

Department of Transportation
State Project No. 84-108
Roundabout at the Intersection of
Route 110 (Shelton Road) and Route 111 (Monroe Turnpike)
Town of Monroe

Public Informational Meeting

Tuesday, March 24, 2015 - 7:00 p.m.

Monroe Town Hall
Council Chambers
7 Fan Hill Road
Monroe, Connecticut

Meeting Summary

Representatives Present:

Connecticut Department of Transportation

William Britnell, P.E., Principal Engineer, Highway Design
Scott Bushee, P.E., Project Manager, Highway Design
Jordan Pike, P.E., Project Engineer, Highway Design
Jessica Darling, Project Designer, Highway Design
Thomas Melzen, Property Agent, Rights-of-Way

Town of Monroe

Stephen Vavrek, First Selectman
Scott Schatzlein, P.E., Town Engineer
Chuck Woerner, Chairman, Historic District Commission

State Government

Marilyn Moore, State Senator, 22nd District
J.P. Sredzinski, State Representative, 112th District

Presentation: Prior to the presentation, First Selectman Vavrek addressed the audience by summarizing two previous 2012 Public Informational Meetings for this project. He also noted the ongoing coordination between the Department of Transportation (Department), Town of Monroe (Town), and local stakeholders and residents. Immediately following remarks made by the First Selectman, Mr. Bushee, Mr. Pike, Ms. Darling, and Mr. Melzen gave a PowerPoint presentation lasting approximately 35 minutes. The presentation covered the following items:

- ⇒ *Project Purpose/Need, Location, and History:* The purpose of this project is to alleviate congestion and improve safety at the intersection of Routes 110 and 111. The project was initiated, in 2011, at the request of State Representative Hovey.
- ⇒ *Crash Experience:* There were 27 recorded crashes between 2008 and 2010. 22% were angle- or turning-type crashes, and 48% were rear-end type crashes. In 2012, one fatality occurred at the intersection, which involved a vehicle departing the roadway.
- ⇒ *Existing Conditions:* Currently, the intersection experiences long queues and delays along Route 110 during peak hours.

- ⇒ General Roundabout Design and Benefits: Presented were general roundabout statistics and more specific information on two previously constructed roundabouts in Connecticut (West Haven and Ellington). Roundabouts improve safety by reducing speeds, eliminating left-turns, reducing the number of decisions drivers need to make, and reducing the total number of vehicle conflict points. Compared to former signalized or stop-controlled intersections, roundabout studies reveal a reduction of: 40% of total crashes, 80% of injury-crashes, and nearly 90% of fatal/incapacitating-crashes.
- ⇒ Existing Intersection, Original Concept, and Proposed Design: The proposed design includes construction of a modern roundabout, converting Hurd Avenue into a cul-de-sac, and installing new sidewalks throughout the project site.
- ⇒ Aesthetic Features: Included will be: landscaping, the bell tower, decorative light posts at the crosswalks, the truck apron and splitter islands, retaining walls with decorative safety fence, and a reset stone wall on the edge of the Firemen's Field.
- ⇒ Project Cost and Schedule: The estimated cost is \$4.1 million, using Federal (80%) and State (20%) funds. The current schedule anticipates construction to begin in spring 2017 and end in fall 2018.

Public Comments and Questions: Approximately 100 residents and stakeholders attended the meeting, about a third of which took the opportunity to ask questions or make comments. A summary of the questions and comments is as follows:

1. Hurd Avenue Cul-de-Sac: Some residents were concerned about the response time of emergency vehicles, the inconvenience of having to drive around, as well as the possibility of increased traffic on nearby Jeanette Street due to the cul-de-sac. The Department indicated that the response time of emergency vehicles to Hurd Avenue would not be significantly increased and that there has been coordination with local fire and police services regarding this concern. Converting Hurd Avenue into a cul-de-sac would improve safety for the intersection. The Department has coordinated with the Grange Hall as well as Hurd Avenue residents near to the proposed cul-de-sac. The Department agreed to review concerns expressed regarding Jeanette Street.
2. Sidewalks: Several residents were concerned about sidewalk maintenance and questioned the need for new sidewalks proposed throughout the project site. The Department stated that sidewalks are needed to accommodate pedestrians, especially near the roundabout, where lane and shoulder widths will be reduced to calm traffic. The First Selectman added that sidewalk extensions were designed, at the Town's request, to create connectivity and walkability within the area and to meet the needs of the public during such events as local festivals and carnivals. Some residents of Hurd Avenue and members of Saint Jude Church and School also confirmed the need. The Town has agreed to provide the necessary winter maintenance for the sidewalks following construction.
3. Truck Apron: A few residents were concerned that large vehicles, such as plow trucks and school buses, may have difficulty maneuvering through the roundabout even with the truck apron in place. The Department noted that the apron will be designed to accommodate large tractor-trailer trucks. School buses will be able to stay within the circular roadway, and plow trucks will be able to mount the apron and make a U-turn as needed for plowing.

