



## MEETING NOTES

**To:** Jeanette Janiczek  
City of Charlottesville

**From:** Sal Musarra  
Kimley-Horn

**Date/Time:** August 16, 2017 / 6:00-8:00

**Subject:** Belmont Bridge Replacement Project (VDOT Project #0020-104-101 / UPC #75878)  
Steering Committee Meeting #5

**Attendees**

Amy Gardner	Belmont Neighborhood
John Harrison	Business Community
Patrick Healy	Ridge Street Neighborhood
Heather Danforth Hill	North Downtown Neighborhood
Tim Mohr	PLACE
Lena Seville	CAT Advisory Board
Tony Edwards	NDS - Development Services Manager
Alexander Ikefuna	NDS - Director of NDS
Jeanette Janiczek	NDS - UCI Program Manager
Brennen Duncan	NDS - Traffic Engineer
Sal Musarra	Kimley-Horn
Brian McPeters	Kimley-Horn
Allison Linney	Allison Partners

## PURPOSE

Steering Committee Meeting #5 continued the process of refining the Conceptual Plans toward presentation and request for endorsement by the City Council in the fall of 2017. This meeting included reporting out feedback from the August Planning Commission and BAR meetings as well as additional stakeholder input on the remaining open design issues. The goal of this meeting was to provide a project update, receive any further input on open design issues, and to summarize the design recommendations going forward to the City Council. We also received public input from those in attendance.

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## AGENDA

- 1. Planning Commission and BAR meetings update**
- 2. Update and comment on 3 open design items**
  - a. Prior SC opinion
  - b. New data, PC opinion
  - c. Staff and Consultant Recommended Design going forward
  - d. Further Discussion
- 3. Discussion of SC member P. Healy project memorandum**
- 4. Next Steps**
  - 9/5 Tree Commission
  - 9/7 Bike and Pedestrian Committee
  - 9/12 Planning Commission #2
  - 9/14 PLACE Committee
  - Oct - City Council Presentation
  - TBD - Technical Committee Meeting #6
  - TBD - Steering Committee Meeting #6
  - TBD - Design Public Hearing
  - TBD - Final BAR Presentation
- 5. Public comment**

## SUMMARY

This was the fifth meeting between the Steering Committee and the project team for the Belmont Bridge replacement project. Members of the Steering Committee, City staff, consultant team, and public were present for the discussion. Below is a brief description of the items discussed.

## Summary of Discussion

### Project Updates

Following brief introductions, Sal Musarra (Kimley-Horn) gave a background presentation that highlighted project updates, process and schedule, which included the following:

- Presented and received input from Planning Commission (PC) on the conceptual design on August 8<sup>th</sup>.
- Presented conceptual design to the Board of Architectural Review (BAR) on August 15<sup>th</sup>.

### Planning Commission and BAR Update

Sal Musarra with Kimley-Horn presented a summary of the input received from the PC including public comment which included:

- Preference for no fencing
- Emphasized need for good lighting levels across the project
- Asked staff about potential for additional funding to supplement the current budget, and staff replied that no additional funds were available to increase the budget
- Preference for full movement turns at Graves
- Safety should be top priority in decisions on crosswalks and access
- Preference to maintain at-grade crossing for better overall connectivity
- Limited access at Graves must consider negative impacts to traffic patterns within the neighborhood

Sal Musarra with Kimley-Horn then presented a summary of the input received from the BAR which included:

- Overall Design Approach
  - Want to minimize overall impact of concrete surfaces and massing
  - Want more integrated design details (i.e. site furnishings)
  - Concern regarding segmented look of bridge elevation – make efforts to present a smooth curvilinear form
  - Concern regarding new plaza design for pavilion event operations and security
- Paving
  - No consensus on Board about color palette. Some lean toward bold statement as shown and others toward muted, more subtle approach.
  - Recommend looking at alternative materials beyond, or in addition to colored concrete.
  - Like concept for contrasting pavement finishes in parking areas.
- Site Furnishings / Integrated design
  - Strong consensus for contemporary site furnishings in lieu of city standards used in other transportation projects; need to coordinate furnishings with overall design
  - Questioned ability to vary height and spacing of roadway lighting – inquired if low level fixtures could illuminate the street
  - Like railing light feature
- Landscaping
  - Create as much soil volume for trees as possible
  - Species selection OK except Sycamore
  - Combine gateway and Ninth Street zones – single species
- Pedestrian Underpass
  - General support for this feature

