

**APPENDIX D**  
**Public Coordination**

## APPENDIX A -

# STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS SUMMARY

Project Title	Watertown-Jefferson County Transportation Council (WJCTC) Truck Route and Public Safety Building Access Studies
Interview Dates	2021
Venue	Phone, email and videoconference
Topic	Preliminary Stakeholder Interviews
Interviewees	See interview summaries
Project Team	Keith Ewald, Barton & Loguidice Evan Cobb, Barton & Loguidice Christopher Dunne, Highland Planning

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## OVERVIEW

### Background

The Watertown-Jefferson County Transportation Council (WJCTC) is conducting an area-wide study of trucking routes within and around the city of Watertown to gain a better understanding of issues, opportunities and impacts associated with truck traffic in the region's urban center. The current configuration of designated truck routes between Interstate 81 (I-81) and Public Square in Watertown contributes to traffic congestion and bottlenecks and poses potential safety issues for other vehicles, cyclists, and pedestrians.

A related project explores the creation of a new access road to the Metro-Jefferson Public Safety Building (PSB) and the City Center Industrial Park ("the Industrial Park") in the city of Watertown. Bellew Avenue South provides the sole suitable access point to the Industrial Park as well as Waterman Drive, off of which the PSB is located. Resulting delays at the intersection of Bellew and Arsenal Street may make the Industrial Park less attractive to potential tenants and negatively impact emergency response times.

A series of stakeholder interviews were undertaken in 2021 to document issues and opportunities for each study, review proposed alternatives with potentially impacted parties and identify other options and stakeholders to contact. A table of all stakeholders contacted for interviews and responses is included in Appendix A and a map documenting stakeholder comments and identified routes is viewable in Appendix B.

## KEY FINDINGS

### Truck Route Study

Stakeholders were contacted in the winter and spring of 2021 for interviews via Zoom videoconferencing or phone, or for responses to questions via email. Questions focused on issues and opportunities with respect to the study as well as proposed changes to designated truck routes. Stakeholders contacted were also asked about the related Public Safety Building Access Study. Seven (7) stakeholders representing freight and logistics interests, local economic development organizations and businesses participated. Key findings included the following:

- The desire to have truck traffic avoid Public Square is widely shared among downtown businesses and drivers themselves. That Public Square should have minimal truck traffic is

one of the few areas of consensus among the downtown business community. Additionally, truck drivers point to Public Square as an area they generally try to avoid due to congestion and other factors.

- Some stakeholders are skeptical that routing and signage alone can reduce the number of trucks travelling through Public Square. The perception that truck drivers are more reliant on private way-finding technologies (e.g., Google Maps, Waze, etc.) than public signage leads some stakeholders to believe changes to designated truck routes are unlikely to shift truck traffic away from Public Square.
- The presence of industrial or delivery-based businesses in close proximity to Public Square may be contributing to the sense that truck traffic is heavy in this area. Truck drivers often have to make complex turning maneuvers to dock at businesses such as Knowlton Technologies and Morrison's Furniture at the edges of Public Square. Additionally, businesses such as New York Air Brake and White's Lumber, while not immediately adjacent to Public Square, may be accessed using routes that go directly through downtown.
- Stakeholders were open to longer term interventions such as a reconfiguration of designated truck routes or extending the Black River Parkway/connections to I-81. While routes used by drivers were heavily dependent upon origins/destinations, stakeholders saw some of the proposed options for routing around Public Square as workable.

### **Public Safety Building Access Study**

Stakeholders were contacted throughout 2021 for interviews via Zoom videoconferencing or phone, or for responses to questions via email. Questions focused on issues and opportunities with respect to the study as well as specific alternatives<sup>1</sup> developed to improve access to either the Public Safety Building, City Center Industrial Park, or both. Stakeholders contacted were also asked about the related Truck Route Study. Seven (7) stakeholders representing public safety services, freight and logistics interests, local economic development organizations and Industrial Park tenants participated. Key findings included the following:

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<sup>1</sup> To avoid confusion with numbering, Public Safety Building Access Study alternatives are referred to by their street names/route numbering throughout this document and when possible, discussions of alternatives have been ordered to proceed clockwise from S. Bellew Avenue.

