

**Route 9W Corridor Study
Study Advisory Committee Meeting
Bethlehem Town Hall
October 26, 2006
4:00 PM**

Draft Meeting Notes

SAC Attendees:

Keith Bennett, Town Resident
Anne Benware, CDTC
Mike Daley, Town Resident
David Gehrs, CDTA
Linda Jasinski, Town Resident
Jeff Lipnicky, Town Planner
Dave Jukins, CDTC
Peter Lauricella, Town Resident
Susan Olsen, NYSDOT Region 1 Planning
Darlene Valet, Town Resident

1. Draft Route 9W Corridor Profile Review. Changes to the draft profile were noted.

These include:

- additional language inserted at the beginning of the report to provide regarding the study purpose and general direction.
- incorporating comments from Town staff which included factual corrections, etc.
- digital orthophotos overlaid with driveway locations, land use type and volumes providing a picture of what's going on along the corridor regarding land use/conflicts.
- a daily traffic map and graphics to illustrate how daily corridor traffic compares to CDTC's standards and thresholds for practical capacity.
- incorporation of data and analysis for additional intersections that weren't included in the previous draft (such as the Bypass/jughandle, Magee Dr.).
- some additional information to the crash analysis regarding the few bike/ped crashes.
- general document cleanup/reorganization for improved readability.
- additional information on previous studies and planning efforts.

A summary of the main points regarding existing conditions along the Route 9W Corridor was also reviewed, including:

Land use and development patterns along the corridor can be said to be primarily auto-oriented, especially within the northern section of the corridor. Within this section, while the buffering of the larger retail uses from the street has lessened the visual impact from the roadway of the large parking lots and big box structures themselves, the site layouts in this area make it difficult to reach destinations via means other than the private motor vehicle. In other sections as some individual residential structures with individual driveways have converted to commercial uses in a strip along the corridor, parcels have not been

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interconnected resulting in numerous nonresidential driveways sometimes close to the functional areas of intersections. Many residential uses remain along the corridor with the challenge being continued livability of the corridor as traffic volumes and additional development build over time. Selkirk livability is an issue due to truck traffic relative to residential uses.

There are a mix of land uses with various setbacks and architectural styles. Design guidelines are helpful to foster the type and form of development desired by the community.

Wetlands are a constraint that will need to be considered relative to future development.

The roadway works pretty well for most of the day except for the afternoon peak hour between the Bypass and Feura Bush Rd. largely because there is a good amount of activity that generates a lot of trips and also because there are 3 traffic signals within this area (soon to be 4). In terms of overall capacity, we have more than enough to accommodate development in the short term as long as we have properly designed intersections, well timed signals or better yet roundabouts; if managed well, this corridor can work well into the future without doing that much to it. As mentioned above, truck traffic/livability issues in Selkirk a problem.

Transit Service is playing a larger role today than it did four years ago. Today CDTA serves 12,000 passengers a month up from 4,000 when the fixed route service first started. Transit service is an opportunity as it not only provides an important travel choice for residents of the Town but also provides access to jobs, and travel options for those without access to or ability to use motor vehicles.

Walking and biking along the corridor is not accommodated very well. We are making incremental improvements bit by bit as new, larger developments come in and we are doing a better job of marking crosswalks at intersections. However, we have a long way to go to “complete the street”.

Along portions of the corridor there are numerous driveways and large undefined continuous curb cuts which not only contribute to crashes but are visually unappealing and make for a difficult walking and bicycling environment. Typical of any corridor of this character, crashes are common with several areas exceeding the statewide average crash rates for similar facilities. These crashes correlate for the most part with proliferation of driveways as these create a lot of conflicts.

