

NYS Route 378 Troy Menands Bridge PEL Active Transportation Stakeholder Meeting
Tuesday, August 29, 2023, 9:00 AM – 10:30 AM
Meeting Minutes

Attendees

NYSDOT

Susan Olsen, Transportation Analyst, NYSDOT
Kaylee Noll, Transportation Analyst, NYSDOT
Valeria Deane, Senior Transportation Analyst, NYSDOT R1
Greg Wichser, Capital Program Manager, NYDOT
Celeste Harp, Transportation Analyst, NYSDOT R1
Kristen Morris, Senior Capital Program Analyst, NYSDOT

WSP

Bernard Kalus, Director of Transportation
Barret LaGrave, Vice President
Zeeshan Ott, Assistant Vice President, Communications & Public Involvement
Sophia Schintzel, Associate Consultant, Communications & Public Involvement

Transportation Council

Chris Bauer, Director of Transportation Planning
Rebecca Odell, Transportation and GIS Analyst, Transportation Council

Christopher Morris, Statewide Trails Program Manager, NYS Parks
Linda VonDerHeide, Principal Planner, Rensselaer County Economic Development & Planning
James Rath, Operations Officer, Capital Streets
Ethan Warren, Senior Planner, CDTA
Joe Durkin, Board Member, Rensselaer Land Trust, TRIP
John Scavo, Planning Department Director, Town of Clifton Park
Charles Welge, Director, Public Health Planning & Education, Alb. Co. DOH
Ed Brennan, President, Albany Bicycling Coalition
Erica Schneider, Greenway Program Associate, Parks & Trails NY
Thomas Hotaling, Recreation Trails Program Administrator, NYS Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation
Jim Mearkle, Traffic Engineer, Albany County

Purpose: The purpose of this meeting is to provide active transportation stakeholders with an overview of the project, progress updates, a summary of preliminary corridor concepts, and gather input from attendees.

Welcome:

- Chris Bauer of the Capital Region Transportation Council introduced Susan “Susie” Olsen, NYSDOT, Bernard “Bernie” Kalus, WSP, and Barrett LaGrave, WSP. The in-person attendees then introduced themselves round-robin style. Chris Bauer introduced virtual attendees.

- After a brief introduction, overview of the project and a high-level update on outreach efforts, Susie Olsen turned it over to Bernie Kalus.
- Announcements – Upcoming Public Information Meeting on Tuesday, October 26 at the Hudson Valley Community College, from 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM.

Presentation:

- Bernie Kalus presented agenda items for the meeting, a detailed overview of the project including background, purpose and need, goals and objectives, and recap of outreach efforts to date.
- In addition, Bernie Kalus provided a summary of the structural, traffic, and environmental analysis, along with an explanation of the PEL study and process.
- With the goals and objectives for the project in mind, Zeeshan Ott then led participants through a SWOT polling exercise. The results are included in the chart below (some answers have been very lightly edited for clarity):

What are the STRENGTHS?	What are the WEAKNESSES?	What are the OPPORTUNITIES?	What are the THREATS?
Significant Menands - Troy connector	Poor conditions accessing the bridge on Troy side	Open space on east side poses opportunities	Low density zoning reinforces car dependency
Recreational assets along the river.	No connection to Broadway in Menands	Mill - greenway expansion, good connection opportunities going up the river	Availability of funding
Empire State Trail	Congestion management- i.e., lack of advisory signage - variable message boards	Better trail connectivity = increased multimodal users	Negative Stormwater quality impacts to the river.
Multiple crossings options	Bicycles are technically prohibited from riding on the bridge, but they do anyway. The bike/pedestrian sidewalk is too narrow	Opportunity to connect to river	Hostile road design
Cross river capability, the river is a natural public draw, connectivity, EST.	Traffic congestion	Proposed/planned shared-use path for east side of Hudson south to Rens	Lane expansions on route 4 can take away opportunities
Lots of natural resources and recreational options	Poor bicycle connection from Troy-Menands bridge to HVCC	Lots of opportunities for expanded connections to natural resources and beauty - pedestrian corridor up Mill and Campbell	Vehicles are not just driving faster, they have gotten much, much larger. Both are factors leading to more serious injuries to vulnerable road users. Intersections need to be safer, separation needed for bike / peds on these roadways.