- While both see the current site access at S. Bellew and Arsenal as inadequate, solutions for Industrial Park vs. Public Safety Building tenants are likely to differ. Travel needs for businesses in the Industrial Park are focused on access to I-81 whereas the Police Department is oriented toward the city. The Sheriff's office must respond to calls throughout Jefferson County. The current single access point creates a potential safety issue since a spill or accident could hem in emergency response vehicles. This intersection is also not well designed for truck-turning movements.
- The presence of protected wetlands and active rail operations constrain ability of the Industrial Park to expand and may reduce access route options. According to stakeholders, the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has identified much of the area east of I-81, south of Arsenal Street (Route 3) and west of South Massey as natural wetlands that may not be suitable for development even with remediation efforts. As such, few parcels remaining in the Industrial Park area may be available for development either for tenants or as points of access. Additionally, an at-grade crossing of the railroad tracks at Willow Street, which provided secondary access to the site for Public Safety Building tenants, was closed off by CSX.
- Alternatives using Coleman Avenue, or the nearby plaza, have been the most extensively considered options for truck access to the Industrial Park. The idea of building off of the road stub on Waterman Drive to connect with Coleman Avenue/plaza to provide secondary access for trucks to Route 3 has been widely discussed. While viewed favorably by Public Safety Building and Industrial Park tenants, other stakeholders have pointed out potential constraints on using this option including the presence of utilities and businesses that could be impacted.
- The use of Sand Street to access Route 3 was seen as a good option by the Public Safety Building tenants. Both the Sheriff's Office and the Police Department saw the use of the Big Apple parking lot and Sand Street to connect the Public Safety Building to Route 3 as a workable secondary access point. These public safety stakeholders saw an additional connection to the street network that avoids the intersection used by Industrial Park-bound trucks as a plus.
- Ensuring alternatives do not become trafficked by civilians is a priority. The Police Department pointed out that several of the proposed options risk becoming cut-throughs for regular motorists, which would erode their usefulness to the Public Safety Building tenants.

## INTERVIEW SUMMARIES

Interview questions and discussion are summarized below.

### Jefferson County Economic Development

David Zembiec, CEO

February 26, 2021

What are the main opportunities and issues for freight/logistics stakeholders in both studies?

- No thoughts on truck studies
- Access point to CCIP: Coleman Ave option is being explored
- Renzi wants to see additional access to CCIP
- Results of discussions with the Local Development Corporation (LDC) and City planners: Coleman Avenue has some physical constraints and potentially high costs associated with it

Who else should we talk to?

- Reach out to Renzi – they do so much shipping out of there. Can get firsthand account of what their challenges are. Roth is expanding as well. They want to utilize rail siding to bring in material.
- Can provide other contacts as well

### Watertown Local Development Corporation

Donald Rutherford, CEO

Thursday, February 25, 2021 from 9:00 – 9:20 a.m.

Role of LDC?

- LDC has exclusive option on land at CCIP
- CCIP only has one parcel remaining to sell to prospective buyers. Other surrounding parcels would need wetland remediation for an expansion of the CCIP to happen,

except for small parcel (2.5 acres) in the corner near Blue Mountain Spring Water. The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has not expressed a high level of interest in remediation since these are “natural” wetlands and difficult to replace

What are the main opportunities and issues for freight/logistics stakeholders in both studies?

- Renzi Food Service has a plan to expand their presence at the park but are adamant that they need a separate entrance. We've sold them a separate parcel of land, but they will not commit to locating headquarters there until access issue is resolved; at certain times of day, there is a backlog of trucks and Renzi is usually responsible
- Single access point is an issue for PSB: if a spill or accident happened at single entrance, they are hemmed in
- City wants separate entrance points: this is a high priority for the Mayor of Watertown
- Truck routing conflicts with community vision for Public Square: more pedestrian friendly and conducive to holding events
- Challenges: these are New York state routes and GPS directs trucks through the center of town which creates a “thoroughfare” even though there are a lot of sidewalks/pedestrian-level amenities. Not unusual for this to be the case in small communities like ours.

What are some potential access points for the CCIP/PSB?

- There is a stub off Roundhouse Drive near Blue Mountain Spring Water that we were initially looking at which connects to Coleman Avenue/plaza though there are some infrastructure issues on that front. Road width is a challenge. Utilities may have to be moved and land ownership is also a potential problem. Also, there are businesses (medical practice, Tractor Supply Co., etc.) that may be impacted. The Tractor Supply storage area might need to be moved for example.

- There was an egress through a parking lot – that's private property and is now blocked off by concrete barriers. (Agritech property access to Willow Avenue)
- There are few residents in the area that would be impacted but businesses could be an issue.

What are some potential alternative routes for trucks around Public Square?