- Want to see more detail regarding scale and lighting to ensure a safe and attractive environment for the pedestrian underpass
  - Improve circulation to and from passageway for smooth pedestrian flows
- Railroad fencing
  - General observation that including this element enhances the design, with some creativity in the fence profile.
- Signature ramp/stair feature
  - Can footprint of overall feature be reduced - some debate regarding importance of this feature
  - Suggested that eastern stair north of the railroad should be oriented to the east
- Wall Treatments
  - North abutment wall – add more interest
  - Green Walls – reduce amount of green walls; select locations carefully relative to growing conditions; use other landscaping to mitigate wall scale;
  - Graffiti – it will happen organically – be prepared; support for dedicated locations for commissioned murals;
  - Cladding – generally support proposed materials;

## Open Design Issue Update

After presentation of the input received from PC and BAR, Sal Musarra with Kimley-Horn gave a brief review of the three open design issues with the conceptual design including the current staff/consultant recommendation for each one. The open design issues are as follows:

- Pedestrian Crossing South of the Railroad – The current design shows removal of the existing mid-block crosswalk near Graves Street across 9<sup>th</sup> Street. The crossing is to be replaced by a pedestrian underpass of 9<sup>th</sup> Street. The Steering Committee endorsed providing both the pedestrian underpass and replacing the existing at grade crossing in-kind. Planning Commission expressed support for both the grade crossing and pedestrian underpass. The current staff and consultant recommendation due to safety concerns and compliance with the Streets that Work guidelines is to remove the at grade crossing and install the pedestrian underpass.
- Graves Street Access - The current design limits access to and from Graves Street to left-in, right-in and right out. The Planning Commission recommended that the City evaluate options and consider rerouted traffic in determining the appropriate access for Graves Street. The Steering Committee endorsed limiting access provided that the City evaluate options for mitigating impacts to rerouted traffic not allowed to turn left onto southbound 9<sup>th</sup> Street. The current staff and consultant recommendation is to limit access to and from Graves Street to left-in, right-in and right-out.
- Vertical Circulation North of the Railroad – the current conceptual design shows stair towers on the east and west side of 9<sup>th</sup> Street at the northern abutment and mezzanine under the bridge to create a connection between Downtown Mall & eastern side of bridge & vice versa. The Steering Committee endorsed this concept previously and had requested the team to review options for constructing a ramp from the eastern side of the bridge to the mezzanine. Sal reported back to the steering committee that construction of the ramp at this location would be cost prohibitive due to impacts it would have on the existing wall along Water Street supporting the Pavilion.

## Committee Discussion

After the presentation, the Committee was afforded the opportunity to make comment about input received to date on the project and discuss amongst themselves as a committee. The discussion included the following highlights:

- The committee questioned whether the City Police Department has/will review the bridge plans including the plans for the pedestrian underpass. The City responded that a City Police Department representative is a member of the Technical Committee, has reviewed the conceptual design and will review the detailed plans in the future.
- The committee expressed support for the western stair tower to Water Street to point west and the eastern stair tower to Water Street to point east as recommended by the BAR. The Committee also requested that the visibility of the stair tower on the east side be considered during design.
- Several committee members commented that BAR's recommendation to include the railroad fencing now as part of integrated design focused on looking at the bridge and not views from the bridge. The public engagement results show that views from the bridge (that would be impaired by the fence) are more appreciated.
- The committee requested that staff and the consultant explain the reasoning for the current recommendation to remove the existing at grade crossing of 9<sup>th</sup> Street and replace with the pedestrian underpass. Brian McPeters with Kimley-Horn responded that the crossing is not in compliance with Streets that Work guidelines due to the proximity of the signalized crossing at Levy/Garrett intersection and due to safety concerns. Brian pointed out that multiple crashes involving pedestrians and vehicles have occurred in or near the crossing in the last five years, which suggests that a safety problem exists at the location. Alex Ikefuna shared that the City Attorney's office had reviewed whether the City would be exposed from a liability standpoint if the consultant team's recommendation was overturned and the crossing was installed. It was the City Attorney's office opinion that the City would be potentially at risk should an incident occur under that condition. The City intends to inform the Planning Commission and City Council of that fact at future presentations.
- The committee asked if other locations further from Levy/Garrett (in compliance with the spacing standard) had been studied for a crossing of 9th Street. The City responded they had not but the vertical alignment of 9th Street likely limits possible locations. (Since the meeting Kimley Horn reviewed relocating an at-grade crosswalk across 9th Street 300 feet from the crosswalk at the signalized intersection of Levy/9th Street. There would be insufficient sight distance - does not meet the necessary stopping sight distance at a 25 MPH design speed for a 6% slope which is 165 ft nor would there be a clear line of sight for a car coming over the bridge (traveling south) to see a pedestrian standing at the top of the sidewalk.) Several committee members agreed underpass has merit when development happens but may not work without future development near the bridge. The City pointed out that pedestrian habits will likely be due to construction phasing, which could be a year or more of a different pattern. It was also pointed out that should the crossing be needed/warranted based on use, it could potentially be installed following construction.
- One committee member pointed out that the existing crossing location meets all but one technical criteria, and that they didn't agree that past crash data is representative of future traffic calmed conditions. Safety at night should be balanced with safety of pedestrians. The City confirmed that the removal of the crossing of 9<sup>th</sup> street would not violate ADA requirements.
- After discussion of City's technical staff, consultant and City Attorney's, there was general acknowledgement by Committee members in attendance that the at grade crossing could not be supported or recommended by staff or the consultants.
- The Committee was generally supportive of access limitations at Grave Street provided that the impacts of rerouted traffic was considered to avoid unnecessarily pushing traffic into Belmont. The

