



LOCATION: TOWNSHIP OF READINGTON

SPONSOR: HUNTERDON COUNTY

Flemington-Whitehouse Rd. (CR 523), Pleasant Run Rd., Stanton Rd. (CR 629) and Springtown Rd. Roundabout

Public Information Center Meeting - Summary

MEETING DATE: April 3, 2019, 6:00 PM to 9:30 PM

PREPARED BY: Urban Engineers, NJTPA, Hunterdon County

The following provides a summary of the April 3, 2019, Readington Roundabout Public Information Center held at the Readington Township Administration Building. A sign-in sheet of public participants is attached. The questions and comments presented are organized below by category to reduce duplication. A comment form was provided at the PIC and is available through the County's website. Comments forms and e-mailed comments received to date are attached to this memo.

Public Participation

There was a range of response including positive, negative and undecided from the attendees regarding support of the project. Several noted that they felt more comfortable with the proposed solution following the presentation. Most appreciated the opportunity to offer their perspectives, ask questions, provide comments and be heard.

An individual inquired why the presentation materials were not provided to the public before the meeting, enabling the public to be more prepared. Presenters indicated that the intent of the PIC is to inform the public about the project as a group and offered to return for a second meeting to provide more details in response to some of the questions and comments. Presentation materials would be made available in advance of the second meeting to the extent practicable.

Presenters indicated that the information from the meeting will be available through Hunterdon County and Readington Township. Another attendee asked if a community website could be created to post comments and ask questions.

Alternatives/Project Purpose and Need

A number of the questions focused on the roundabout solution being presented. Questions and comments are attributed to the existing condition, the project delivery process, and the design features associated with the roundabout. Several attendees asked why a circle was being proposed here when many of the State's traffic circles have been removed (ex. Camden County circle). One attendee commented that other options should be considered such as tree clearing, raising the intersection or installing a traffic signal. The presenters explained that a roundabout is the safer alternative that can achieve a much higher reduction in fatal and serious injury crashes. It was also explained that this project is part of a federally funded NJDOT statewide systemic roundabout program.



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Existing Condition

There was a significant focus on vehicle speeds and accidents. One factor that most, if not all, observed is that vehicle speed is a long standing problem. Most attendees acknowledged that efforts were made previously to address the speeding concern, including advanced warning signs and enforcement but that it remains an issue. Many identified previous police enforcement, County and Township coordination. The Township Mayor interjected that the accidents did not reduce from the Township and County's efforts regarding speed control. The attendees asked for more information to be provided by the Township and requested the Police Chief attend the second meeting to discuss speeding and crashes since the installation of the advanced warning signs. One attendee asked if the signs could be moved further back to further increase advanced warning.

There was a range of comments regarding accidents, including the numbers, the severity, and the types. Most recognized the location as a significant safety concern or "very dangerous"; some avoiding the location as a route choice. One questioned that the number of accidents "seemed low" when compared to the total number of vehicles passing through the location, questioning the premise; others offered that the accidents were severe; some indicated they were in accidents where a moment of time could have changed the circumstances. One attendee commented that the improvements made to the intersection 25 years ago "were obsolete when they were created" and that the prior condition was better before those improvements were made.

Sight distance from both approaches of CR 523 was mentioned as a main safety issue for the intersection in the existing condition and for any proposed improvement. Truck and bus traffic was noted as a significant challenge. Several commented that there is a significant number of trucks and buses traveling along CR 523. Others suggested that truck and traffic is a significant contributing factor to the safety concern. Several asked if trucks could be prohibited along CR 523.

Most acknowledged that the location provides a significant challenge because of the valley condition and surrounding constraints (personal property, streams, culverts, walls and wetlands).

Weather, specifically snow or ice conditions were a concern. A comment was made that trucks may not be able to yield or stop in bad weather with the proposed roundabout.

Regarding non-vehicle use, pedestrians are not typical but bikes operate within the intersection occasionally.

Project Delivery Process

Several comments were made regarding the decision to advance a roundabout solution at the location and the appropriateness of the choice. Attendees asked if this was the only alternative studied, and questioned the roundabout safety statistics verses stop signs or signalization.

The initial discussion focused on the NJTPA safety program authorized in partnership with NJDOT and FHWA to fund the design and construction of roundabouts at locations that present systemic problems associated with challenging intersections. When more details were requested from attendees, the Project Team (Hunterdon County, NJTPA, and Urban Engineers) explained that various alternative types



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were studied before NJTPA contacted the County. Specifically, the County concluded that a roundabout option appeared to be the best option to slow traffic, avoid left turn movements, and to reduce traffic accidents. The County was hesitant about doing the project internally due to the challenges of the existing condition, mostly the environmental constraints and regulations. It was coincidental and beneficial that the NJTPA suggested this funding option. Within the current preliminary engineering phase of the effort, the Project Team discussed the project background, other alternative options, and proceeded with the County's preferred roundabout alternative. The consultants evaluated a significant number of roundabout iterations to address traffic issues, geometry, environmental constraints, and other factors.

Regarding other options to consider, some noted "rumble strips" and others questioned this option because of noise to neighbors. Several attendees wanted to slow traffic down, suggesting a signal, and others a stop sign. Conversely, some thought a stop sign would cause rear-end traffic accidents at the approaches because vehicle users would not see stopped vehicles quickly or that snow and ice conditions would make it dangerous. Others identified the "valley condition" making alternatives difficult to solve the problem.