Good connectivity to multiple locations- south Troy, Menands, EST, etc.	Always broken glass and loose sand on the sidewalk of the Troy-Menands bridge	Opportunity to better connect communities over bridge	
Uncle Sam bikeway	Elevation changes on east side challenging to bike-ped going uphill	Separate Rt. 4 destination traffic from local road network.	
BRT and bike trail	Better bike/ped buffer - either way if replacing or repairing an improved physical buffer from the traffic would be good.	787 PEL offers opportunities for West side connections	
Hudson River	Poor access to waterfront and Uncle Sam trail on troy side. Morrison is terrible climb for cyclists wanting to get to hvcc. no direct access to Broadway in Menands - which has bike lanes (partially). Intersections on Troy side could stand improvements for bike / ped safety.	Ability to improve the quality of life for those negatively impacted by traffic from bridge (whether those living on Morrison or use the bridge)	
Separated path for bikes/peds across the bridge, connects to EST	Need for better wayfinding. Poor access to Uncle Sam Trail in Troy, especially for bikes, Morrison is terrible climb for cyclists, no access to Broadway on Menands.	Opportunity to generally improve safety for all users. Waterfront access on Troy side, access to bike lanes on Broadway	Vehicles getting larger, people driving faster more likely to do harm to vulnerable users implies need to slow traffic, separate bikes and peds with protected bike lanes/multiuse paths
HVCC major destination, broad age group of potential multimodal users	No signage directing cyclists on the Troy side that they are close to and can access the Empire State Trail	Build trail/connection to waterfront on Troy side and Broadway in Menands. Go beyond recreational thinking - think build into bike/ped network - at over \$10,000 per year for average automobile per AAA in 2022 (probably near \$12000) now - a growing % of people in our communities need safe alternative transportation network to get to jobs/shopping and general transportation needs.	

Strong community and local community	No signage on the Empire State Trail directing riders that they can reach South Troy by taking the ramp up to the Troy-Menands bridge	Improve freight movement.	
Relatively flat - helpful for ped and bike connections, especially commuting	Not connecting to route 4 directly - dumps traffic into residential neighborhoods	South Troy bike-ped connection to EST	
This bridge provides the option to do a loop using the EST up the west side of the river, crossing to downtown troy on the green island bridge, then taking the Uncle Sam bikeway back down the east side of the river to cross back over to the west side on the Troy-Menands bridge	Morrison sees more volume where Mill/Rt 4 could handle more	Planning for E-bikes	
Natural beauty, great for experiencing the landscape	No bicycle accommodation getting on or coming off of Troy-Menands bridge on Troy side	Smart growth to justify more transit on route 4 to handle increasing activity on route 4	
	Route 4/Campbell intersection - needs improvements	Wider bike/ped path on the bridge	

- The SWOT polling exercise sparked a large discussion from in-person attendees, please see an overview of questions in the Questions & Discussion section.
- Barret LaGrave provided an overview of the project's concepts.
- Bernie Kalus closed out the presentation with an overview of next steps and Zeeshan highlighted opportunities for participants to share feedback and additional questions on the SurveyMonkey survey. In addition, the project team committed to sharing meeting details, the project website, and the survey link following the meeting.

Questions & Discussion:

- SWOT Discussion
 - STRENGTHS
 - Attendee #1
 - Land trust and affordable housings are emerging in urban areas. His focus is making urban areas livable for everybody, specifically, recreation areas and access to the waterfront. The other day, he walked to the waterfront area (access is fairly easy if you know what to do), but it's confusing at the moment, providing access to the Troy side would be wonderful, and make less confusing. In addition, attendee #1 feels if more recreation

opportunities are available within cities, people will be less inclined to travel away for their recreational hobbies. He notes that south of the bridge has a lot of open space for development and wants to emphasize the importance of recreational access in the long-term plan.

- Attendee #2
 - Strong community neighbors in that in South Troy
 - Susie Olsen notified attendee #2 about the upcoming neighborhood meeting in September.
- Attendee #3
 - The bike and walking connection is relatively flat which is a big draw for people who are commuting, and with modifications could be handicap accessible. Attendee #3 also feels that there is a good buffer between traffic and the sidewalk which increases comfort and safety while traveling across the bridge. Along with the structural strengths, attendee #3 acknowledged the gorgeous views from the bridge.
- WEAKNESSES
 - Attendee #3
 - Important to look at the whole project area even though the main focus is on the bridge
 - Susie Olsen explains that there are additional studies being conducted on surrounding areas, today's discussion is focused on the bridge and immediate areas
 - Feels that navigating the area by bicycle is very intimidating due to traffic patterns, vehicle speeds, and intersections.
 - Attendee #2
 - Attendee #2 was once driven off the road by a pickup truck— agrees with attendee #3
- OPPORTUNITIES
 - Attendee #2
 - Great opportunity for greenway expansion up the river
 - Attendee #1
 - Reacknowledged the opportunity for recreational space
 - Attendee #3
 - Restated importance for pedestrian connection
 - Opportunity to take vehicles off the roadway by improving bicycle commuter conditions (Attendee #2 agrees)
- THREATS (Please see chart above for summary)
- Additional Questions
 - A few questions regarding the upcoming neighborhood meeting, it's location and outreach that has gone out.