4. Speeds: A few residents brought up the issue of high-speeds through the area today, especially near the Historic District. The Department explained that, with the roundabout in place, it would be physically difficult for vehicles to speed through the intersection due to the curvature of the roadway, deflection, and narrow lanes. Speeds through the roundabout are anticipated to be between 15 m.p.h and 20 m.p.h. Though the roundabout would help to slow vehicles heading northbound towards the Historic District, speeding is a local law enforcement issue.
5. Access to Saint Jude Church and School: Some residents and members of Saint Jude Church and School were concerned that traffic on Route 111 northbound, turning left at the Saint Jude entrance, would cause back-ups into the roundabout during church services, peak hours, and on weekends. The Department agreed to investigate the need for left-turn treatment at this location, likely in the form of a bypass area.
6. Aesthetics: Several residents stressed the importance of maintaining the historical character of the area, being so close to the Historic District. The residents were concerned that some features of the design might take away from this. The Department assured the residents that the historical aspect of the area has been considered throughout the design process and that coordination with the Historic District Commission has been ongoing. The bell tower, retaining wall, and decorative light posts will be applied with the intent of reflecting the historic nature of the area. The Historic District Commission also acknowledged that the bell tower was designed specifically to be a gateway into the Historic District and that other project aesthetics would be carefully considered.
7. Traffic during Construction: A few residents were concerned with how traffic would be maintained during construction and suggested that detours be considered. The Department stated that traffic is planned to be maintained throughout the project site, often on dirt or gravel paths, and detours will be considered, though are not anticipated.
8. Changes in Traffic: Some residents were interested in how the roundabout might impact traffic – if volumes (including that of trucks) would change and if capacity on Route 110 would be improved. The Department stated that changes in traffic volumes, due to the roundabout, are not anticipated. The Department does, however, expect capacity on Route 110 to improve, because all vehicles will be traveling in a counter-clockwise direction within the roundabout, providing more gaps and easier access for vehicles at the Route 110 approach.
9. Funding: Several residents asked about project funding and whether or not this was the best use of such funds. The Department stated that project funding is currently scheduled to be split between Federal and State monies, 80% and 20%, respectively. It was further noted that the [Federal Highway Administration] actually encourages the installation of modern roundabouts, because of their proven safety benefits compared to typical signalized or stop-controlled intersections. One resident mentioned the need for improvements at a nearby bridge, also located on Route 111. The bridge, known to the Department, is currently being investigated under another project.
10. Roadway Grades and Sightlines: A few residents were concerned with the existing crest on Route 110, near Route 111, which creates a poor line of sight to the intersection. The residents asked if this location would be regraded to

improve sightlines. The Department explained that the Route 110 approach would be lowered by two to three feet, which is the reason a retaining wall is proposed along the Firemen's Field, and the crest would be located further back from the intersection to provide a longer landing area for vehicles. This reconfiguration of vertical elements of the roadway will provide better visibility of the intersection.

11. *Driver Confusion and Roundabout Education:* A few residents were concerned that the roundabout would cause confusion and asked if the Department was planning to educate drivers. The residents also expressed their concern that yield signs, which will be applied on the approaches, do not work or people do not comply. It was explained that the public would, in a way, learn to drive the roundabout during construction, when the intersection would be dirt and gravel, speeds would be low, and cones would delineate the lanes. The Department agreed to consider providing informative handouts on the Town website, at the Town Hall, and at other local community centers. Regarding the yield signs, the Department stated that the signs would be installed in combination with a yield line, also known as "shark's teeth", to indicate to drivers the need to yield at the approach. Advanced warning signs will also be installed to alert drivers of the roundabout.

Adjournment: The question and answer session ended at approximately 9:30 p.m. The Department Representatives then continued to speak with residents and other participants, informally, until approximately 9:50 p.m.