City committed to evaluating converting Monticello Road between Graves Street and Levy Avenue to one way southbound and moving parking to the west side of the street (moving forward as a demonstration project separate from the bridge replacement project). The City also confirmed that an ingress/egress easement does exist on the Inova parcel allowing public traffic to access Old Avon Street from Graves Street.

- The Committee acknowledged that the budget for the project was the budget and that there are likely not enough cost saving options or reductions to offset the cost and risk of a ramp at the north abutment. Kimley-Horn also confirmed that the existing ramp from 9<sup>th</sup> Street to the mall doesn't meet ADA standards and it cannot be significantly modified to be made compliant due to adjacent site grades.

## Discussion of SC member P. Healy project memorandum

After the discussion, the Committee was afforded the opportunity to discuss a recent memorandum distributed by e-mail to the Steering Committee from Pat Healy. The discussion included the following highlights:

- Pat Healy reinforced his opinion that the steering committee was not actively involved in selection of the configuration of the bridge deck and that City Council's enhanced bridge criteria was just applied. City staff and the consultant team commented that the council's criteria was acknowledged as a starting point, but the actual configuration of the bridge deck resulted from feedback, input and analysis at the three-day charrette. It was noted that the conceptual design shows a bridge width slightly wider than Council recommended due to maintenance of traffic needs during construction. Pat expressed concern that the 'hour glass' shape of the concept seems odd, and he is concerned if traffic will work with the design. City staff commented that extra lanes on the bridge will not improve traffic flow, since the intersections on either end do not allow for any more vehicles to traverse the corridor than today.
- John Harrison shared that his opinion is the conceptual design of the bridge deck may not adequately support future vehicles and bikes using route. Brennan mentioned that there is functional space for all modes. Heather said that is scary to walk on the 6' sidewalk today, so it needs to be wider. John also expressed that loss of downtown parking is an issue for businesses, which means people are parking in the neighborhoods. John also shared concerned with tractor trailer movements on 6<sup>th</sup> Street, South Street and Old Avon. City acknowledged that the design must allow for efficient truck access and that the conceptual design will allow for truck turn movements.

## Public Comment

- One citizen expressed support for allowing two-way traffic on Monticello even though it is narrow to allow for access control at Graves Street.
- Another citizen expressed a concern for walking through the pedestrian underpass at night, they believe an at grade crossing of 9<sup>th</sup> Street, south of the railroad is necessary for safety.
- A business owner on Old Avon suggested that the City should change the plan to keep Old Avon Street open, but limit it to one way out.
- A Belmont neighbor asked when will Monticello be tested for flipping the one-way direction. The City Traffic Engineer responded that he will route the suggestion through internal processes for review and then approach neighbors for feedback before beginning a test phase
- One Belmont neighbor expressed that the Belmont neighborhood association wanted to know if time restrictions could be used on the crosswalk.

- Another Belmont neighbor suggested that with both sidewalks active in the proposed design there may not be a strong need for the crossing. The mezzanine connection on the north end creates redundant routes, so the pedestrian underpass could be eliminated if budget were a concern.

## Next Steps

Following this meeting, revisions will be made to the conceptual design based on feedback provided by the Technical Committee, Steering Committee, PC and BAR to prepare the project for presentation to the City Planning Commission in September for a review for the project's conformance to the City's Comprehensive Plan and presentation of the conceptual design to City Council for endorsement in October. The planned dates for upcoming public meetings was presented and included:

- 9/5 Tree Commission
- 9/7 Bike and Pedestrian Committee
- 9/12 Planning Commission #2
- 9/14 PLACE Committee
- TBD City Council Presentation (Date TBD)