

**Department of Transportation  
State Project No. 82-309  
Reconfiguration of Route 17 On-Ramp onto Route 9 North  
City of Middletown**

**Public Informational Meeting  
September 23, 2014 – 7:00 p.m.  
Middletown City Hall  
245 Dekoven Drive**

**Minutes**

**Representatives Present:**

Connecticut Department of Transportation:

Timothy M. Wilson, P.E., Manager of Highway Design  
William W. Britnell, P.E., Principal Engineer  
David W. Harms, P.E., Project Manager  
Douglas Hummel, Office of Rights of Way  
Dean Cerasoli, District Engineer  
Erik A. Jarboe, Project Engineer  
Manny D. Pires, Design Engineer

City of Middletown:

Mayor Daniel T. Drew  
Joseph J. Samolis, Chief of Staff  
Michiel Wackers, Director of Planning, Conservation & Development  
Bruce Driska, Middletown Planning

***Council Members:***

Carl R. Chisen (D)  
David Bauer (R)  
Deborah Kleckowski (R)  
Gerald E. Daley (D)  
Grady L. Faulkner Jr. (D)  
Hope Kasper (D)  
James B. Streeto (D)  
Mary Bartolotta (D)  
Robert P. Santangelo (D) – Deputy Mayor  
Sandra Russo-Driska (R)  
Sebastian N. Giuliano (R)

Marie Norwood – Common Council Clerk

**Presentation:**

As per the City of Middletown request, the Meeting started at 6:00 p.m. with Department presenting the proposed conceptual plans to the city's Mayor and council members. This was followed by a public workshop, which started at 6:30 p.m.

During the workshop, the proposed plans were projected on the screen along with two paper plans displayed on the boards, where the Department personnel answered questions before the formal meeting, which started at 7:00 p.m.

The formal meeting began with Mayor Drew making a brief opening by talking about the concept project and thanking the Department of Transportation staff and all the attendees.

Mr. Will Britnell, the Principal Engineer, introduced the Department of Transportation staff, made it clear that this is just a conceptual plan, and that public input is critical for further development. Mr. Britnell also explained the comment form which can be filled out and mailed in after the meeting.

Subsequently, Mr. Erik A. Jarboe, the Project Engineer gave a slide show presentation of the proposed/concept plan, identifying the problem areas and potential solutions.

The Presentation covered the following items:

- ⇒ Location: This project is located in the City of Middletown at the Route 17 on-ramp onto Route 9 north, in the vicinity of the intersection of Harbor Drive, River Road and Union Street at Harbor Park. It is anticipated that the implementation of this project will involve other minor traffic modifications within the City's streets.
  
- ⇒ Design Features and Amenities: This concept proposes to widen the existing bridge to accommodate a full length acceleration lane and remove the stop-controlled condition. The widening of the Route 9 bridge would be facilitated by the relocation of the intersection of Union Street, Harbor Drive and River Road which is now located under the bridge. This intersection would be moved further east to the east side of Sumner Brook, which would require the construction of two new bridges, and the realignment of the three intersecting roadways.

Additionally, as part of this concept, an option to close the existing on-ramp onto Route 9 north located at the north end of Harbor Drive is being investigated by the Department. Closing this ramp would greatly reduce both the volume and speed of vehicles now utilizing Harbor Drive. This would increase safety for vehicles and pedestrians as well as transform the character of the riverfront access.

### **Comments and Questions:**

#### **Council Comments:**

Councilman Gerald E. Daley asked if the existing Harbor Drive on-ramp must be closed to accommodate the proposed acceleration lane from Route 17. Mr. Britnell made clear that there is an adequate length between the two access points to accommodate the proposed acceleration lane and that closing the Harbor Drive on-ramp is not required.

Councilman Daley also asked what constitutes support of the plan. Mr. Britnell clarified that all the comments or input from the council members, and from the public in general will be considered and investigated further during the design phase of the project;

however, the Department will take direction from the First Elected Official, (the Mayor) prior to pursuing the actual design phase of the project. Later, Mayor Drew added that public insight is very important and he encouraged all to send comments to his office or directly to the Department.

