# MEETING MINUTES

**Meeting Date:** September 26, 2017

**Time:** 6:00 p.m.

**Location:** Northfield Village Hall

**Project:** Happ Road, Winnetka Road to Willow Road - Phase I Study

**Purpose:** Steering Committee Meeting #4

**Attendees:** See Attendance Roster

The meeting began with the Village of Northfield (Village) acknowledging that while it has been quite on the public front regarding this study, there has been much happening behind the scenes, and that the reason for today's meeting is to relay the activity that has occurred in anticipation of the upcoming Public Meeting. Patrick Engineering (Patrick) then began the presentation by outlining the agenda for tonight's meeting that includes describing the study coordination activities that have occurred since the last Steering Committee meeting, showing improvement alternatives that will be presented at the Public Meeting, and providing a preview of the logistics and details of the upcoming Public Meeting.

Coordination with the Northfield Emergency Services Providers occurred in March. The Fire and Police Department Chiefs acknowledged the improved safety and operations that would result from a roundabout alternative, expressed their preference for the 5-leg oval roundabout as opposed to the 4-leg circular roundabout, and stated their preference for a traffic signal at the Winnetka Road intersection.

Coordination also occurred with the Illinois Department of Transportation during April and May. The main purpose of this coordination was to disclose any effects that a roundabout at Orchard lane would have on the Willow Road intersection in terms of traffic queuing. Patrick submitted a traffic model that demonstrated the traffic interaction between the roundabout alternative at Happ/Orchard and the Happ/Willow intersection and IDOT was satisfied that the lane configuration could be designed so that there would be no adverse impacts from one intersection to the other under the proposed scenarios.

There was extensive coordination between the study team and the Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways (CCDOTH) throughout April to August. The primary goal of this coordination is due to the fact that Happ Road is under the jurisdiction of the CCDOTH and they will need to provide complete and thorough reviews and approvals of any alternative to be presented to the public. It would be very detrimental to the project to present an improvement alternative to the public that was not fully vetted through the County, only to discover later that the County could not accept the alternative. As part of this effort, Patrick prepared Technical Memos summarizing the analysis of the Happ/Orchard and Happ/Winnetka intersections, which the County reviewed and provided input on regarding the analysis. Patrick then refined the engineering models in coordination with the CCDOTH to ensure design optimization and identified concepts that the CCDOTH can support.

The presentation then proceeded to the improvement alternatives. At the Orchard lane intersection, it was determined that a traffic signal is not warranted due to low volumes along the Orchard Road legs that are below the threshold needed to warrant a traffic signal. As such, this alternative will not be carried forward to present to the public.

The Standard Intersection – Two-Way Stop Controlled Alternative was deemed acceptable to the CCDOTH and will be carried forward. This option maintains all current traffic operations, increases pedestrian safety by adding a refuge island on the south leg, provides improved vehicle channelization, has a lower construction cost compared to other alternatives, and does not require any additional ROW to construct. However, this alternative maintains higher delays for vehicles turning onto Happ Road from Orchard Lane, does not reduce the large number of potential vehicle conflict points, maintains the two-way stop that is confusing for motorists and results in vehicles on Happ Road stopping as they approach the intersection, keeps the overlapping route onto Walnut Street, and restricts the driveway on the southwest corner to right turns only.

In order to address some of the issues and concerns with the standard intersection alternative, several roundabout options were developed. The four-leg roundabout was reviewed by the CCDOTH, and due to the conflicting and overlapping movements related to Walnut Street, was not deemed acceptable to be carried forward to present to the public. The five-leg roundabout separates these conflicting movements and will be carried forward to present at the Public Meeting. This alternative improves vehicle safety by reducing potential conflict points, reduces crash severity, significantly reduces the delay for vehicles turning onto Happ from Orchard, was endorsed by the Village Police and Fire Departments, increases pedestrian safety at all crossing movements, simplifies the potential conflicts for vehicles accessing Walnut Street, and allows for aesthetic enhancements. However, it was noted that drivers are typically not accustomed to roundabout operations. The alternative also has a higher construction cost compared to other alternatives, requires additional ROW, impacts private parking in the lot in the southwest corner (potentially 0-4 spaces), removes on-street parking along Orchard and Walnut (net loss of a maximum of 16 spaces), and restricts the driveway on the southwest corner to right turns only.

A question was asked about the parking loss along the east side of Happ Road in front of Village Hall. Under both alternatives, the two spots closest to Willow Road will be removed. The study team will look into replacing one or both of these spots adjacent to the three spots further south. The available space for parking replacement along Happ Road is more limited under the roundabout alternative.

In response to an inquiry, it was noted that pedestrian signs and flashers can be investigated as the details of the alternatives are further refined. The Village made a statement that it appeared that the pedestrian safety in the standard intersection alternative is not that much improved over the existing condition. The point was acknowledged in that the 6" high barrier refuge island does improve safety for those crossing the south leg of Happ Road, as long as the island is wide enough, the level of pedestrian safety is not improved as much as under the roundabout alternative; the roundabout helps slow down vehicle speeds approaching the intersection A refuge island can also be investigated on the north leg of the intersection as part of the standard intersection alternative, if desired. One Steering Committee member asked if the entire intersection could be raised to reduce travel speeds and improve safety. This option may be considered for the standard intersection alternative but would not provide any additional benefits under the roundabout option. In addition to increased safety, the roundabout also provides an element of "placemaking" to the Village's downtown area, encouraging safe pedestrian movements and creating a destination where people will want to go. It was also noted that green space should be provided between the bikepath along the west side of the road and the roadway curb to improve bicyclist safety.