- Black River Parkway provides a bit of a thoroughfare around downtown. Brings trucks from northeast to I-81 through Coffeen Street. The challenge there is proximity to residential areas.
- There are some business parks that are off of Arsenal Street.

Are there any hot button issues we should be aware of before we start engaging the community?

- Re Access study: not sure what issues may be out there. Issues that might arise depends on the alternative(s) selected. These businesses have a lot of traffic coming in and out of the Park so avoiding impacts to daily operations may be a high priority.
- Re Truck Route study: no big hot button issues. People would like to see a more pedestrian-friendly downtown if it can be accomplished without disrupting residential neighborhoods.

Who else should we talk to?

- City Planning Department
- Talk to the City prior to engaging with businesses/residents on either study

### **Knowlton Technologies**

Jon Richards, Supply Chain Manager and William Hardin, Site Manager

March 3, 2021, 3:30 PM

What has been your experience with truck/tractor trailer traffic destined for your business?

- Northbound traffic from 1-81: we tell our drivers to take Exit 46, Coffeen Street to Black River Parkway. Our location has the worst possible setting for a tractor trailer to maneuver in: the loading dock is right on the corner of that intersection, so drivers have to make an immediate U-turn in front of the building and reverse in front of Mill St. They usually have to wait for traffic to subside before backing into Dock #1.
- Project to move dock back fifty yards will be progressing with earliest completion in 2022. Currently there's an old water tank used for fire suppression that is in the way which will be decommissioned when Knowlton hooks into the City's water for their fire suppression needs.
- Northbound traffic is 60 – 75% of our traffic.
- Southbound traffic from I-81: we tell drivers to take Exit 47, Bradley Street to West Main to Mill. Shipments in this direction include raw materials from Canada, one that is every other week, one that's three times a month, and a few customers that actually ship out of Montreal (container haulers)
- One major supplier in Carthage but not tractor trailer (just straight boxes). They come down Factory Street and use Dock #2 where we have a tank farm in between the two buildings. (Entrance is north of Dock #1 on Mill Street).
- Public Square was previously (5-10 years ago) just a giant roundabout so it was relatively easy to navigate. With reconfiguration allowing two-way traffic and entrances at multiple points, traffic congestion has gotten a lot worse.
- Other companies have a lot of truck traffic coming from the east and travelling down Factory Street

Possible alternatives?

- In the long-term, Black River Parkway extension would make a lot of sense
- Traffic coming north up Massey (Route 65) would just hit Public Square. We already direct drivers to avoid Public Square.

Who else should we talk to?

- Big furniture store across from us on Factory Street (Morrison's Furniture Store) also has trucks that have to make difficult maneuvers to dock.

### **Renzi Food Service**

John Renzi, President

Tuesday, March 2, 2021, from 10:00 to 10:30 a.m.

Issues and Opportunities for the Access Study?

- Issues:
  - Renzi's has 50 tractor trailers and sees deliveries to their location
  - CCIP has really been built up in the years since Renzi's first located there; there has been a trend of locating retail and government services (Social Security Administration, Public Safety Building) at the CCIP which has exacerbated traffic issues
  - Most of Renzi's fleet is on the road by 6 a.m. – real challenge comes in the afternoon with deliveries, etc.

Thoughts on potential alternatives for the Access study?

- Coleman Avenue
  - Would alleviate traffic issues around Social Security Building, Walgreens and Credit Union at Arsenal/Bellew; (retail is mixing with industrial park)
- Adding access point to the northeast of CCIP/PSB (Black River Parkway Extension)
  - 90% of Renzi's load is traveling between CCIP and I-81 so connection to Arsenal further east of current access point is not particularly helpful
  - Renzi's trucks are in the city all the time but it still represents only about 5%
  - Extending the Black River Parkway could be a good option for Knowlton Technologies' trucks to avoid Public Square - they are smack in the middle of the everything

- Bridge to Massey Street from the southeast corner of the CCIP:
  - might bring more traffic into the CCIP; could be seen as a bypass for regular drivers around downtown so might not help with truck issues

Thoughts on potential alternatives for the Truck Route study?

- Look at Bradley Street exit to go around the city
- Connections to Town Park on Coffeen Street might also be helpful

Who else should we be talking to?

- White's Lumber will be important to include in the process – Dave at JCED should have contact info

#### **Watertown Downtown Business Association**

Joseph Wessner, President

Friday, March 19, 2021 at noon.

Issues and Opportunities with truck traffic in Public Square?