Councilman Grady L. Faulkner Jr. questioned whether the Department has anticipated or developed any plans to handle traffic during the events which take place at the Riverfront. Mr. Britnell explained that specific events have not been discussed, but this will be investigated during the preliminary design phase should the project move forward.

Councilman David Bauer asked whether it was possible to create an at-grade intersection of Route 17 and East Main Street as proposed in a past alternative. Mr. Britnell expressed that the existing topography would not allow the at-grade intersection in conjunction with the existing Route 17/Route 9 interchange.

Councilman Sebastian N. Giuliano asked whether Harbor Drive could be eliminated entirely, expanding the area of the riverfront park. Department staff explained this suggestion had not been previously considered. The elimination of the roadway may be feasible; however the access to the businesses and boat houses would be a concern.

Councilwoman Mary Bartolotta questioned whether the proposed improvement will impact the number of crashes at the site in question. In response, Mr. Britnell explained that 96% of the reported crashes are rear-end type which are directly a result from the stop-controlled on-ramp. He indicated that removing the stop sign and transforming that on-ramp into a typical on-ramp will substantially decrease the number of crashes.

### **Public Comments:**

A member of the public questioned how the proposed project will affect Sumner Creek. Mr. Jarboe stated that Sumner Creek will be disturbed during the construction of the two proposed bridges that span across the Creek, as well as removing the existing bridge carrying River Road over the watercourse. He explained that coordination will take place with the DEEP and Army Corps and all necessary permits will be acquired. The environmental impact will be minimized to the extent possible.

Several members of the public questioned the effectiveness of the proposed traffic signals at the intersection of Route 17 and Main Street Extension. It was explained that a traffic analysis had been performed to determine the adequacy of the existing intersections. The analysis shows that the installation of these traffic signals will improve the operations at the intersections. It was also explained that the proposed traffic signals will be coordinated to one another and to nearby existing signals to increase the efficiency of the corridor. Additionally, the Department indicated that in lieu of traffic signals, roundabouts were also analyzed. Roundabouts would perform better from a vehicle traffic standpoint and have significant advantages to both pedestrians and bicyclists. Therefore, they will be considered during the design phase.

The owner of the business located at the southeast corner of the intersection of Union Street and DeKoven Drive asked how vehicle traffic will be informed that there will be no access to Route 9 through the Harbor Park on-ramp after its closure. The Department responded that traffic signs will be implemented and installed to redirect traffic to access Route 9 through other points.

One member of the public asked whether there is a possibility to keep both on-ramps opened. The Department explained that although it is preferred to remove the Harbor Drive on-ramp onto Route 9 north, it could remain as there is an adequate length to accommodate the proposed acceleration lane in between the two on-ramps. It is preferred however to eliminate the Harbor Drive on-ramp due to its close proximity to the proposed Route 17 on-ramp. Additionally, the removal of the ramp creates a safer area for bicycles and pedestrians by changing the purpose of Harbor Drive from highway access to a low speed cul-de-sac.

Some of the residents expressed their concerns on how this proposed plan could adversely impact traffic operations, speed, and volume on High Street and Loveland Street. They questioned whether or not the traffic study encompasses those areas. The Department agreed to expand the study area to cover those streets in question.

A member of the public asked whether improvements could be incorporated to the existing bituminous walk along the westbound portion of Route 17 from Main Street Extension to South Main Street. Mr. Jarboe stated that improvement to the subject walk is not currently included as it is outside the scope of the work; however, the Department will investigate this during the design phase.

One of the residents questioned whether the proposed Harbor Drive will accommodate emergency vehicles. It was explained that the roadway will be designed to accommodate emergency vehicles including fire trucks. Access to Route 9 north for emergency vehicles would be available from the Route 17 on-ramp.

One resident asked whether there is a more detailed explanation of the redistributed volumes in order to get a better understanding of the anticipated changes. Mr. Britnell explained that the existing and adjusted turning volumes are available for review.

There was also a question concerning Cooley Avenue's capacity to handle any additional anticipated traffic. Mr. Britnell explained that the increase in traffic on Cooley Avenue is not a significant increase; however required improvements will be further investigated during the design phase.

Mayor Drew closed the meeting by expressing his gratitude to Department staff and to all the attendees for their participation on the meeting.

In general, the concept was well-received by those in attendance. The formal portion of the meeting was completed by 8:00 p.m.