

**CITY OF CONCORD
TRANSPORTATION POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 29, 2022**

The Transportation Policy Advisory Committee (TPAC) met at 6:00 pm on September 29, 2022, in City Council Chambers, 37 Green Street.

Members Present: Mayor Bouley (Chair), Councilor Brown, Councilor Rice-Hawkins, Gregory Bakos, Craig Tufts

Members Absent: Ian McGregor, Dick Lemieux, Terri Paige, Councilor Todd

Guests: Members of the public (see attached sign-in sheet)

City Staff: Karen Hill (Transportation Engineer), Heather Shank (City Planner), Matt Walsh (Interim Deputy City Manager)

1. Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:05 pm.

2. Approval of Minutes

The meeting minutes from the September 15, 2022 meeting were tabled for review at the October meeting.

3. Public Comment

The Chair opened the meeting for public comment.

Aaron Fracht-Monroe, a member of Concord Greenspace Coalition, is happy innovative bike and ped infrastructure is being considered. He would like to see efforts to connect downtown to greenspace. He urged the City to keep NHDOT's feet to fire.

Meredith Cooley, a member of Concord Greenspace Coalition, thanked the Committee for their hard work. She stated that she is adamantly opposed to highway widening. She mentioned if there is no choice, then she would support a deck park feasibility study. She would like to see the highway expansion plan lay a foundation for a river connection to downtown and not preclude it. She also discussed the City's 2005 Master Plan with specific references, including a connection to river (page 20). She stated that transportation is one of Concord's guiding principles and the study states "Transportation that serves the community." She discussed that a connection to river would benefit economic development, tourism, connection, unification – east and west side, ADA

accessibility, and sustainable development. She urged the City to continue the vision in the previous master plan.

Craig Tufts, committee member, mentioned that the prior study proposed to depress the highway and move it to the west, including redevelopment of the Brixmor property along Storrs Street. He discussed that the dynamics would be different now, but he sees the opportunity to cap highway and rail as a positive thing for the City.

Anna Krasinski, a Concord resident, supports all of what Cooley said. She also supports bicycle and pedestrian connectivity and connection to riverfront.

Jenny Robson, 1.5-year resident, used to be a part of the Fri-Sun crowd traveling north and does not believe traffic is a problem. She mentioned that she regularly sped through Concord as there is nothing along the side of the highway that made her want to stop. She advocated for things that bring life to the City. She was asked the question on what time of the day she would travel north? She answered, all times.

Mayor Bouley briefly discussed colorful lighting and increased lighting that shows life, similar to the State House dome and Hotel Concord lights. He also mentioned the addition of color and the phrase “painting our backside” with murals, etc.

Robson agreed but would want to see it complement our historic downtown.

Tess McMann, 5-year resident, loves the City. She moved here from Colorado, and considers herself outdoorsy. She sees so much potential, especially with the deck park idea, she believes it is an incredible opportunity for downtown and would appeal to younger demographic. She mentioned that road biking could be better, Loudon Road especially. She would like to see a connection from downtown to the river and unification of both sides of the City. She also advocated for public transportation and believes that a future train to Concord would help with traffic.

Nicole Fox, resident of Concord 15 years and transportation engineer, mentioned that at first, she was “in the box thinking” and was close minded to the deck park idea. She now supports the feasibility study and believes it will need to be incorporated in the widening plans. She would like the City to ask the question “is ALL the proposed widening necessary?” She stated that the benefits of park would be enormous. She mentioned that it would provide the only access across the City that would not have to cross an interchange, as interchanges are challenging for bicycles and pedestrians. She feels that a pedestrian bridge would be too high and long and unappealing. She recognizes that there are challenges to get across highway and river today, needing to get behind Brixmor, over the tracks and river with a park, then a bridge across the river.

Susan Woods, 4-year resident, supports testimony and Greenspace recommendations. She also supports pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, and

would like to see the project lay the foundation for a deck park. She has concerns with what happened with Exit 4A in Derry and hope history does not repeat itself on this project. She would like the City to relook at the Loudon Road plans and mentioned that there is a need to prioritize Loudon Road accommodations. She also mentioned that recent Manchester murals have been a success.

Judith Kurtz, Ward 5, 3-year resident, echoed support for a deck park. She mentioned that she shares concerns with making sure the State lays ground work for what we want in our City. Something that makes people want to stop and get off the highway. Equity and access, essential for folks that don't have cars. Kids could bike to skate park, safely. She believes the current infrastructure is unsafe and car-dependent. Our responsibility to advocate now!