- Have to address Google Maps routing truck drivers through downtown
- Truck traffic is probably the #2 issue that people are concerned with; pedestrian crossing is the #1 issue (crossing a six-lane road)
- Trucks are loud, dangerous: just last year a woman was killed by a truck in a crosswalk
- Really not designed for trucks
- Some deliveries for restaurants but not big 53-footers
- Routes:
  - Heading north: new 781 extension could be good
  - Heading east: could also do 342 (nine miles out of the way); only one left turn in the whole thing

- West Main Street is a possibility as a route right through the city; issues with half of it being residential; can't really widen it more than it is
- BID:
  - Bring people back to downtown
  - It's set up as a commercial center; everybody used to be downtown; usual revitalization of the downtown
  - Right now it's just an inconvenient pass through
  - Emphasize unique nature of the Square – turn it into a tourist spot; needs to be pedestrian-friendly
  - Keep studying Public Square configuration but convergence of state and county routes makes it difficult
  - Would love to actually make use of the park in the middle – would love to have 30+ events year-round
- Businesses all have backdoor delivery; really only one building in downtown that doesn't have a backdoor because it's hemmed in by streets; everyone else has streets and alleyways
- Desire to do something about truck traffic is one of the few areas of consensus

How to reach members:

- DBA has
  - E-blasts
  - Newsletters
  - Regular meetings

Hot button issues?

- Parking remains the most contentious issue among downtown businesses

### **Gaetono Transportation**

Balvinder Singh

Kaleb O'Dett

Email, March 30, 2021

Do your drivers try to avoid routing through Public Square in Watertown?

- The drivers try to avoid going through the Public Square, due that it can be tight fit. This all depends on the traffic flow, they will go that way if they need to.

If your drivers are routed through Public Square, what do you see as some viable alternative routes to avoid it?

- Approaching Public Square from the north on Route 11: As a driver, I would take Paddock Street to Holcomb Street then Route 11 south of Public Square
- Approaching from I-81: Route 3 then Leray Street [sic: North Massey south of the River, Leray north of the river]. This would happen on the delivery location or pick up.
- For the most part, we deliver to Renzi foods.
- If we have a load in Lowville, most take Route 11 to Route 12 from the company's yard.

What routes does your fleet use when connecting to I-81?

- Bradley St
- Coffeen St
- Arsenal St
- Route 11 to Route 342 then to I-81

Do you deliver to any of the industrial/business parks in and around Watertown (see truck route map)?

- For the most part our company delivers food grade products. If we make a delivery in the Watertown area it goes to Renzi Foods. Most of the drivers take Route 3 to Renzi's.

In the county's Long Range Transportation Plan, some extensions and bypasses were proposed as possible alternatives to current truck routes (see attached LRTP map). Do you have any thoughts on these proposals?

- The proposed plan for the route is ok. The only issue there is that it could be just an exit on I-81 to the area of Renzi and continue the route [as] planned. [i.e., forego the Black River Parkway Extension]

**Erie Materials**

Aaron Draper

Email, March 30, 2021

Do your drivers try to avoid routing through Public Square in Watertown? If your drivers are routed through Public Square, what do you see as some viable alternative routes to avoid it?

- We don't normally travel the public Square unless necessary
- Possible [to use] Massey St as alternative

What routes does your fleet use when traveling between I-81 and points east of Public Square in Watertown?

- Bradley St. is most used, because of our location

Do you deliver to any of the industrial/business parks in and around Watertown (see truck route map)?

- Don't normally deliver to industrial parks/ mainly work with contractors

## Development Authority of the North Country (DANC)

Hartley Schweitzer

Michelle Capone

June 14, 2021, at 9:00am

- Pedestrian connectivity: Public Square – Franklin St. – most of the public parking is on the opposite side of the street. Ties in with parking issues. Increasing speeds. Are the timings of the ped x correct? Crossing near bus station might not have the timing right
- Arcade and Arsenal light (city-owned).
- The City undertook a NYSDOT-funded study of the light timing for Public Square and surrounding the surrounding area (That's Hartley's commute)
- Just during peak commute times, there are backup issues.
- Sensors may not function properly and while the signage is helpful, Public Square should be more walkable.
- Franklin St. light gets sped through (People feel safer walking in bigger cities!)
- In terms of rerouting trucks to avoid Public Square: northbound trucks off Route 11 to I-81 – I-781 at Kellogg Hill
- Look at past DRI project: closure of north side of Public Square was discussed and truck issues came up

## Jefferson County Sheriff's Office

Sheriff Colleen O'Neill

Tuesday, August 17, 2021, from 2:30 to 3:00 p.m.

