



CITY OF CONCORD

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MINUTES

Transportation Policy Advisory Committee

May 24, 2018, 6:00 PM
2nd Floor Conference Room
City Hall, 41 Green Street, Concord, NH

Members Present:

Dick Lemieux (Vehicle Traffic Safety Operations; Chair)
Craig Tufts, (Bicycling Community)
Ursula Maldonado (Pedestrian and Trails Community)
Rebecca McWilliams (At-Large)
Greg Bakos (At-Large)
Rob Mack, Traffic Engineer (City Manager's Designee)

Members Absent:

Brent Todd (Council Representative) - excused
Sheila Zakre (At-Large) – excused
Jim Sudak (Public Transportation Representative) – not excused
Rob Werner (Council Representative) - excused

Staff and Guests:

Dave Cedarholm (City Engineer)
Heather Shank (City Planner)
Sam Durfee (Senior Planner)
Gene McCarthy (M-J)
Brian Colburn (M-J)
John Butler (NHDOT)
Ryan Buchanan

1. Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order with introductions for all attendees. The Chair welcomed newly-appointed members Rebecca McWilliams and Greg Bakos.

2. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the April 26, 2018 meeting were approved as submitted (Motion-McWilliams; Second-Tufts; Unanimous).

3. Presentations - None

4. New Business – None

5. Old Business

a. Continued Discussion of NHDOT's I-93 Bow-Concord Project

The Chair introduced this item as the second item of the evening's agenda. TPAC had been discussing this project for the past several months and had mixed feelings on a number of aspects of the NHDOT's Preferred Alternative F2 (Exits 14 and 15), particularly in light of prior city and state studies and recommendations developed over the past two decades. TPAC had very limited opportunity to react to the NHDOT's design process that led to the Preferred Alternative and that led to TPAC's March 22, 2018 report to Council requesting an opportunity for closer coordination between staff/TPAC and the NHDOT. The purpose of tonight's meeting was to discuss Concept F2 for the Exit 14/15 area including the Storrs Street North redevelopment area. NHDOT's reported preferred alternatives for Exits 12 and 13 appeared reasonable to TPAC in prior reviews.

Gene McCarthy (MJ) provided a brief history of the project. Initial concept studies and screening, including a number of public forums, were performed in Phase A which ended in 2007/2008. Results of the Phase A study include the range of alternatives considered and considerable public involvement and are available on the NHDOT's website for this project. Phase B of the project study is ending this summer and includes preliminary engineering, determination of a preferred alternative and environmental documentation. The core issues of the project are to: improve capacity and safety along the segment of I-93 from I-89 to Exit 15; and to replace red-listed bridges. Public information meetings were held in 2017 and feedback received was blended into concept F2 which was presented as the Preferred Alternative at public meetings in February 2018. Pursuant to feedback received from city staff in May 2018, the Preferred Alternative F2 has been further modified to include 10-foot wide multi-use paths with 5-ft buffer from the curb along both sides of Loudon Road through the Exit 14 project area. A two-lane northbound S. Commercial Street approach to I-393 was also indicated per the City's Storrs Street Extension North study. This latest plan for Concept F2 was on display at the TPAC meeting and would soon be placed on the NHDOT project website. The design team anticipates a final public hearing later this summer, following which time the preferred alternative, coupled with the environmental documentation, will become generally set and carried into the final design phase.

Several TPAC members inquired as to why the railroad tracks could not be located further east (closer to I-93 lanes and ramps) so as to improve the developable area of the proposed Storrs Street North area. Such an option was presented last year in Concept O3 and included raising Loudon Road to cross over I-93 rather than pass under. Gene McCarthy explained that this option resulted in a number of serious challenges not found in the Preferred Alternative, including: need to construct substantial and tall walls along the Exit 14 ramps resulting in restricted views; need to close Loudon Road for an extended period in order to reconstruct the freeway and interchange; resulting steep and undesirable grades (8 to 9 percent) on Loudon Road at the traffic signals; substantial impact to eligible historic structures (Ralph Pill and adjacent buildings); and high cost. He also noted that the potential effectiveness of relocating the tracks eastward would be limited by the minimum curvature requirements for the track coupled with the need to provide about a 900-foot tangent section of track for a future train station. Furthermore, only the NHDOT rail line could be relocated. The Pan Am corridor alignment would need to stay at its western location resulting in two separate rail corridors through the Storrs Street North area (as opposed to having them both share the same corridor as per the Preferred Alternative F2).

Gene McCarthy provided responses to a number of questions posed by TPAC attendees. Roundabouts were considered at the Loudon Road ramp intersections at Exit 14 but could not be sized big enough to handle traffic flows at the intersections due to the river and other space constraints. There is potential for a future pedestrian bridge (by others) over the freeway and the river in the area south of Exit 14; Concept F2 does not preclude its construction, and it might be possible in the NHDOT design to allow space for a future bridge footing(s). A potential multi-use path tunnel

under I-93 connecting the Storrs Street redevelopment area with Ft. Eddy Road is possible, but would result in a 180-foot tunnel which might not be attractive to bicyclists and pedestrians. A full-directional signalized intersection at the I-393/Commercial Street intersection would not be feasible due to inadequate capacity to handle peak traffic volume due to the addition of more crossing movements. While relocation of the electrical substation near Exit 14 might be a significant aesthetic improvement for Concord's Front Door, is not necessary in order to meet the project's purpose and need and would not be funded under the NHDOT's project. Such relocation could be added to the project, but associated funding would need to be provided by the city.

