

**Department of Transportation
State Project No. 0134-0148
Rotary Upgrade to A Modern Roundabout
In the Town of Stafford**

**Virtual Public Informational Meeting
July 29, 2021 - 6:00 p.m.
MS Teams Live Event and YouTube Live**

Report of Meeting

In Attendance:

- DOT State Highway Design
 - Michael Cherpak – Project Manager
 - Nicholas Ivanoff – Project Engineer
 - Haseeb Ahmad – Project Designer
- DOT Traffic Engineering
 - Michael Chachakis – Project Engineer
- DOT Office of Rights-of-Way
 - Dennis McDonald – ROW Coordinator

There were 60 people in attendance for this event including the First Selectman from the Town of Stafford (Town), Ms. Mary Mitta.

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 Mr. Michael Cherpak. Following the introduction, First Selectman Mitta said a few words in support of the project and thanked the project team for their work. Mr. Cherpak thanked the First Selectman and covered the process for how attendees can interact with the project team. Mr. Nicholas Ivanoff and Mr. Haseeb Ahmad gave an approximately 30-minute PowerPoint presentation on project **0134-0148 – Rotary Upgrade To A Modern Roundabout**

The presentation covered the following items:

- ⇒ The project location, existing conditions, and points of interest within the project site. The differences between a rotary and what it means to upgrade an intersection into a modern roundabout. Deficiencies with existing rotary and the crash history within the project limits were presented as well as the painted roundabout interim solution installed in summer 2020.
- ⇒ The proposed design was discussed including key design elements such as geometry changes, the proposed splitter islands, and truck apron. Changes to the Town Hall driveway, the proposed parking lot, the bump-outs on Main Street, and their benefits were discussed as well.

⇒ ROW impacts, project cost, utility coordination, construction considerations, and project schedule were summarized before the Question and Answer session began.

Comments and Questions: Questions regarding the proposed parking lot and impacts to specific properties were most prominent. The comments/questions are summarized below:

1. If bump-outs are constructed adjacent to each of the six crosswalks shown in the aerial photo, how will the State of Connecticut (State) effectively clear around them during snowstorms?

Response: The State plows the State routes while the Town plows the on-street parking and the sidewalks. This would continue to be the case after the construction of this project. The Town has agreed to remove the snow in and around the sidewalks, bump-outs, and on-street parking.

2. Will the creation of the parking area have any affect or conflict with the current stonework, the clock, and the stone retaining wall? Also, how many parking spaces will be eliminated due to the bump-outs and curb changes?

Response: Approximately 11 parking spaces can be accommodated in the proposed parking lot. The design still needs to be refined in the area however, the clock and the stonework will not be impacted. The parking lot would only occupy the gravel area adjacent to the stonework. Regarding the loss of on-street parking, preliminary findings show that approximately 7 spaces are being affected due to the bump-outs and curb changes. With the installation of the proposed parking lot, there would be a net increase of approximately 4 spaces.

3. How will I get out of the Town Hall parking lot if you closed the exit?

Response: Traffic circulation within the Town Hall parking lot will be in the same fashion as it is today. A few spaces on the western side of the lot will be affected. Traffic circulation will be in the direction of the existing arrows and drivers will exit the lot using the bi-directional driveway. The existing island in the parking lot will be removed to accommodate the proposed sidewalk and the crosswalk.

4. Is it possible to find parking off Main Street? I fear that paving the vacant lot for a parking lot misses a great opportunity for a more climate friendly green space in downtown that would attract people.

Response: The State recognizes the need for, and the limited availability of parking in the vicinity of the project. The Town has also explicitly stated that the loss of parking is a major problem. The proposed parking lot is presented as an idea to mitigate the parking loss created by the new curb lines and bump-outs. The Town's approval is needed to proceed with the design. If the Town is not supportive of turning the vacant lot into a parking lot, other options can be explored.

