



# CITY OF CONCORD

*New Hampshire's Main Street™*

## REPORT TO THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

From: Carlos P. Baía, Deputy City Manager—Development

Subject: Resolution to appropriate \$456,000 for the 100% design/engineering of a multi-lane roundabout and ancillary improvements at the intersection of Hoit Road and Whitney Road (CIP #30)

Date: June 2, 2020

### **Recommendation**

Accept this report and set the attached appropriating resolution for public hearing.

### **Background**

Whitney Road is a city street in Penacook which is home to a handful of industrial and retail developments among them the Concord Crossing multi-use building; Lakes Region Tents and Events; Concord XtraMart; the Wheelabrator Waste to Energy facility and Boyce Highlands.

Whitney Road's only outlet is onto Hoit Road, also recognized as NH State Route 4. Traffic exiting off of Whitney Road is required to stop and wait for clearance of through traffic on Route 4. During the morning and evening peaks, this movement is extremely challenging and dangerous.

The NH Department of Transportation (NHDOT) reviews any new development on Whitney Road as part of the permit it issued the City of Concord for Whitney's connection to its State highway. Based on discussions with the NHDOT over the last few years, it is expected that any new use on Whitney Road that would be a significant generator of traffic would not be permitted since the intersection of Hoit and Whitney Road has no safe way to accommodate the needed capacity in its present form.

Local landowners, Laurie and David Rauseo, hoping to fully develop their commercial property abutting the Hoit and Whitney intersection, have attempted for nearly a decade to include an intersection improvement in the State's 10 Year Improvement Plan (STIP). They have been aided in that advocacy effort by the City of Concord. Unfortunately, this project never rose high enough in the DOT's

calculus to be included in the STIP. The NHDOT's position is that this present intersection does not negatively impact Route 4 and that any improvement to the intersection with Whitney would only be needed to accommodate development.

The improvement to this intersection has been a project in the City's Capital Improvement Program for many years (CIP #30). The project historically contemplated the design and construction of a simpler intersection improvement projected to be entirely funded by the private sector—as an off-site improvement to a site plan. However, a planning evaluation commissioned by the City in 2019 concluded that the needed improvement to this intersection would be quite extensive with possible impacts on the I-93 on-ramp and the intersection with Hannah Dustin Drive which lies in the Town of Canterbury. The study estimated that this improvement would cost approximately \$5 million.

Based on the aforementioned estimate and the extensive coordination that would be required to successfully manage a project built on a State highway near an Interstate highway interchange which straddles two municipalities, City staff concluded that it was very unlikely that this project would ever be built by a private developer as an “off-site improvement” condition of a site plan approval.

In October 2019, City Council accepted a staff report that outlined a tentative project schedule for construction of this intersection which would allow for the development of the Whitney Road corridor. The Rauseos took the first step in that timeframe when they commissioned a comprehensive traffic analysis of the intersection to determine what type of improvement would work best. Their study determined that a multi-lane roundabout would be preferred and earlier this month, the NHDOT concurred.

## **Discussion**

In its October 2019 report to Council, staff contemplated returning to City Council upon the NHDOT's determination of the preferred intersection alternative with a request for Council to fund a partial design contract which would provide sufficient detail to develop a reasonably accurate project budget.

The generation of the traffic study and the time it took for NHDOT's review delayed the project by several months. At this point, to keep this project on course with any hope of having an operational roundabout before 2022, staff is recommending that Council consider a contract with the City's consulting engineering firm of VHB for

100% design but which includes a “check-in” stage at the 30% phase. Once the design reaches 30%, VHB will also provide a project budget. This 30% design and project budget should help Council determine if it wishes to move forward to the 100% design phase. Staff anticipates also having a discussion with City Council concurrently as to direction on funding the roundabout’s construction. If Council wishes the City to participate financially, staff will draft a development agreement for its review later in the summer.

The attached resolution contemplates funding the up to 100% design from general obligation bonds.

A revised, tentative project schedule that was reviewed with the Rauseos is also attached.