



City of Chicopee
City Council
Public Works Committee

Members

Fred Krampits, Chair
Gary Labrie, Vice Chair
Bill Courchesne
Mary Beth Pniak-Costello
Shane Brooks

APPROVED 11-14-2022

MINUTES
May 5, 2022

The following are the minutes of a public hearing held Thursday, May 5, 2022 at 6:30 PM in the Auditorium, 2nd Floor, 17 Springfield Street, Chicopee, MA 01013.

Members Present

Krampits, Labrie, Courchesne (zoom), Pniak-Costello

Members Absent

Brooks

Also Present

Dan Garvey (Associate City Solicitor), Councilor Zygarowski, Doug Ellis (City Engineer), Councilor Laflamme, Elizabeth Batista (DPW Superintendent), Councilor Tillotson, John Beaulieu (Assistant DPW Superintendent), Victor Anop (Assessor)

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM

In compliance with the Open Meeting Law the Chairman asked if anyone in the audience was recording the meeting. Hearing none the meeting continued.

ITEM #1

BE IT ORDERD THAT the Public Works Subcommittee meet on Thursday, May 5, 2022 at 6:30 PM as an informational session to discuss the 609061-CHICOPEE-INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS AT MONTGOMERY STREET, GANBY ROAD, AND MCKINSTRY AVENUE Round-About project.

Councilor Laflamme stated that he and many other Councilors have received calls on this intersection. Many of us could not make it tonight due to another meeting. He stated he is glad to have this meeting to discuss updates. He explained there was a little explosion outside and the system went down up top but, the IT Department has it up and running.

Elizabeth Batista stated she wanted to have an in-person meeting so we could show you some graphics and answer questions. We have here also our consultant from VHB will also show you a video of how vehicles will operate around the series of round-abouts. She stated we do have **John Freeman** from Mass DOT here.

Someone from VHB stated we will be going over some intersection improvements on the intersection of Montgomery, Granby and McKinstry. Just to make some formal introductions, Van Kacoyannakis P.E. IMSA II – Project Manager VHB, Matt Chase P.E. P.T.O.E Principal-in-Charge VHB. John Freeman Project Manager from MASSDOT. He stated that tonight we're going over the project history, goals and needs of the project, improvements and what our next steps are.

He stated it's about six hundred feet along Montgomery Street going from south to north. About six hundred feet south to the entrance to the Mass Pike in extending approximately three hundred feet past the CVS driveway on Montgomery Street. Granby Road approximately seven hundred feet from the intersection of Montgomery Street heading north easterly, Granby Road north easterly through the intersection to Granby Road past the variety store on the corner and a short section of McKinstry. He stated back in May of 2017 the City of Chicopee imitated a feasibility study and they hired VHB to perform. He stated March 2018 Mass DOT approved the project for transportation improvement plan to be funded. April 2019 a road safety audit was conducted, and a report was prepared. In October of 2019 a ten percent design was submitted through the Mass DOT it was reviewed and there were some revisions that were done February 2021. He stated we then moved to twenty five percent design and in March we had a design public hearing. He stated in 2009 this intersection was studied also by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission; they did a safety and transportation study, so this area has been looked at for quite a bit of time. He stated a road safety audit participants were the; Planning Commission, DPW, Engineering, City Police Department, PVPC, VHB and Mass DOT. He stated that this is a high crash area and there was one hundred and seventy-four crashes within the project limits from 2014 to 2016. There are lack of pedestrian and bicycle accommodations and traffic congestion. Project goals and needs are to improve modes for all transportation, mobility improvement for pedestrians and bicycles, reduce vehicle conflicts and pavement rehabilitation. He stated we are replacing two traffic signals, prohibit left turns within project limits, provide off road accommodations for pedestrians and bicycles. Just to go over some round-about safety; they reduce vehicle speeds, promote traffic calming, minimize conflict points and reduce crash severity. He stated it will be a peanut shaped round-about at the intersection of Granby and Montgomery Street, it's a mixed lane round-about. The one lane round-about is just north of the Big Y and gas station. The third round-about is at the intersection of McKinstry and Granby Road it's also a single lane round-about. There will be a median between the north and southbound traffic on Montgomery Street limiting left turn lanes exiting the shopping plaza. The first round-about is the Mass Pike assess road with Montgomery Street it will be a single land round-about. There will be share use path starting on the Montgomery Street extending towards Grandy Road. Also, a shared use path on the east side extending towards Granby Road, some sections are eight and ten feet so it will provide room for bicyclist and pedestrians in both directions. At each location we're providing an accessible ramp for pedestrians and cyclist with a flashing beacon at each one of these locations. He stated they will provide a little bit more width for the tractor trailers that will be running through these. They also provide a cut through for emergency apparatus. He stated they will supply some landscaping in the area and plenty of green space. The third round-about is as McKinstry and Granby Road, it's a single lane round-about for the Granby Road and McKinstry approaches from Montgomery Street and there's two lanes approaching the round-about but it's providing more of a right turn for directs access. Rapid flash beacons will be provided in all of the pedestrian crosswalks. We are going to continue with design development the next steps are; review and respond to comments received from this meeting. Continue with design 75% design submittal, 100 % design submittal, PS&E submittal. ROW coordination, advertise project for construction 2026.