Ron Rayner, 33-year resident, mentioned there were a lot of good comments tonight. He would like to see greenspace, pedestrian and bicycle accommodations, etc. He expressed concerns with the thought of depressing the highway depression under Loudon Road, and thought this was no longer the case. He asked why folks would want to hang out over the highway on a deck park. He sees other opportunities for riverfront parks and access including the farm land on the east side of the river and the Everett arena. He supports the widening to 6 lanes in Concord, he believes that traffic will continue to increase with growth from the south. He mentioned that Concord is the Gateway to the north and believes there are other ways to invite people to Concord, without the deck park. He believes inevitably, the highway will be widened, and the City should try the best we can to get what we can with State and Federal funds. He suggested that folks tour the area on foot along with the proposed Greenway Trail. He further suggested a hybrid approach for MRGT route to minimize new pedestrian crossings.

Councilor Brown asked if there is a possibility to have a commercial canoe/kayak opportunity out of Everett Arena.

Nicole Prizio, has lived in Concord for 8 months, can't believe waterfront property is not being taken advantage of. She mentioned that she has lived in other cities, and believes that traffic in Concord isn't that bad. She stated that the important point is about connecting Concord and keeping young families and young adults. She mentioned that a waterfront park adds capability of safely navigating around and would allow kids to have freedom and independence. She advocated for providing safe access for all and making the connection to the Heights. She would like the City to consider light pollution and noise, and thinks murals are great. She mentioned a kayak rental in Austin, awesome experience.

Sarah Hurd, 5-year resident, voiced support for making the project pedestrian and bicycle friendly. She would love to be able to show her kids riverfront and trail opportunities in Concord and bike to Christa McAuliffe School.

Jeff Evans, provided written comments before the August meeting. He believes that a deck park is a great idea, if feasible. He would like the City to focus on the Exit 14 area, a negative aspect of the project, currently ugly, if widened would create higher speeds and increased noise. He does not believe the project is going to serve residents of Concord. Would love to see the river, and connection to river from downtown. He mentioned right now all you see is a crappy strip mall and parking lot, etc. He believes it would be a shame to waste this opportunity.

Teresa Vincent, lives off of Exit 12, believes that the Main Street work and investment should be supported by and expanded through this project as it was a huge success. She would like to see a park system along the river that invites people from downtown, over the highway. She does not believe that a boring highway widening project will draw people to the City. She mentioned that we need to create our image, with greenspace, to draw people off highway to the City. She believes in a phased approach, but mentioned that the City needs to get NHDOT on board to help. She is also worried about the increased noise with the widening.

Meredith Cooley, appreciated Ron's testimony. She showed Concord Greenspace Coalition's vision for deck park and trail and mentioned that it is on their website.

Mayor Bouley clarified that the deck park is not part of the interstate project, it would be a separate City project.

4. Discuss NHDOT's I-93 Bow-Concord Project

Exit 12

The Committee is accepting of the recommendation from the September 15th meeting.

The Committee also recommends that Council ask NHDOT to consider the impacts of the highway noise to the abutting neighborhoods in the area of Exit 12. was important to consider safety and access for bicycle and pedestrians through the proposed roundabouts. Use industry standard design principles.

Exit 13

The Committee supports the additional lanes at the NB off ramp and the intersection of Manchester Street and Old Turnpike Road, having these improvements included in the State's project is valuable to the City. The committee recommends that Council ask NHDOT to carefully consider safe crossings for bicycles and pedestrians at all two-lane approaches and exits.

The Committee recommends that Council advocate for safe bicycle transitions between the trail system and street system, connecting Manchester Street users to the MRGT. This could be accomplished by the addition of bicycle curb ramps

and 10-foot wide multi-use paths extending from the existing paths under the Manchester Street Bridge to the intersection with Old Turnpike Road.

It is recommended that Council encourages NHDOT and the developer of the Black Hill area to negotiate and plan a MRGT connection through the State property on the southwest corner of the intersection that connects Manchester Street and Terrill Park users to the proposed MRGT along the river on the Black Hill development site.

The Committee suggests this area is a great candidate to consider additional tree plantings.

Exit 14

MRGT

The Committee suggests that the Loudon Road typical section be reconsidered to mimic the proposed improvements across the Loudon Road Bridge. Additionally, consideration should be given to beautifying the interstate bridge over Loudon Road as well as constructing sloped abutments versus vertical to open it up and make it feel less like a tunnel. The committee feels this bridge is a gateway connecting the Heights to downtown and should be appropriately designed.

The Committee is interested in the design details of all intersection trail crossings and suggests they are designed using industry standard design principles to incorporate safe access for all users.

The committee recommends that Council ask NHDOT to further analyze MRGT Concepts A, C and F, and/or a combination of the three.

Other considerations include:

- Signal timing of the Loudon Road/Centre Street intersection with increased pedestrian activity.
- ROW impacts to the hotel on the corner.
- Aesthetics of the ramp in Concept F, TPAC recommends a structure as opposed to large retaining walls.
- TPAC recommends that all alternatives are configured to work with the proposed Storrs Street roundabout.

