

**Department of Transportation
State Project No. 0170-3480
Proposed road diet on Route 349 (Eastern Point Road) between
Chester Street and Benham Road in the City of Groton
Virtual Public Informational Meeting
October 5, 2020 - 6:00 p.m.
MS Teams Live Event and YouTube Live**

Report of Meeting

In Attendance: There were approximately 16 people in attendance for this event including Mayor Keith Hedrick and Councilor Aundre Bumgardner. The remaining attendees were residents or bicycle advocates.

Presentation: The meeting went live at 5:45 p.m. with an informative introduction slide for attendees to view before the event began. The official start of the meeting was at 6:00 p.m. with an introduction from the Department's Consultant Engineer Christopher Granatini, who also covered the process for how attendees could interact with the project team. Consultants Chris Granatini, Michael Morehouse and Parker Sorensen gave a 35-minute PowerPoint presentation, followed by a Question and Answer session. Joseph and Ouellette were also present and involved with the event on behalf of the Department.

The presentation covered the following items:

- The project history and location of the project limits. The background of steps and traffic analysis process taken to evaluate Route 349 as an eligible road diet segment were discussed. Crash history within the project limits was discussed as well.
- The proposed design was discussed next, including key design elements, project constraints, costs, and options for implementation.

Comments and Questions: Questions regarding bicyclists and roadway lane design were most prominent. The comments/questions are summarized below:

1. **Chat question:** DOT's current standard for 2-lane state roads is 11' width. This helps slow traffic speeds as described in the presentation. His examples show 10.5' and 10' wide lanes. Roads across the state are being re-striped for 11' lanes. Why 12' lanes?

Response: Chris Granatini responded that bicycles traveling in shoulders adjacent to 10'-11' lanes undesirable. We are seeking to provide a shoulder width that is uniform and consistent. Wider shoulders may also inadvertently encourage parking.

2. **Chat question:** 349 was identified as the Eastern Shoreline Path in this area, a priority bike facility. This is documented in the SCCOGs bike/ped plan, previously provided to the Department. We would like buffered bike lanes striped in this project.

Response: Chris Granatini responded that given the current width of Eastern Point Road, it is not possible to provide buffered bike lanes and also accommodate the 2 travel lanes, as the existing roadway cross-section is not wide enough, and the project does not include roadway widening.

3. **Chat question:** Will the white lines be painted on the road? For some reason the white lanes were not painted on the road just south of the project area.

Response: Chris Granatini responded that yes, this will be completed as part of the Paving project. If the road diet is endorsed by the City, the State would implement the road diet concept in the spring once the pavement markings can be applied (they will be temporary markings until then). The focus of this study is the section being discussed, not the area to the south.

4. **Chat question:** Earlier this year, an employee at Electric Boat was tragically struck and killed by a speeding motor vehicle on this very road. What considerations are being given to improving the Chester St./Eastern Pt Rd. intersection to make it safer for pedestrians?

Response: Chris Granatini responded that the scope of this project was to identify corridors that are candidates for road diets. The section of Route 349 at the south end of the study corridor (at this intersection). The JLUS study called out for specific pedestrian safety improvements, so that resource should be used to come up with recommendations for pedestrian traffic.

5. **Chat question:** Please consider lane reductions at the intersections to accommodate a bike lane through the intersections. Dropped bike lanes are a poor accommodation for cyclists.

Response: Chris Granatini responded that the ability to reduce the lane widths in the intersections to provide a continuous bike lane through the intersection would require physical roadway modifications, including roadway widening, something that's much more significant in terms of project scope than this study. If the City or region wanted to incorporate this as part of a larger safety project, it could be done under that.

6. **Chat question:** Did the engineering study model elimination of turn lanes at Chester and Benham Roads? Please add to my previous question - Elimination of the right turn lanes would allow continuation of bike shoulder up to each intersection.