Public Input

Beverly Bellavance, 41 Barby stated she has lived in Chicopee almost her entire life so using rotaries is nothing new to us. What you've done is taken a very dangerous intersection and made it extremely interesting but safe. Having lived in Chicopee she has become an expert on rotaries and roundabouts. She stated the James Street flow of traffic within that rotary is excellent. It accommodates quickly and safely in all one hundred directions. Therefore, considering the current proposed round-about it's an excellent idea to accommodate the heavy traffic flow. It creates a constant flow that we don't have right now. If that is what the engineers have assessed for our safety, then so be it and remember the State is paying for this. She stated to our abutting business if asked I'm sure they have already come up with a plan, solution or agreement that they could be happy with.

Steve Frederick 204 Mayflower, stated that he was the former city Engineer for Chicopee for seventeen years. He stated he came up with this peanut design. He stated that the last safety improvements were made by Councilor Tillotson and myself, we made a six second advance on Granby Road making a left turn onto Montgomery. Prior to that all the other developments that were happening whether it be Walmart, CVS, Walgreens, we always went to them and said, what effect are you having to this intersection and what can you do. He stated the Traffic Engineers said you can't do anything. Time went on and more accidents. We had some bad intersections and took care of those. We looked at other options, making McKinstry a one-way and other scenarios and could not come up with something. When he came up with the peanut round-about he shopped it around with his colleagues at Pioneer Valley Planning and they said you may want to take it to the next design. He stated the whole time we were looking at this and I'm sure they can give you more statistics, this probably won't solve the volume issue that exists in this intersection. We did find the safety factor and off-peak efficiency. Right now, the intersection is time based, one intersection goes for a certain amount of time and the next one goes on and it has a long cycle length. For everyone to get a green cycle it's over three- and one-half minutes long. He stated the off-peak efficiency will be approved here and the safety part of it. He stated if you're looking for the federal funds you are going to have the bicycle and pedestrian accommodation. He just wanted to give some background of the twenty years of how this has been going on. He stated VHB has some success with the round-about in Worcester and Atkins it's working out well.

Lorraine Baron 95 Cyman Drive, stated that this will illuminate all the traffic lights however, people will have to yield. You're still going to have some danger with people not paying attention. She stated that this looks good to her. The only problem she has with the existing area is when she's coming up Granby Road from Chicopee Center, when you approach the lights it's very confusing to direct the traffic with arrows.

Elizabeth Batista stated yes there are arrows. She stated that she and the City Engineer will look at modifying the line striping. She stated that we actually put up more signs than we mark on pavement, because pavement markings have to be maintained and they do wear away. She stated right now at that intersection you have a sign that has lights on it and we may not be able to put up a sign there for left or right hand turns. They are older structures and it may not be able to take on the weight of additional signage. In this situation they will make sure there will be plenty of signage and some pavement markings. She stated that we will look and figure out what is the appropriate situation.

Renee Lafleche 18 Mary Street stated they have been working on the bridge around the rotary and it's awful.

Raymond Burningham lives off Granby Road his major concern is going northbound off Montgomery around the Mass Pike rotary around the peanut to head down southwest on

Granby Road, this is a dangerous path. He remembers a citizen of Chicopee laid out a path to cut down on traffic, stop lights and timing and the resident was told he was only a citizen and what do you know. He stated he is a citizen and is a retired Engineer and that is dangerous, it will take life before it saves life.

David Boisselle 117 Dejordy Lane asked when the traffic study was made.

Elizabeth Batista stated that the traffic counts were taken in 2018.

David Boisselle 117 DE Jordy Lane asked you planed it for 2030.

David Boisselle stated that you mentioned it would be a more fluent process but, you have to shift from the outside lane to the inside lane. Is this four peanut process put anywhere else so we can take a look at it.

Elizabeth Batista stated it's only three roundabouts because the peanut is one and you can't cut through the middle. She stated the only reason we have a disconnect between the landscaping is for emergency cut-through to shorten response times. She stated the speed going through a roundabout is not the speed going through a straight-away. You are going to have a little bit of queuing. There is constant slow-moving traffic and reduction in speed.

David Boisselle stated that there will be a lot more rear-end accidents because it is a dart out process. This is individually controlled by driver. He stated is there a back up plan if this is a disaster.