TPAC does not recommend moving forward with Concept B as it is too circuitous and does not connect users to downtown. The Committee also does not suggest supporting Concept D as includes an approximate 300' tunnel that would be dark and unpleasant, especially with 90 degrees turns at the ends. Due to the uninspiring route along Stickney Ave and through parking lots, TPAC also does not recommend Concept E. The Committee notes that the economic connection is not provided close to downtown with these alternatives.

Other suggested routes from a member of the public that was supported by a committee member include:

- Thru Users – the trail, after passing under the new Loudon Rd. bridge, would parallel the rear of the buildings (Shaw’s, EMS) & then turn, traveling between the rear of Staples & Lowe’s until reaching Ft. Eddy Rd. There, the user would turn right traveling a very short distance to the existing traffic light (entrance to Market Basket & Lowe’s), cross Ft. Eddy & then passing down (either front or rear) of the few properties on the strip mall (Planet Fitness) to the existing tunnel & traveling thru that as described in Option B.
- Downtown Users – Signage would direct downtown users to the trail passing between FedEx & Shaw’s to Ft. Eddy Rd. Then proceed down Ft. Eddy Rd to the existing traffic light at the entrance to Shaw’s plaza & LL Bean (opposed), turning W & running parallel to the end of the LL Bean building to the rear of the property. There, it would turn S running parallel to I-93 until reaching a new tunnel travelling under I-93 out to Stickney Ave. There would be only 1 surface crossing on Stickney (to the very S end of the DOT complex) where the trail, before reaching Loudon Rd., would turn W, descending directly down onto Storrs St. From Storrs St., users would then have access to shops & restaurants on both Storrs St. as well as Main St.

Some members were concerned about the circuitry of these routes and the challenges with constructing a large amount of the trail through private property.

Stickney Ave (Right-in, Right-Out)

The Committee is accepting of the recommendation from the September 15th meeting.

NB On Ramp

The Committee did not reach a consensus on a recommended ramp configuration. The Committee offers the following list of pros and cons to the proposed partial access ramp:

- | <u>Pros</u> | <u>Cons</u> |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminates a closely spaced signal on Loudon Road • Improves traffic flow on Loudon Road • Reduces lane confusion under bridge that exists today | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some traffic would divert to N Main Street • Potential free-flowing traffic conflict with pedestrian crossing |

- Eliminates a path of travel that could conflict with pedestrians

Exit 15

TPAC recommends that Council support the proposed Clover Stack interchange at Exit 15 as it will eliminate many existing unsafe weaving conditions and red listed bridges.

The Committee recommends that Council advocate for streetscape and design features to be incorporated on I-393 between Commercial Street and N Main Street to help mitigate speeds approaching the intersection and notify drivers that they are leaving the interstate and approaching a more local street network. This would also act as another gateway into the City.

Interstate Widening

Committee members still have concerns with if ALL the proposed widening was necessary. Discussions included what the Committee has been hearing from the public, less highway more access, what can we do to narrow the footprint? What impact would it have to capacity and safety?

Concerns were raised that we haven't looked at the big picture and that we need to have a bigger discussion. We need to weigh traffic congestion vs. all of the other things. The Committee has unanswered questions, including: What else can be done? Is there a certain amount of congestion the City is willing to accept? How can we benefit from this project? How can our wants/needs interface with the NHDOT project?

Bakos mentioned that he can visualize the proposed widening when he drives it every day and that he has a hard time picturing a highway that wide through Concord. He does believe that traffic will only get worse and that it is a real problem. He would like to see more analysis between traffic volumes and safety solutions. He believes that the frontage roads are the most important.

Committee members have continued concerns with construction traffic.

Following lengthy discussions, the Committee did not reach a consensus on support for the interstate widening.

The Committee recommends Council ask that NHDOT minimize the interstate footprint and number of lanes while still meeting purpose and need of the project.

TPAC also recommends that Council seek an updated traffic study with data that shows the target LOS, projected growth rate, and ramp volumes to further justify the proposed widening.

Deck Park/Pedestrian Bridge/River Connection

Mayor Bouley mentioned that he will be asking Council at an upcoming meeting to appropriate dollars from the economic development reserve account to conceptually study a deck park. He will suggest the City release an RFP to find a national expert in this type of study. He suggested that once we have a study, it would help us have conversations with legislature, etc. and help people to visualize possibilities, scope, and feasibility.

TPAC recommends that Council support the completion of a feasibility study for the deck park, pedestrian bridge, and possible river connection.

5. Adjourn

Mayor Bouley thanked everyone for coming and providing feedback. He suggested that Hill would circulate a draft recommendation report to Council for Committee members to review and finalize, to be provided at the October Council meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 9:15 pm by unanimous consent.

6. Upcoming Meeting Dates

October 27, 2022