Response: Chris Granatini responded that yes, during the traffic engineering analysis, both the existing lane-use (left/right and left lane) and revised lane-use (exclusive left and exclusive right) were modeled at Chester Street. No changes are being proposed at Benham Road. In response to the second part of the question, intersection geometry would have to be reviewed/redesigned to make such a change.

7. **Chat question:** Will bicycle markings be applied on the shoulders?

Response: Chris Granatini responded that it is not part of the current plan to do this at this point. The application of painted bike markings could be a project that the City would pursue under encroachment permit, which would require them to maintain the markings. The Department does not install these markings.

8. **Chat question:** How will cyclist navigate through the northern end of the project area where they need to cross an automobile right turn lane?

Response: Chris Granatini responded that cyclists would need to exit the shoulder area and merge with the stream of traffic to pass thru the intersection.

9. **Chat question:** I respectfully challenge that the road is not wide enough to accommodate increased bicycle traffic. You have proposed three 12' travel lanes. You can reduce to two 12' travel lanes and have at least 5'-6' bicycle lane with a 2' stripped buffer. Why is this not feasible? I am sorry. I meant 10.5' wide lanes travel lanes.

Response: Chris Granatini responded that 6' shoulders are being proposed with 12' lanes. Proposing to eliminate 3 lanes to go down to 2 lanes with wider shoulders. Given these dimensions, we cannot fit the additional 4' of total stripped buffer within the constraints of the

roadway. Regarding the 10.5' travel lanes, a previous response mentioned why 12' lanes are desirable. All of these comments will be used to come up with a final design, as well as for discussions with the City.

10. **Chat question:** The proposed x-section at the north and south ends squeezes bicyclists by eliminating the "shoulder" down to almost zero space. This is a safety risk.

Response: Chris Granatini responded that a similar question has been answered previously in the presentation. Impossible to fit within the existing cross-section without eliminating lanes or doing a roadway widening.

11. **Chat question:** 11' lanes would result in 7' each side that could be subdivided into 5' bike lanes and 2' striped buffer strips. This would discourage parking or passing.

Response: Chris Granatini responded that the cross-section will be revisited with the Department to discuss this.

12. **Chat question:** Will some suggestions made tonight be factored into a final design decision?

Response: Chris Granatini responded that the reason for this PIM is to get public input to use in making an informed decision, and to get the endorsement of the City prior to implementing any final designs. The comment period extends until October 19 to give people a chance to be heard, at which time the Department compiles the comments and shares them with the City to either provide the endorsement or not be involved with the road diet project.

13. **Chat question:** Will heavy truck movements from development at Electric Boat delay final pavement markings?

Response: Chris Granatini responded that the corridor has been paved and temporary pavement markings have been installed as of now. This was done so that the final pavement markings can be installed by the spring. The pavement markings are not dependent on the Electric Boat project.

14. **Email question:** If the road diet is not completed this year can it be revisited in future years after construction is completed at Electric Boat Shipyard?

Response: Chris Granatini responded that yes, the road diet can be revisited in the future when pavement markings are being put down, or the next time there is a pavement project in the area. Markings are not permanent, so they can always be changed back if necessary.

15. **Chat question:** Will there be additional crosswalks installed? Pedestrians have long distances to walk between existing crosswalks.

Response: Chris Granatini responded that there are currently no plans to install additional crosswalks.

16. **Email comment:** With two lanes and Large tractor trailers entering Electric Boat's south yard there will be horrendous roadway backups. These large trucks currently use one of the of the two current southbound lanes to park while waiting to enter Electric Boat. There can be three or four of these trucks waiting up to half an hour causing no traffic flow in a two lane diet which is totally unsat. I have lived on this street for 47 years and everything is fine. Don't change something that doesn't need fixing.

Response: Chris Granatini responded that this is valuable information for the project team to have and will factor into the decision making process.

The meeting ended at 7:15 pm after all questions were answered. Attendees were reminded to fill out the survey and that the comment period would be open until October 19 should anyone wish to submit after further comments or questions to the project email or phone number.