Elizabeth Batista stated this intersection has been a nightmare for many years. What was found in the feasibility study was there was no good solution to its current layout and structure and by utilizing signals. She stated there is no way of improving timing anymore than it is. She stated that the best solution through the feasibility study was incorporating the roundabouts. She stated it rated significantly high on the safety through the DOT review process.

David Boisselle stated that the bicycle path in the center ended up being a problem. He stated where does the bicycle path fit in the process of the roundabouts and the rest areas. He was very concerned about a cyclist getting hit.

Elizabeth Batista stated that these are multi-use paths eight to ten feet wide so it can accommodate cyclist and pedestrians.

David Roziniski 200 Lambert Terrace stated that this intersection has become more of a nightmare when the turnpike stopped their toll booths. He stated this is one of the most brilliant projects I have seen in the City of Chicopee in years. He stated why can't you start it before 2026.

Elizabeth Batista stated it may be able to be moved up a little bit but, everything is approved under funding source.

Victor Anop 103 Bridal Path Road stated he really does not see this working out. The plan was made on the basis of the heaviest traffic between 4:00 and 6:00 PM. What about the Chicopee Comp traffic from 2:00 until 3:30 PM you can be backed up for ten minutes.

John Freeman stated that the volumes from the 4:00 to 6:00 PM peak period is higher than the school peak period.

Elizabeth Batista stated that we had traffic counters out there for a week and it was done during school period. She stated we have actual factual data.

Victor Anop stated he is opposed to these roundabouts and in the meantime something should be done to fix the highway for the turns to make it easier from 2022 – 2026. He stated it will eliminate a lot of the problems that we have now. He stated that you've done a good job at fixing things on Memorial Drive that were bad but in the meantime please do what you can in the city to take care of the situation to fix the left and right whether it's a sign or an arrow on the road.

Elizabeth Batista stated that the consultants here are the individuals who worked on the Memorial Drive intersection improvement projects. If you liked the improvements on Memorial Drive you can have faith that these guys know what they're doing.

Victor Anop asked how long this project is anticipated to last from start to finish.

John Freeman stated the project will start in 2026 and it will be anywhere from two to three construction seasons.

Elizabeth Batista stated they are utilizing this time to do some utility replacement. There is some aging infrastructure in there that we are going to make some repairs. She stated it will not come from DOT funding it will come from City funding.

Kenneth Kuenzel 232 Woodcrest Drive stated that this looks good. He stated Mr. Fredericks original design was good. He stated why isn't this taking the gas station, wouldn't you have more room in that opening.

Elizabeth Batista stated we originally were taking the gas station and when they were going through the design and during the review with DOT, there were certain concerns with crossings and how vehicles were flowing. We also had to make sure we had locations for pedestrians to stop because these crossings are quite long.

Kenneth Kenziel stated everyone knows how hard it is to get in and out of that gas station.

Elizabeth Batista stated that you are eliminating the left turns so you're not having those vehicles crossing through two lanes of traffic.

Kenneth Kenziel suggested changing some routes for the school busses that travel that intersection.

Elizabeth Batista stated that is for the Transportation Coordinator for the school department.

John Freeman stated that there will be some strategic construction staging for this when it is constructed. There will be a person on staff from MASS DOT on site to make sure that access to businesses and circulation for busses are maintained during construction.

Denise Cote 124 Fuller Road stated that the question was not answered earlier; has anyone seen this type of intersection in other towns or cities.

Elizabeth Batista stated in Worcester in Kelly Square they have an actual operating round-about that's the same as that peanut with a lot more traffic. It might seem a lot when you have three roundabouts, but the traffic is going to move smoother.

Denise Cote stated that you can do all the traffic studies you want but, has anybody actually seen a set up like this in action and does it actually work as the projections show.

Elizabeth Batista stated there are other roundabouts that have roundabouts in sequence. She stated that she can't speak for three. I get that it's a new concept, but it doesn't mean that it's not something that works. She would ask to just have confidence. These are licensed designers that have been doing this for thirty years, there is a lot of experience here.

Debbie Baldiga 62 Kaveney Street stated that she came in here with a very negative attitude but after seeing your plans she does not. She stated right now it's a free for all and you're taking a chance. She stated no left turns are a positive. As for road markings and signs you are slowing down the speed, people will see those road markings. She stated she sees a positive on the kids crossing from the school area. The gas station has been a failure so many times and she does not know why that's there. The positive is you are going to keep the traffic flow moving and there will be bottlenecks coming at the busy times. She stated coming from the out lane to the inner lane of the peanut will take some learning and in time people will be alright with that. She sees positives and it's the wave of the future.