It was noted that the loss of on-street parking along the east leg of Orchard and Walnut is a concern to the business owners in that area. The Village verbalized their vision that if pedestrian crossing of Happ Road is made substantially safer, as would be under the roundabout option, then the patrons of the businesses to the east of Happ would be more apt to utilize the available open parking lots to the west of Happ. The Village also approached the County about the transfer of some of their unused County property in the area near Orchard between Happ Road and the Edens Expressway that could be used for additional public municipal parking lots. The County responded that they are amenable to transferring this land to the Village, but needs to go through an IDOT approval process first, due to the existence of some longstanding agreements giving IDOT first right of refusal on this land. The CCDOTH has initiated this process.

A committee member expressed concern regarding sight distance for vehicles entering the roundabout from the east leg of Orchard for vehicles coming from the south leg of Happ. The team responded that any vehicles entering a roundabout need to have visibility of any vehicles already traversing the circulating lanes of the roundabout. Keeping landscaping elements low in the inside circle of the roundabout will also aid sight distance. The CCDOTH further noted that they have engaged one of their on-call consultants, who has extensive roundabout experience out of their Indianapolis office, to review the designs being developed by this team for the roundabout alternative. This offers an extra check to make sure that all deign and safety aspects of this roundabout design meet standards and provide an optimal design.

A member asked if eliminating Walnut as a through street would help the overall design. This could be done with traffic bollards, allowing drivers to enter and exit Walnut from each end, but not allowing them to go through. The response was that while this would reduce the traffic volumes utilizing Walnut, it would not change the design of the intersections at either end of Walnut, and hence would not improve the design.

The Winnetka Road intersection was discussed next. A temporary traffic signal was recently installed by the CCDOTH at this intersection and was turned on earlier today. The Village expressed their appreciation, as well as the appreciation of the New Trier High School administration, to the County for making this happen. The signal is described as temporary, primarily because it is comprised of wood poles and span wire, as opposed to metal foundations and mast arms. While the impetus for the signal was to accommodate diverted traffic due to a nearby bridge closing during construction, the County indicated that once the bridge project is complete, the County will evaluate and discuss the situation with the Village and determine whether to remove the signal.

Since it was determined that a traffic signal is warranted at the Winnetka Road intersection, it will be presented at the upcoming Public Meeting. This alternative improves the level-of-service for all legs of the intersection, facilitates protected pedestrian crossing movements in all directions, and improves vehicle safety by eliminating confusion on which movement can proceed. However, the traffic signal does increase average delays during off-peak times, shifts the north leg of the roadway to the east to make the best use of available space, and required the signal equipment to be located outside of the roadway footprint.

A member inquired about alternatives for crossing the road at Happ Road Park that were presented at the last Steering Committee meeting. Patrick responded that the alternative at Happ Road Park was determined to include the protected crossing, and that this alternative, in addition to all the improvements proposed for the entire length of the Happ Road study area, will be shown at the upcoming Public Meeting.

A member asked if the signal equipment at the Winnetka Road intersection could be located on any of the four corners. The CCDOTH responded affirmatively, however, the presence of yet to be determined utilities may limit the ability to locate this equipment on one or more of the corners. In response to a comment, the CCDOTH indicated that they could consider programming a flashing red light for signal during low volume off-peak times of the day. A concern was expressed that the surge of traffic coming from the signal may make it more difficult for motorists to find gaps to exit nearby downstream driveways. The CCDOTH responded that due to the signal's ability to group and platoon vehicles, that actually more gaps in traffic result making it easier to access the main road. It is also important to note that there are limitations to the current temporary traffic signal equipment to adapt to traffic. If and when the permanent traffic signal is installed in the future, more can be done including adaptive signal timing, actuated signal phases using vehicle detection loops in the pavement, and pedestrian push buttons that can provide longer crossing times when activated.

The logistics of the upcoming Public Meeting were then discussed. It will be held on November 9th from 4:00 to 7:00 PM at Clarkson Park. Village, County and Consultant staff will be available to provide information and answer questions from the public. The presentation will include exhibit boards describing the Project

Goal Statement, corridor deficiencies, the improvement alternatives, and the pros (benefits) and cons (impacts) of the various alternatives being carried forward. Since it will be important for the public to be able to easily assimilate information on the various improvement alternatives, as well as the associated pros and cons of each, special exhibits will be required. Example exhibits were displayed that were prepared by the study team that depict the alternatives and the pros and cons in a color-coded fashion that are targeted towards presenting this information in a simple easy to understand manner.

Finally, it will be important to encourage input from the citizens attending the Public Meeting. As such, the study team will provide numerous ways by which input can be provided. Comment forms and writing materials will be available and commenters can place in their completed forms in the comment box at the meeting or mail or email them to the study team. Members of the public can also call the study team or provide comments online via the project website. While comments can be received at any time, in order for them to be included as part of the official record of the Public Meeting, they must be postmarked or received within 2 weeks of the meeting (by November 23rd).

The next steps after the Public Meeting will be for the study team to review the input received and recommend a preferred alternative for the overall project to discuss with the Steering Committee. Then, once a preferred alternative is agreed upon, it will be presented to the public at a Public Hearing. After the hearing, project reports will be processed for approval to IDOT, who will grant Design Approval, marking the completion of the Phase I Study process. It is anticipated that this will take 6-9 months. Once Phase I is complete, Phase II contract plan preparation and land acquisition can occur, pending funding availability. Phase II typically requires 18-24 months to complete before construction can occur, pending funding availability. The Village and County stated their mutual intention to continue to seek funding so that this project can keep moving forward to completion.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:30 p.m.

Submitted by:

Steve Lynch, P.E.
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