Gene McCarthy noted that the project's noise analysis is nearing completion and recommendations would be shared when available. Noise abatement (sound walls) may be recommended at select locations along the corridor where residential or other noise-sensitive uses are in close proximity to the future highway lanes. Local input from affected properties and the City will be needed in considering the acceptance of noise-abatement walls versus the potential impacts to views and aesthetics.

TPAC members were very supportive of the NHDOT's recent update of the Preferred Alternative to include full multi-use paths along both sides of Loudon Road through the Exit 14 interchange. Attendees also discussed possible funding opportunities such as a Federal BUILD grant (aka, former TIGER grant program) that might be used to add appropriate infrastructure to the NHDOT's project. This might include a new multi-use path/bridge crossing over the Merrimack River south of Exit 14 or perhaps along a reconstructed Loudon Road bridge. Other options might be related to enhancing the potential for a transit-oriented development in the Storrs Street North redevelopment area.

6. Public Comment - None

7. Consent Reports

a. Acceptance of Subcommittee Minutes

The following subcommittee reports were accepted by unanimous consent: Bicycle/Pedestrian – February 5 and March 5, 2018.

8. City Council Meeting Update

Rob Mack reported that at its May 14, 2018 meeting, City Council: accepted TPAC's April 27, 2018 report recommending CIP priorities; approved a Stop Sign for the Willard Street approach to Manor Road; and referred to TPAC two resident traffic concerns (Items 9b and 9c, below).

9. TPAC Referrals from City Council, Staff and Chair

a. Referral from Councilor Bouchard regarding a constituent concern on the revised alignment of the Old Loudon Road/Portsmouth Street intersection

Rob Mack reported that staff had developed four alternatives for the intersection configuration, including comparative matrix, as had been requested by TPAC earlier this year. Councilors St. Hilaire and Bouchard had indicated an interest in participating in TPAC's discussion; however they were unable to attend tonight due to a conflicting finance committee meeting. As such, the Chair tabled discussion of this item until TPAC's next scheduled meeting on June 28, 2018.

b. Referral from Councilor Herschlag requesting funding for sidewalk along Borough Road

Rob Mack reported that Engineering staff and TPAC considered similar requests for Borough Road sidewalk in 1998 and 2014, culminating most recently with TPAC's September 26, 2014 report which was accepted by City Council. The subject referral again requests the continued extension of sidewalk along Borough Road westward from roughly the Sandwood Crossing area where sidewalk currently exists. An issue in past studies is the potential need to take right-of-way and/or remove trees from abutting properties for sidewalk construction, regardless of the side of the road that the sidewalk

might ultimately be installed along; significant opposition from impacted property owners was noted in earlier studies.

The Chair requested that the referral be forwarded to TPAC-BP for further consideration as part of the subcommittee's ongoing overview of sidewalk needs city-wide and project prioritization within CIP 17 (Sidewalks and Streetscapes). The subcommittee's findings and recommendation on the request would be brought back to TPAC for further consideration.

c. Referral from City Council regarding resident concerns on increased traffic growth and the need for additional traffic enforcement at the Broadway/Rockingham intersection

Rob Mack reported that this new item was referred to both TPAC and TOC. He spoke with one of the several residents that live near the intersection and had signed this request. Concerns appear to be: drivers not stopping at the stop signs; too much traffic for the area; excess noise due to motorcycles and enhanced mufflers; and large trucks traveling on Broadway and Rockingham Street where they are otherwise restricted. As most of the concerns are related to enforcement, the request will be first taken up by TOC.

10. Status Report on Subcommittees

a. Bicycle/Pedestrian Committee (TPAC-BP), Craig Tufts

Craig Tufts reported that TPAC-PT met this month and continued discussing project priorities for CIP17 (sidewalks and streetscapes). Subcommittee members are also working with staff to locate loop detector hot spots for future paint markings to show cyclists where to best stop in a lane to best activate the traffic signal for a green light.

b. Public Transportation Committee (TPAC-PT), Sheila Zakre

Rob Mack reported that TPAC-PT did not meet this month.

c. Traffic Operations Committee (TOC), Rob Mack

Rob Mack reported that TOC did not meet this month.

11. Staff Updates

a. Merrimack River Greenway Trail (CIP 543)

Dick Lemieux reported that he had contacted the state's LWCF manager to discuss the status of the project grant. MRGT can apply for an extension to August 2020. The design team is considering an alternative design (helical piles) for the boardwalk section that might reduce the structure cost in a potential re-bid of the project.

12. Other Discussion Items

a. TPAC Membership

Updated TPAC membership lists were distributed for members to review. Of 13 TPAC positions there are four vacancies: one City Council position and three at-large member positions. Attendee Ryan Buchanan is currently an applicant for appointment to one of the at-large member positions. The Chair discussed meeting attendance and asked that future meeting minutes report any member absences as either excused or unexcused, with excused absence implying prior notification to staff or the Chair.

13. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at about 8:20 PM.

Upcoming Meeting Dates: June 28, 2018
 July 26, 2018
 August 23, 2018