Susan Keenan 405 Montgomery Street stated that she is feeling kind of positive about this She stated that she moved here three years ago and six corners in Springfield is an example and a big improvement of a round-about. She stated she lives close to the pike entrance and if you look at current condition, the turnpike entrance onto Montgomery has a stop sign if you're going to take a left, if you're going to take a right it's a yield. She stated that cars come very fast they don't yield at all and that has a big negative impact on the hashmark lines to allow for cars coming out of the shopping plaza. The second thing is in your plan you have southbound on Montgomery Street going down to a single lane. If you could consider those two things for the

next four years. There is nothing to help the people coming off of the shopping plaza or trying to take a left.

Elizabeth Batista stated we will take a look now and see if we can improve movement through there.

John Murk 21 Dowds Lane stated that his concern is the traffic that exits the shopping plaza, it's a nightmare. People are taking the Mass Pike entrance and exit there.

Elizabeth Batista stated that this will definitely be an improvement exiting the shopping center.

Ashton Malloy 114 Wellington Ave stated he is a cyclist and is excited to see that you have trail pass around. He sprained his ankle because there haven't been curb cuts. He asked if the work will be done individually or at the same time.

John Freeman from Mass DOT stated that we can't tell the contractor how to build the roundabouts. They won't necessarily be done at the same time, they will be done in staging.

Elizabeth Batista stated that the contractor will have to submit during the process of what they're scheduling, and it will all have to be approved by DOT.

Catherine Baldiga 62 Kaveney Street stated that she has lived in Chicopee her whole life and she came here with a very negative attitude. She stated when you break it all down you really see how it takes that concentrated conflict and make it a lot safer. It's a big change but a positive change.

Sharon Lapointe 80 Pennsylvania Avenue stated that if she's coming out of Big Y and wants to get to the Chicopee Falls bridge she will have to take a right and go around the peanut is that correct.

Elizabeth Batista stated yes.

Sharon Lapointe stated if she's across at BJ's Pizza and she wants to go north on Montgomery Street she will take a right and come around the round-about and go down Montgomery Street.

Elizabeth Batista stated yes that's how it's going to work.

Sharon Lapointe stated there's only one lane from Montgomery Street coming into the peanut.

Elizabeth Batista stated it merges down to one before you get here. It's one lane until you get to CVS and then it bulbs out. It will funnel to one lane into the peanut.

Sharon Lapointe was concerned the traffic will be backed up to Bridal Path.

Elizabeth Batista stated no because of constant movement throughout the round-about.

Elizabeth Batista stated there are two lanes on Granby Road going west, there's two lanes coming in going north on Montgomery, because of the volume of traffic there you have to have queuing space for them. Right now the backup is that somebody has to stop at a red light, with a round-about it will be constantly filtering in and out.

Thomas Alexopoulos 119 Leona Avenue stated that you don't have a straight flow through. If you want to go to the other side to Montgomery, you have to get to the inside lane because you have to get through from the traffic coming from Granby Road. He stated all he is saying it is not straight and easy flow as you present it, there is going to be hesitation.

Elizabeth Batista stated that the shopping mall entrances will still be utilized. We have to maintain entrances but now they will not be able to take left turns out of those.

Thomas Alexopoulos stated that the traffic from Montgomery to Granby Road is going to back up and you still have other traffic. People going through the rotary are going to back up.

Elizabeth Batista stated that the primary on this project was safety. The left turns out of that plaza are the biggest problem that we have for accidents. She stated that yes during peak times we're going to have some traffic.

Thomas Alexopoulos stated that you haven't completely alleviated all the hazards you pushed them around a little bit.

Elizabeth Batista stated that you are experiencing some traffic now and you're going to experience some traffic then, but it will be less than it is now.

John Freeman from Mass DOT stated that we are eliminating left turns which will make it more efficient. It could be inconvenient to take a right and go around the peanut. I understand what you are saying, we are shifting them to go other places on no left turns.

Thomas Alexopoulos stated you are presenting as hazard and safety free.

A Gentleman from Summit Avenue stated he has to go to McKinstry to get down to the peanut area was concerned how people will get in and out of CVS.

Elizabeth Batista stated that nothing will change on how you get in and out of CVS. She stated that's before you're entering the round-about. She stated Walgreens will be reduced down to one entrance.

Jeremy Simonich 83 Terimar Street stated coming onto Montgomery taking a left into CVS suggested a do not block the box or a turn lane. He stated possibly having a box so cars don't stop in front of CVS might alleviate those problems.

Elizabeth Batista stated that we can look into that. She stated that it's an appropriate place to put a do not block the box. It's something that can be considered, and Mass DOT will have to approve it.

Elizabeth Batista stated that she thinks this will be a positive improvement to this area.

Informational – Place on file

Councilor Roy motion to place on file – Councilor Labrie 2nd the motion – motion passed

Committee vote 3 – 0 favorable

ITEM #2

Councilor Labrie motion to approve the minutes of September 30, 2021 – Councilor Krampits 2nd the motion – motion passed

Meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.