Attendees

NYSDOT

Susan Olsen, NYSDOT
Kaylee Noll, NYSDOT
Valeria Deane, NYSDOT R1
Greg Wichser, NYDOT
Celeste Harp, NYSDOT R1

WSP

Bernard Kalus
Barret LaGrave
Zeeshan Ott
Sophia Schintzel

CDTC

Chris Bauer

Christopher Morris, NYS Parks
Linda VonDerHeide, Rensselaer County Economic Development & Planning
James Rath, Capital Streets
Ethan Warren, CDTA
Rebecca Odell, Transportation Council
Joe Durkin, Rensselaer Land Trust, TRIP
John Scavo, Town of Clifton Park

+ attendees from Zoom below:

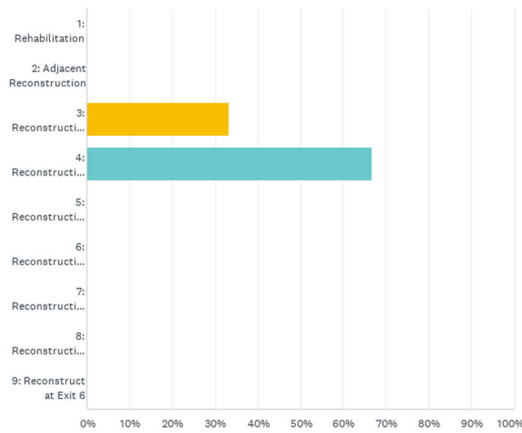
Charles Welge
Ed Brennan
Erica Schneider, Parks & Trailer
Hotaling
Jim Mearkle
Kristen Morris

Meeting Chat

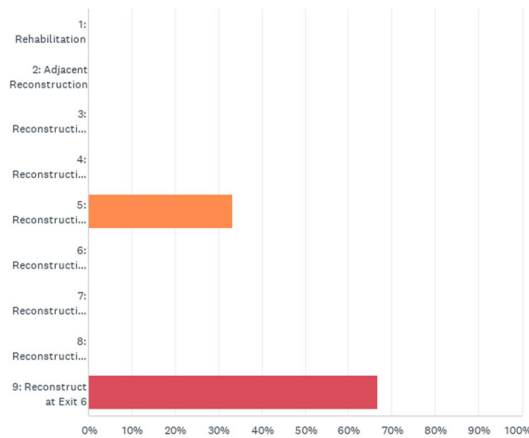
- Charles Welge: What does PDO stand for?
 - TC – Property Damage Only
- Ed Brennan: What is date/time of the October HVCC meeting? Is there a building/room designation? Will it also have zoom access?
 - Zeeshan shared information on the upcoming meeting on Tuesday, October 26 at HVCC.

SurveyMonkey Results (*see below*)

Q1 What concept do you view MOST favorably for active transportation purposes?



Q3 What concept do you view LEAST favorably for active transportation purposes?



After a week, we received three responses on the survey. The full results are below. *(Some answers have been lightly edited for clarity).*

Q1: What concept do you view MOST favorably for active transportation purposes?

4: Reconstruction at Mill St

3: Reconstruction at Morrison Ave

4: Reconstruction at Mill St

Q2: Why do you view that concept most favorably?

It moderates congestion
Mill is not adequate for cars or alternative transportation users
It meshes well with existing roadway flow while addressing the issues faced with the current alignment

Q3: What concept do you view LEAST favorably for active transportation purposes?
9: Reconstruct at Exit 6
5: Reconstruction at South Dr
9: Reconstruct at Exit 6

Q4: Why do you view that concept least favorably?
It is the least likely alternative to address traffic congestion
Options 5 through 9 all entail destruction of open space, impact permeability, and will encourage sprawl and help to remove and discourage economic activity in Troy and built areas to the North. They are all terrible options
There is very little active transportation in this area of N Greenbush

Q5: What other active transportation considerations are important as we move forward with the Troy-Menands Bridge NY 378 PEL?
Active transportation integration; preservation/promotion of green space
There is a need to think beyond recreational uses of active transportation and help build the safe network that will make active transportation and actual transportation alternative. Link to Broadway and safer intersections and connections on the Troy side of the bridge leading to HVCC and Troy
Integrating complete streets concepts at South Troy connections to accommodate bike-ped to the greatest extent possible

Q6: If you'd like to receive future project updates, please provide your email below. If you would like to remain anonymous, please leave this section blank and email susan.olsen@dot.ny.gov with a request to be added to the project updates distribution.
Charles.Welge@albanycountyny.gov
edpbrennan@yahoo.com
christopher.morris@parks.ny.gov