With respect to the visual environment, the residential uses along the corridor are pretty attractive, if you take the street environment away. However, many commercial uses, particularly those built prior to the year 2000, are typical strip-type developments which utilize the typical cookie cutter franchise approach to design that some consider unattractive. Some of the newer developments are more architecturally pleasing but what they often lack is integration into the surrounding neighborhoods with no connections for pedestrian access so that they are mostly oriented to the auto. The town has done a good job at trying to address access issues and appearance to the best they can. While berms are not loved by everyone, these provide a buffer to mask the sea of parking in front of the big box developments. Other ways to enhance the visual environments would include improved site design.

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The Town's LUMAC, Comprehensive Plan, the old 9W study, and CDTC's New Visions, all advocate for better site design and traffic management. Some of the recommendations of the previous 9W study have been implemented such as the treatment at the jughandle (used to be unsignalized now signalized as a result of recommendations in the previous study).

There was discussion of transit on 9W, its benefits to the community at large and its future. It was mentioned that there is no downside to enhancing transit service along 9W due in part to the fact that what's needed to enhance it is better site design that is pedestrian friendly. To make sites accessible to transit they should be designed with transit and pedestrian access in mind during the planning stages; if this is done there should be no additional cost. It was stated that some residents like the 9W CDTA service because they can now ride the bus to downtown Albany from Glenmont.

Other comments on the 9W Corridor existing conditions profile included:

- The development table is meant to indicate general scale and location of potential future developments, not specifics as projects are prone to change. The scale and location are important inputs to the traffic model being developed as part of this corridor study to examine the potential impacts of future development on existing roadways and various alternative locations of the Selkirk Bypass as we get in to evaluating those in upcoming work and SAC meetings. Comments were made regarding the potential for industrial/tech parks in various locations (i.e. Wemple Rd., Creble Rd.) and how these would be influenced by the ultimate location of the bypass and potential Thruway interchange.
- General information about pavement condition should be included.
- Sight distance/steep grades in various locations (Creble Rd southbound, between Feura Bush and Wemple, at Beacon, etc) along with travel speeds and volumes are likely contributing factors to the crashes occurring in these areas.
- Maps need to include better keys, be cross-referenced and made larger.

Any additional comments/corrections or other suggested changes to the profile should be sent to Jeff Lipnicky soon so that the document can be finalized and posted on the Town's website.

NYSDOT Roundabout Unit Presentation and Discussion

NYSDOT staff Tom Kligerman and Rich Schell provided the group with a 45 minute presentation on roundabouts including what they are, what they are not, and where they have been and are being built within the region. The benefits of roundabouts including additional intersection capacity, reduced delay, significant decreases in crashes, especially injury and fatality crashes, enhanced aesthetics and traffic calming were explained. Results from a recent before and "after" travel time survey for the almost complete set of 5 roundabouts in Malta were discussed; these results show a 4 minute reduction in delay during the pm peak hour compared to the before condition. Such a reduction has notable air quality and time savings benefits. The presentation also included video showing various users maneuvering through roundabouts including large trucks, snow plows, school buses/school traffic, and

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pedestrians. Comments from the group centered on how roundabouts could be incorporated into 9W.

Discussion on Background Reading Materials

There was brief discussion of the background reading materials. It was emphasized that these materials were meant to provide some additional information on some of the technical basis for ratings included in the profile as well as a sense of some of the newer planning approaches being used around the country.

Public Comment

Two members of the public had comments. These included an endorsement of roundabouts as intersection treatments and comments about the future location of the Selkirk Bypass. The group was urged to look at bypass alignments that would take trucks more directly to the Thruway from their point of origin and vice versa to reduce truck travel on other roadways in the Town, as this is an issue important to Town businesses/truckers and residents alike. According to the speaker, this would focus a new bypass near Creble Road.

Next Steps

The consultant, along with CDTC and Town staff, will continue working on the growth scenario/traffic forecasts and summary of Selkirk Bypass work done to date. That information, along with initial discussions about the Corridor vision and planning principles, and planning for the public workshop will be the subject of our next SAC meeting to be held Monday, November 20th. Jeff will confirm the meeting date and time. The group would like to meet no earlier than 5 pm next time. A tentative date for the first public workshop is December 4th.