

Executive Summary – Responses to Comments

Albany Hospital Area Traffic Study
Public Meeting #2, March 25, 2019

This Executive Summary provides a brief summary of the attached document, which is a catalog of the comments received after the second Public Meeting for the Albany Hospital Area Traffic Study and their corresponding responses. In all, 81 written comments were received and most of them covered numerous topics, so there is a good range of concerns and opinions. The approach used to prepare the responses is based on the following three categories of comments:

1. Comments that expressed support or opposition to particular alternatives, or ideas for improvements are generally recorded as “Comment Noted”. All comments under this category are being considered as part of the development of recommendations.
2. Where comments appear to have misinterpreted the information presented, or are in conflict with known information, responses are provided to clarify and provide accurate information.
3. If a comment is similar to a previous comment, then the response refers back to the original response to comment.

It is important to note that this is a traffic planning study and that the alternatives presented are conceptual in nature and will require funding, further engineering and design should they be progressed. From an Executive Summary standpoint, the comments and responses generally fit into the following subject areas.

- Concerns for all users
 - Some commenters believe the study is overly focused on moving cars as compared to making the area more comfortable for non-motorized users and protecting the neighborhoods. The study, in fact, is taking a complete streets approach considering users of all ages and abilities, and all modes (pedestrian, bicycle, transit, and automobile). The City is committed to complete streets and any recommendations from the plan will support and promote this policy.
- Public input and questions about a third public meeting:
 - Some commenters believe that not enough public input has been sought or that notice wasn't sufficient. The City has sought input through various forms and Public meetings were announced through the City's press release process. Opportunities for input included stakeholder group meetings (2), public meetings with open house times (2) (which included Question and Answer sessions, comment forms, and group exercises), a project email address, and the project website. A comprehensive list of comments, concerns, and suggestions has been developed which provides a very good cross section of public opinion. A third public meeting is scheduled for October 7, 2019 to present the recommendations in the draft report.
- Requests to reduce the speed limit below 30 MPH.
 - The City is committed to complete streets. A reduction in a speed limit below 30 MPH and is not recommended for the City of Albany as part of this study. A review of speed data on New Scotland Avenue and Buckingham Drive shows that average speeds are below 30 MPH, and 85th percentile speeds are 33 MPH (New Scotland), and 31 MPH (Buckingham Drive) indicating that the existing 30 MPH speed limit is appropriate.

- Requests for speed enforcement
 - Enforcement can help address some of the unsafe driving behaviors mentioned, which has been referred to the City. The striping alternatives presented for New Scotland Avenue will also reduce speeds.
- Tampa Avenue and Friebel Road one-way pattern
 - Circulation in the Buckingham Neighborhood remains a concern. There is a general desire to restore two-way traffic on Tampa Avenue and Friebel Road, and limit the amount of through traffic.
- Reopen Buckingham to two-way traffic, or remove all through traffic from Buckingham
 - The current restriction at Bender/Route 85 has been in place for decades. The concern is that removing the bullnose and making Buckingham Drive a true 2-way between Route 85 and New Scotland Avenue would negatively affect the neighborhood. This alternative is not supported as part of this study.
 - Four alternatives were presented at public meeting #2, which would reduce traffic along Buckingham by providing more direct access to Route 85 on an alternate route. These alternatives shift traffic off of Buckingham but simply add it to other areas, and are not considered practical at this time. The study focuses on what can be done along existing facilities to improve safety and mobility for all users (pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists).
- Roundabouts
 - The majority of commenters oppose roundabouts, however there is also some misinformation regarding the benefits of roundabouts. There are numerous documented safety and operational benefits of roundabouts, and the FHWA has documented roundabouts as a proven safety counter measure with a 78% reduction in all types of injury accidents as compared to signalized intersections. The FHWA Desktop Reference for Crash Reduction Factors cites an 89% reduction in pedestrian crashes. While the benefits of two-lane roundabouts have been less clear, a recent IIHS study found that crash rates at two-lane roundabouts fall over time as drivers gain familiarity with them. The NYSDOT requires a roundabout at least be considered as part of any major intersection capacity improvement project. Additional education and engineering will be needed if roundabouts are ever progressed in the area.
- A desire for Transportation Demand Management
 - Some Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies will be discussed in the report, such as incentives to use transit.
- Location Specific Comments
 - There are many comments and suggestions for specific improvements, which were considered as part of the development of recommendations.