in engagement with the project, most people focused on the concept explanations, with fewer responses on the concluding survey questions that asked participants to rank the concepts.

- Concept A (Roundabouts on Route 9) was supported or supported with modifications by 56 percent of survey question respondents. Most comments focused on roundabouts

(some comments supported, while others opposed their use here). Supporters liked the traffic calming and slow speeds this alternative would provide, while detractors were concerned about potential for diversions, as well as the lack of direct access from Main Street to the Mid-Hudson Bridge.

- Concept B (Route 9 Realignment) was supported or supported with modifications by 66 percent of respondents. Supporters liked the elimination of left side ramps and dedicated ramps for origins and destinations. However there were concerns with the potential for realignment to intrude on the historic district neighborhood.
- Concept C (Half Clover with Signals) was supported or supported with modifications by 57 percent of respondents, who liked the intuitive concept with free flow ramps for high volume moves. Others, however were concerned about safety and travel time impacts of the signals.
- Finally, Concept D (Route 9 Flyover) was supported or supported with modifications by 27 percent of respondents. Most commenters felt that the level of investment, for a condition which does not remove problematic design conditions (like left side ramps and weaving) was not an effective design response. It was considered out of character with the area, and visual impacts of a third level were not appealing.

More details on public feedback can be found in the Virtual Meeting Summary, available on the project website. The concepts were also presented at the November 2 City of Poughkeepsie Common Council meeting, where comments focused on the community context of the interchange. Reducing speeds on Route 9, improving walking/biking connections, and reconnecting to the street grid were all interests expressed.

Mark Sargent then presented the results of constructability analysis conducted by Creighton Manning's design and construction staff. Concept A (Roundabouts on Route 9) is considered the lowest cost solution (\$25 million) since the roundabouts could be built without affecting traffic. Some short duration detours would be needed. Concepts B and C are estimated in the range of \$50 to \$75 million, due to complex construction staging needed to realign the roadways while maintaining traffic through the area. In this analysis it was determined that modifications to Concept B would be required. The ramp from the Mid-Hudson Bridge to Route 9 south would be shifted east. Concept D has a similar cost range. Although it is more straightforward to construct, the structure would require a significant investment. This led into a discussion of the recommendations, considering the evaluation criteria set earlier in 2020. Although Concepts B and C could be considered doable, Concept A meets most of the criteria and has the lowest cost to construct.

The group noted that speed reduction potential, as well as intuitiveness for each alternative was considered a high priority and modifying the roadway design is needed to affect a significant change in speed. Lisa Mondello noted that changing the speed limit alone would not reduce travel speeds. It was noted that speed limits change within a short distance of the interchange and are higher at the interchange, as compared to north of the interchange. Additionally, the group asked if existing traffic signals on Route 9 had a demonstrated history of heightened crash risk. This was in the context of considering Concept C, which would install new signals on Route 9.

The group discussed Concept A's merits and concerns at length, including the potential for diversion. To access the Mid-Hudson Bridge from Main Street, drivers could choose to travel via South Perry Street to Jefferson Street, or travel via Rinaldi Boulevard. Although it was

acknowledged that some people do this move today (to avoid the interchange) this would likely result in an increase in traffic in the neighborhood and would need further analysis as concept refinement for preferred traffic routing. Additionally, it was clarified that compared to the current design's eight left side ramps, this concept has four, and the weaving required today has also been eliminated in this concept.

It was suggested that since a final preferred alternative can only be confirmed at the design stage, this chapter should not give a firm selection. Language will be modified to emphasize that further evaluation of Concepts A, B and C is needed to confirm the preferred concept. There was a suggestion to make clear in the report that the public preferred option B. There was discussion of next steps to move the Interchange redesign forward. BUILD grant funding or programming the preliminary design phases were both considered options.

Arterials Phase

Mark Sargent then introduced the Arterials phase of the project. Key considerations of the existing conditions that contribute to the need for evaluating alternatives include: above average crash rates; average speeds exceed the limit by 10 miles per hour; 40 to 60 percent of households on the Arterials rely on non-automotive travel options; and the Arterials separate residential from commercial areas of the City. Concepts are designed to not require full reconstruction and therefore would not change the curb-to-curb width of 38 to 40 feet. As a first step, two concepts will be analyzed: a three to two lane "road diet" and converting the Arterials to two-way traffic (one lane each way with center turn lanes). These would both be considered for the full length of the East and Westbound Arterials as well as Columbus Drive. Further sub-concepts of each can be considered as refinements, such as spot improvements and the tie in to the 44/55 ramps in Arlington.

Project assumptions, prior to COVID-19, included a half percent of traffic volume growth per year over a 20-year design period. Based on the traffic modeling done to date, there are concerns about either concept operating adequately at peak hours in the design year without any changes to these assumptions. Diversions are often a normal part of successful road diet projects that take away capacity, so future Advisory Committee meetings are likely to focus on growth forecast scenarios and the degree of traffic diversion that would be tolerable. This also provides an opportunity to adjust the traffic pattern assumptions due to long-term workforce and travel changes resulting from the pandemic.

Next Steps

The Committee was asked to submit any other comments on the draft Interchange chapter by the end of 2020. NYSDOT staff will also provide a final review of Concepts A, B, and C. The consultant team will then finalize the Interchange chapter of the final report, modifying the recommendation language as discussed with the group. The team will then shift fully to Arterials Concept Development, with the goal to provide a public outreach opportunity in the spring of 2021, following Advisory Committee meetings for concept development. The project is anticipated to conclude by summer 2021.