

Plainfield US Route 2/Main Street Intersection Improvements - Kickoff Meeting

Plainfield NH 028-3(41) / 195311122

September 2, 2015 / 9:00 AM

Date/Time:

Place: Plainfield Town Hall Opera House-18 High Street

Next Meeting: TBD

Attendees: Erin Parizo (VTrans Project Administrator), Patti Coburn (VTrans Project Manager), Judith Ehrlich (VTrans Historic Preservation), Kyle Obenauer (VTrans Historic Preservation), David Strong (Town Selectboard), Betsy Zeigler (Town Selectboard), Bram Towbin (Town Selectboard Chair), Greg Goyette (Stantec Project Manager), Nora Varhue (Stantec Engineer), Steve Gladczuk (CVRPC), Erik Blaze (Local Reporter)

Absentees: Thad Luther (Stantec), Pat Travers (Sidewalk Project LPM)

Distribution: Attendees and Absentees

Location

Intersection of US Route 2 and Main Street in Plainfield, Vermont.

Meeting Purpose

The purpose of the meeting is to review the project history, review community concerns/ideas, initiate coordination with a concurrent sidewalk design project and discuss next steps required to make safety improvements to the intersection.

Project History

DuBois and King performed scoping study of the area in 2005 which yielded 13 alternatives. Preferred alternative #11 proposed signaling the intersection, lowering its grade and adding parking. The preferred alternative was reviewed by the Town Selectboard and VTrans at the time, though the Town mentioned that they did not support the recommendation. The community had concerns regarding the recommendation including loss of parking in front of the hardware store, truck noise and excessive queuing at the signal.

The current Selectboard is very supportive of improvements to the intersection and would like to move forward with a modified version of the recommendations in the 2005 scoping study. They feel improvements will receive overwhelming support from the community. The intersection is unsafe and is avoided often by locals, especially in the winter. The Opera House has recently reopened calling for more parking in the area and the addition of a crosswalk. New striping has been added north of the intersection on Route 2 stopping at the Health Center. Area has a high need for sidewalks and crosswalks. Area is dangerous for pedestrians in all seasons especially on south side of Route 2 on the travel path heading into the village.

This project is currently programmed as a safety improvement project and VTrans will begin the project development process.

Specific Project Issues and Community Concerns

Grade

Grade of intersection is problematic and needs to be adjusted. Addition of signalized section will increase intersection's problems at current grade. Replacement of guardrail has caused new visibility issues

Design with community in mind

especially in winter when covered in snow. Staircase on median is broken and pedestrians must travel around staircase. Community wants median removed completely. The road commissioner receives phone calls frequently about near misses at this intersection. Improvements to the intersection seem to be requested at every Town meeting.

Hardware Store

Parking at intersection is a big concern for the owner of the former hardware store. The building, owned by Rich and Gay Christianson, is currently for sale. The Town believes that they currently have 7 spots permitted by the town with 2 additional spots. People currently park on both sides of roads causing traffic jams and limiting emergency vehicle access. Area particularly dangerous during drop offs and deliveries to local businesses. Many people park in a town lot south of the bridge and walk up to the store. The preferred alternative from the scoping report does not eliminate these concerns.

Town is willing to help mitigate parking needs. Possibilities used by town for additional parking include: renting Harvey Hill parking during events at Opera House and for Inn (approximately 20 spots) and renting area in town. The Town could possibly expand the municipal parking lot across from the Opera House or buy the adjacent house and/or using the property behind this house. The Town should not do anything that impacts historic properties in advance of construction that is for the benefit of the project as the impacts will still need to follow federal regulations. VTrans will need to lead efforts on any historical impacts.

Historical Inn

Building adjacent to Opera house is a historical inn. One possibility is to move building back to improve sight distance. From a historic preservation perspective, this may be possible if other less-intrusive options are not feasible. Owner may consider renting parking space to the Town if necessary. The project area is within a historic district so any adverse project impacts will need to be mitigated following federal regulations.

Opera House

Redesign of this intersection is important for the future of the Opera House. The Opera House now serves as a magnet for community events. Improvements are necessary to provide safety for residents at events and for pedestrians at the town center. Crossing the road in this area is extremely dangerous and safety needs to be improved.

House across from Opera House

Owner was going to let the Town acquire the property, but the son is now living there with a promise to fix it up. Town is unsure of repair status. If the Town was to acquire this property, it could be used for potential parking assuming there were no show-stopping issues with historic impacts.

Water, Sewer and Aerial Utilities

At base of Harvey Hill there is a storm drain maintained by town. There is also a water shutoff in the area per the Town. A waterline may run under the bridge on Main Street. Stantec will contact Greg Chamberlain, head of water and sewer department, to determine if there are any water/sewer mains along Route 2 and if as-builts/record drawings are available. The utility pole at the intersection needs to be removed either through relocation or undergrounding of the existing aerial utility lines.

Right-of-Way

VTrans will take lead on the ROW process. Due to federal funding a particular process with clearance steps must be followed. Additional informal help from the town would complicate this process. VTrans is currently surveying area to understand property lines and highlight difficult areas where temporary easements will be

necessary.

Maintenance

Consultation with District 7 is required to determine which maintenance agreements are required. On street parking, cross-walk striping and street lighting often lead to maintenance agreements.

Sidewalk Project Coordination

A sidewalk and pedestrian bridge project funded through VTrans Municipal Assistance Bureau is in progress along US Route 2 and through the intersection to the bridge on Main Street. The local project manager is Pat Travers. The design engineer will be the Dufresne Group. Contract just signed and project intends to be completed in 2017. Coordination with Pat will be necessary to ensure both projects do not require significant redesign. It is likely that the sidewalk project will be constructed first. One option for the sidewalk project is to include a low-cost temporary path within the limits of the intersection project that can be reconstructed during the intersection project.

Next Steps

VTrans is surveying the area and will work with Stantec to develop improved recommendations for the intersection. Current survey will be completed mid-September. Stantec and VTrans will meet as needed over the next six months to review survey, develop recommended improvements and investigate key impacts such as utilities, historic, ROW, and parking. Once Stantec and VTrans are satisfied with the recommended improvements, they will be presented to the public at an informational meeting. VTrans will keep the Town updated on project status at key milestones. Dave Strong will be the primary contact for the Town and Erin Parizo will be the primary contact for VTrans.

The project issues with ROW, parking, utilities, historic properties, etc. will result in a long project development process that will likely take approximately 6-7 years or more. The Town is willing to help move the project along however possible.

The meeting adjourned at 10:15am. The foregoing is considered to be a true and accurate record of all items discussed. If any discrepancies or inconsistencies are noted, please contact the writer immediately.

Stantec Consulting Services Inc.



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