

Stakeholder Workshop – Daytime Session

Watertown-Jefferson County Area Transportation Council
Brownville Bridge Planning Study
January 31, 2018
American Legion, Village of Brownville
2:30 – 4:00 pm



Overview

On Wednesday, January 31st, 2018 the Watertown-Jefferson County Area Transportation Council (WJCTC), the region's Metropolitan Planning Organization, hosted a stakeholder workshop at the Village of Brownville American Legion from 2:30 to 4:00 pm. The purpose of the workshop was to share information about the planning study and obtain community feedback about the replacement and possible relocation of the bridge over the Black River in Brownville, NY. The workshop was attended by public officials, agency staff and members of the community. A full list of attendees is available in Appendix A.

Project website: <http://www.wjctc.org>.

Workshop Format

Representatives of the MPO and the consultant team provided a brief presentation about the project background, scope, and timeline.

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Keith Ewald, a Project Manager with Barton & Loguidice, described that the purpose of the project, which is to study replacement and possible relocation of the bridge over the Black River in Brownville. He described the project's scope (contractual and geographical) and the project's outcome. Susan Hopkins with Highland Planning then described community engagement efforts to date, future opportunities for engagement and a timeline for the project. See the project website for a copy of the full presentation.

A brief Q&A session was held prior to the start of the discussion. During the Q&A, participants asked about the timeline for construction as well as the possibility of the current bridge's weight limit being lowered in the near future for safety reasons.

The project team responded that the construction timeline is dependent upon the final recommendations and other factors and could be in the range of three to five years. Representatives of WTCTC noted that the need for a decrease in the bridge's weight limit has not yet been identified in annual safety inspections. However, it was noted that the bridge's current sufficiency rating is acceptable for safe and structurally sound passage for passenger and commercial vehicles.

Susan Hopkins explained the meaning of the term "evaluation criteria" and the role the community would play in helping shape those criteria. Attendees were then engaged in a discussion of the following questions:

- What do you like most about the Brownville bridge in its current location? What do you like least?
- What are your biggest concerns about this project?
- What are the greatest opportunities?
- What should we avoid?



- What are the most important factors the planning and design team should consider when identifying and evaluating potential new locations for a river crossing?

A copy of the presentation slides can be found on the project website. Below is a summary of feedback received during the discussion.

Summary of Feedback

A summary of the feedback received at the daytime workshop is below.

Positive aspects of the existing bridge:

- “Nothing;”
- Central location;
- Views of the River.

Negative aspects of the existing bridge:

- Traffic is a major concern especially at peak travel hours; creates challenges for emergency vehicles that need to be able to respond in a timely manner;
- Tractor trailers sometimes get stuck and the current configuration generally heightens risk to safety of Neenah employees;
- Additionally, Neenah representatives indicated that approximately 7 – 10 industrial forklifts cross NY 12E per hour on a daily basis, which presents a serious concern for worker safety: northbound NY 12E traffic turning left to continue on NY 12E queues in front of the paper mill during peak traffic periods. Vehicles wishing to turn east onto CR 190 utilize the shoulder to pass the queued traffic on the right-hand side creating safety issues with the crossing fork trucks.
- Traffic signal lights are confusing and can create safety problems when drivers speed up to make it through the intersection before the light turns red.
- The geometry and vertical profile of the approach from Route 12F to the bridge, particularly during winter months, creates a very hazardous pass down to the bridge due to weather conditions, steep grades, and less than ideal sight lines.

Concerns about the project:

- Lengthy replacement time resulting in having current bridge being out of commission before new one is usable;
- Safety of current structure;
 - [Note: representatives of WJCTC and NYSDOT noted that regular inspections have found that the bridge is safe to cross.]

Opportunities:

- Neenah may be able to expand operations which would be a positive step for local employment;
- Neenah was Agreeable to an alternate location for the bridge, even though they send a flatbed truck over it daily to cross to the storage facility they lease on the opposite side. Neenah felt that the employee safety benefits of moving the bridge outweighed the inconvenience of forcing their truck to go around;
- Better amenities for pedestrians and cyclists and accommodation or encouragement of recreational activities like white-water rafting;
- Utility connections;
 - [Note: representatives of WJCTC and NYSDOT noted that the bridge can be designed to include requested utility connections. Replacement in-kind of existing utilities would be at

the project's expense. All or part of the cost of new/enhanced utilities would be at the utility owners expense.]

Other considerations:

- Current location is central, which is important for emergency services;
- Avoid industry;
- Complete streets treatment; tie in to possible future river trails;
- If located too far east, it will create conflicts with school during pick-up and drop-off times;
 - Chief of Police Larry Jobson (Village of Glen Park) noted that he had observed 82 private vehicles picking up students at Brownville Elementary School in one day.
- The cost in revenue of removing properties from the tax roll should be considered;
- Bridge should be kept close to current location to avoid negative impacts on commerce;
- A bridge located west of downtown Brownville would cause drivers to bypass the businesses located downtown and could negatively impact the village;
- New location should line up with an intersection;
- If new bridge has sidewalks rather than just emergency pedestrian exits (like current bridge) local government will become responsible for clearing snow and other maintenance costs which can be significant.

Possible locations:

- Old Rome State Road (Paddy Hill) / Gould Street (Village of Brownville)
- Storehouse Street (Village of Brownville)
- Brown Boulevard (Village of Brownville)
- Floral Drive (Town of Watertown)

Other project related materials can be found at: <http://www.wjctc.org>.