Roundabout Design (The alternative and the features)

Several attendees offered concerns about the ability of a roundabout to operate effectively in the location considering the existing challenges. The presenters provided perspective of the roundabout as a solution including how the geometrics and operations address the systemic problems occurring today, specifically the speed and the factors attributable to severe crashes such as conflict points.

Several attendees suggested that truck traffic would "not make it" around the circle. The presenters noted that software was used to specifically evaluate truck turning movements as part of the geometric design as shown in the truck turning movements slide of the presentation. An attendee commented that if trucks have to stop to enter the roundabout, it would take them longer to start up and could cause congestion.

Attendees suggested that driver behavior would not respond appropriately to the proposed roundabout, resulting in a new concerns. One attendee commented that a signal would allow for less judgement by the driver. Another attendee identified a Wisconsin Study stating "More Crashes Fewer Injuries." The presenters were familiar with a number of Wisconsin studies and sought to identify the study assumptions noting that several efforts focused on two lane roundabouts locations. From a brief review, it appears that the data offered by the attendee does not align with the specifics of this location.



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Another attendee asked if a root cause (i.e. crash analysis) was conducted. Presenters referred back to the crash analysis slide which showed that the majority of crashes at this intersection were right angle crashes and a single lane modern roundabout is particularly well-suited to address this specific type of crash. Additionally, the presenters noted that there is significant consensus regarding the benefits of single lane roundabouts, so much so that FHWA has identified them as a proven safety countermeasure. FHWA, NJDOT and NJTPA are promoting implementation with projects like this one.

Design Elements

The following identifies comments submitted that require further details be provided. An initial response is presented to help facilitate the discussion.

1. **Future traffic projections: What rate or method of projecting future traffic and noting of high-density affordable housing projects?** More details will be provided on data analysis for traffic counts, traffic volumes at peak hours and future traffic projections in a second PIC presentation.
2. **Can the in-roadway illumination on the approaches to the existing intersection be installed as an alternative to the roundabout?** Lighting will be included in the project. The specific type of lighting referenced is typically used for crosswalks.
3. **Can we remove access to Springtown Road? Can access to Springtown Road be eliminated and the intersection reconfigured to a four-way signalized intersection?** It was considered as part of the project but was ultimately tabled because of the increased property impacts.
4. **What about a traffic signal with advanced warning signs?** The presenters reiterated the safety benefits of a roundabout over a traffic signal or the existing stop-controlled condition.
5. **Is there a hybrid design where traffic could flow on CR 523 without yielding in the roundabout?** No, this would not reduce vehicle conflicts and thus reduce right angle crashes.
6. **Will the roundabout or approaches be lighted?** The proposed solution anticipates lighting.
7. **Are Rumble Strips proposed?** There is no current plan to include rumble strips within the project. Edge and centerline rumble strips could be included as an advance element of the design if that is desired by Hunterdon County and Readington Township.
8. **Advanced warning and approach signage?** The project will include advanced warning and approach signage.
9. **Can we remove Truck Traffic?** That was not part of the project purpose and need and cannot be accomplished within this effort. It was recognized by the attendees that it is unlikely but it was brought forward to identify it as a significant contributor of the perceived challenges.
10. **How does the “valley condition” affect the project and have other roundabouts been constructed with a similar existing conditions?** The presenters acknowledged that the location is a challenge and that a significant amount of time was spent developing the presented solution. The presenters agreed to investigate whether there are locations with roundabouts that have similar existing conditions.
11. **How big is the roundabout?** Presenters discussed the non-traditional oval shape needed to fit within the topography. The approximate diameter varies from 120' to 150'.



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12. **Bicycles and pedestrians?** The presenters explained that the location does not exhibit high pedestrian foot traffic and that bicyclists can be accommodated. More perspective on the methods will be developed for future discussion.
13. **Rescue Vehicles?** The presenters explained the proposed solution can accommodate emergency vehicles. To further the topic, the Project Team will arrange a discussion with Readington Township.
14. **School bus access and vehicles crossing the intersection from homes?** The presenters explained the proposed solution can accommodate school buses and access for the property owners in close proximity to the roundabout. More perspective on the question will be developed for future discussion.
15. **Speed limits in and out of roundabout?** The presenters explained that calculations are performed that determine a vehicles fastest path and that those calculations help facilitate the geometric design decisions. More perspective on the methods will be developed for future discussion.
16. **Will there be ROW impacts to the surrounding properties that were impacted by the reconstruction of the intersection 25 years ago?** The presenters explained that there are proposed ROW impacts to one property on the northwest corner.
17. **What is the cost of this project?** The presenters explained that FHWA is providing the funds for design, construction and construction inspection of the project. Current estimates for the total effort are \$2.5 Million at this time.
18. **Will the intersection be closed during construction?** It is anticipated that construction would be staged so the intersection can remain open. A staging plan is part of the final design process.

Action Items

Information presented will be sent to Hunterdon County and Readington Township in order to provide access to the materials to attendees.

The Project Team will address the comments/questions, meet with Officials to discuss the responses and options, and anticipate a second public meeting to communicate the responses.