5. How many property owners will be affected by rights of way acquisitions for this project?

Response: Rights of way involvement on this project is very minimal. The only potential acquisitions would be a small sliver of property that would be needed to accommodate the curb line at the corner of the Police Station. Sidewalk amendments on private property will be done as a right to reconstruct sidewalk. Easements are not expected for the sidewalk work. There is also a possibility of an easement to install an impact attenuator with a railing device to protect the bridge abutment on River Road. The State will coordinate with the respective property owners regarding impacts to private property

6. Why do we need sidewalk from City Hall to the gas station? The gas station has been closed for two years.

Response: The State wants to provide sidewalk connections to the best of its ability. These connections can be provided at a relatively low cost and the State feels that this project is the best time to provide this connection.

7. You mentioned an analysis of a full traffic light (at Spring Street) that you wish to install. You say it will not adversely affect the flow of traffic through the roundabout. Would you please discuss?

Response: It is a separate project that will replace the flashing beacon and the railroad crossing equipment at the intersection of Spring Street and Main Street. To prevent traffic on Main Street from backing up in to the roundabout due to a red light, the signal will be fully actuated. The light on Main Street will stay green unless a user on Spring Street or the parking lot will call in their phase to give themselves the green light. Detection will be installed on Main Street to ensure that the red light does not cause the queue on Main Street to back up into the roundabout. The signal will be designed using year 2040 projected volumes. The analysis considers the traffic on Spring Street, Main Street, the driveway on the west side of Spring Street, and the proposed parking lot.

8. Is there a location that being considered for construction staging area? Will that affect any current businesses or occupied properties?

Response: Typically, the District's Construction Office looks for construction equipment and material laydown areas. The design team focuses on constructability of the project. The roundabout is expected to be constructable with minimal interruption to the operation of the intersection during construction. Road closures and detours are not expected. There might be occasional night work or alternating one-way traffic during construction. Details on construction staging will be finalized in the final design phase.

9. Has additional green space been considered for the empty lot on Main Street?

Response: The vacant lot was identified as an option to mitigate parking loss. However, if there is high opposition, then other areas will be looked at for parking options. The State is trying to balance all users in the area. Discussions with the Town regarding the mitigation of parking loss will continue.

10. Would the empty lot be owned by the Town if that area is paved by the State for this project?

Response: Yes. This would be Town property and will be maintained by the Town including snow removal. The State's only involvement would be to design and construct the lot as a part of this project using State funds.

11. Did the Town request this project? If so, who initiated it? Is this a done deal?

Response: This is State-initiated project. The State identified this intersection as having deficiencies and the rotary does not function how a roundabout should. There can be significant improvements in the area by adjusting the curb lines. However, it is not a done deal. Public support and Town support are needed to move the project forward. The Town also reached out to the State to see if changes could be made to the area to prevent trucks from hitting the roof of the police station. The curb line improvements will push trucks and other heavy vehicles away from the police building.

12. Will there be a garden area that surrounds the fountain near the concrete truck apron?

Response: The fountain is historical and will not be relocated. The red area shown on the color plan, just around the fountain, could become planted. A hardscaped area was the primary option. The Town would have to agree to maintain the hardscaped areas, as well as any plantings. The State will have conversations with the Town, should the Town want something different.

13. Is there a mockup of how the fountain will look with a street view of the stamped concrete and the truck apron around it?

Response: A visual presentation has not been prepared as a part of this presentation. The State will continue to work with the Town regarding how the final treatment would look.

14. What are the rights of way impacts and how will it affect parking?

Response: There will be some right of way involvement at the corner of the police station in order to install curbing. For the rest of the project, rights of way impacts are not expected. Where the sidewalk is being impacted on private property, a right to reconstruct sidewalk will be requested from those property owners. The State can meet with individual owners to see how parking will be affected for individual properties.

15. Have you spent time watching traffic go through the rotary? Especially truck traffic?

Response: Absolutely. One of the purposes of installing the line stripping was to see how well the trucks operate the roundabout. The State is communicating with truck companies that use this roundabout frequently. Trucks going east on Main Street, turning south on to River Road, have a pattern of starting their turn close to the police station. This project pushes them north, away from the police station.

16. How will the sightlines for the left-hand movements coming from Furnace Avenue be impacted by the project?

Response: Sightlines should not be affected at all. This project is not changing anything vertically and only relocating the curb lines.

17. The truck apron in the proposed layout does not seem to be the same shape as what you have painted on the pavement. The yellow striping seems more parabolic than the round concrete truck apron shown on the color plan.

Response: The painted truck apron should match what is modeled in the color plan.

18. There's never been a problem with the rotary even when there are cars parked in front of the church. There is nothing that can be done

Response: The State will coordinate with the Church and the Town on the parking issues in front of the Church.

19. How will traffic be kept from using the Christopher Allen Bridge on Spring Street since the bridge is historic and in need of repair? Having traffic over it is a cause for concern because of the possibility of increased deterioration.

Response: There isn't anything that's stopping traffic from using that bridge today. The State can look into installing signs that encourage people to stay on River Road and Main Street.

20. Are the bump-outs completely hardscape? Or are they filled with soil or stamped concrete?

Response: The bump-outs are expected to be the same material as the adjacent concrete sidewalk.

21. Could no parking signs be clearly demarcated, serve the same purpose of bump-outs and provide sufficient visibility of pedestrians standing in the crosswalk without the added concerns of special snow management?

Response: There would be some benefits but not all as described in the presentation. The stripping does not offer the same amount of protection that a raised bump-out would. A pedestrian would feel much more safer standing on a bump-out compared to standing on paint in the roadway.

22. The plans show no parking in front of the Town Hall. If the issue is the police building getting hit a couple of times, then fix that issue. Don't mess with anything else.

Response: There is an operational issue with how the rotary is functioning. There are a lot of near misses that occur between vehicles on River Road and Main Street because drivers are failing to yield due to the low visibility of the yield signs. A Bike and Pedestrian needs assessment shows there is a lot of pedestrian traffic on Main Street, and the crash history revealed crash involving a pedestrian resulting in an injury. For those reasons, bump-outs are recommended for this location.

23. Speed limit is not explicitly mentioned in the project. Drivers do not follow the posted 25 m.p.h. speed limit. What speed limit will be posted for the roundabout?

Response: The speed limits are not being changed in this project nor are speed limits typically signed through the roundabout. Designers look at the shortest easiest path through the roundabout to determine how effective the design is at decelerating vehicles. The analysis performed shows curbing and horizontal geometry do a good job of slowing drivers down as they approach and circulate the roundabout.

24. Why do you have a crosswalk ending where police vehicles come and go?

Response: People tend to cross at the shortest distance. The State expects the volume of police vehicles will be much less compared to the volume of vehicles in a commercial driveway. Conversations with the Town and the Church will continue to see where the most ideal spot is to install a crosswalk.

25. Who would be responsible for the snow removal in the proposed parking lot?

Response: The Town will be responsible for snow removal and maintaining the parking lot. The State would burden the cost for designing and constructing the lot.

26. How many parking spaces will be lost in front of the ice cream shop?

Response: Parking will remain the same. There will be some hardscape between the roadway and the sidewalk near the ice cream shop.

27. Will a hearse be able to park in front of the Church during a funeral service?

Response: The State will coordinate with the Church to see what their operational needs are and see how to best accommodate them moving forward.

28. Has the funding been secured for this project?

Response: This project will use State and Federal funding. This project is currently in the design phase and will seek approval for the construction funding.

29. Will the Town be upgrading the utilities within the project limits?

Response: There are not many utility impacts. The State will coordinate with the utility companies if there are any utility upgrades within the area.

30. A specific business owner asked how the project will impact their property. The owner also provided their contact information.

Response: Property owners are encouraged to share their contact information, along with any questions or concerns, so that the State can address those concerns.

31. Can the flagpole on East Main Street be replaced?

Response: The pole would be outside the project limits. There is no work planned to replace the flagpole.

The meeting ended at 7:45 p.m. after all questions were answered. Attendees were reminded that the comment period would be open until August 12, 2021, should anyone wish to submit any further comments or questions to the project e-mail or phone number.