- S. Bellew St Alternative
  - Does not help us. That intersection is really tough and we've requested from Sean Hennessey at NYSDOT to have a left turn arrow there.
  - Some alternatives might better serve PSB and some others might better serve CCIP. Would access to Arsenal actually help?
  - Improvements will be made at Arsenal/Bellew regardless.
  - Emergency Response directions at Bellew / Arsenal: 1/3 left, 1/3 right and 1/3 straight. To access I-81 N, I go north to Coffeen St.
- Sand St Alternative

- Though this option has been crossed off by the project team, it looks like a good option for us because it provides secondary access to Route 3.
- W. Mullin St. Alternative
  - Brings you out into the city but has easy access to Rt. 11. Works well it is the opposite direction from the truck traffic
- Pine St. Alternative
  - This option might work as well.
- Ives St Alternative
  - Better for southwest responses.
- S. Massey St Alternative
  - Same predicament as Ives Street Alternative but just takes you longer
- I-81 NB Exit to CCIP
  - Too close for another clover leaf right there but could be slip ramp to CCIP. Doesn't really help Sheriff's office since we're never in a rush to get *back* to the Public Safety Building.
- Towne Center Alternative
  - Great to reach Sackett's Harbor but that's a huge project
- Overall: best options for the Sheriff's Office are Sand St., W. Mullin St and Ives.
- Watertown PD probably makes a lot more rights than lefts at Bellew. They'll want something that goes into City
- Sheriff's office will provide high-level directional data (possibly w/ emergency vs. non-emergency calls)
- Willow St. was open to PSB until about six years ago. Jersey barriers were put up possibly because of neighbors complaining about traffic.

### **Watertown Police Department**

Charles Donaghue, Chief of Police

Captain LaBarge

November 9, 2021, at 2:00PM

- S. Bellew Ave. Alternative
  - AmeriCU Credit Union and Walgreen's driveways are too close to Arsenal Street. This should be addressed regardless of what other alternatives are selected but improving the

S. Bellew Avenue alone will not solve the issue with slow-moving trucks and a single access point

- The project team will look at potential changes including access management issues at this intersection which could result in recommendations to close some of those driveways.
- Sand St. Alternative
  - Could work quite well if new connection was a one-way / exit only onto Arsenal Street
- Black River Parkway Extension Alternative
  - Would not help police responses
- W. Mullin St. Alternative
  - Would work well for the Department when trying to access points east but could become a heavily trafficked secondary street
  - For example: the current Stone Street gets congested at times with drivers trying to avoid S. Massey / Arsenal intersection
- Pine St Alternative
  - If it connected to S. Bellew, it would potentially increase civilian traffic on Waterman Drive/S. Bellew
    - What if this alternative connected to Pine St. from the access street around the PSB?
  - That would likely increase civilian traffic through and around the PSB
    - What if there was a restricted access connection from the access road around the PSB to Pine Street (so a driveway for the PSB onto this alternative) and all other traffic used W. Mullin Street Alternative?
  - Any increase in traffic on S. Bellew is going to be a problem.
- Ives St. Alternative
  - Would increase access but would not solve the conflict between public safety vehicles and slow-moving truck traffic
- S. Massey St. Alternative
  - Might work for Sheriff's office but it would be really convoluted for police vehicles
- I-81 Exit Alternative
  - Would reduce truck traffic at Bellew Avenue arriving from I-81 north but would need a second ramp option for access to I-81 south
- Towne Center Alternative
  - Would not solve the public safety vehicle-truck issue and would require police vehicles to take a circuitous route
- Coleman Ave Alternatives

- The project team initially rejected this Alternative because the high traffic volumes on Arsenal Street and the fact that this option is more just redundant access without necessarily resolving other issues
- Chief was member of the Complete Streets Committee which explored the Coleman Avenue option
- While use of Coleman Avenue east entrance onto Arsenal was rejected by the Committee, another option was looked at:
  - Convert portions of the plaza's parking lot into a road with curbs that can accommodate truck traffic connecting the current western entrance (sans signage) to the eastern portion of Coleman Avenue near Macar's
  - Prohibit truck movements on Bellew Ave and instead have them use this new Coleman Avenue Plaza Road
  - Coleman Avenue's eastern stretch would become a dead end so businesses and residents along it would retain access but not be impacted by thru traffic
  - The Police Department would prefer an option to the east of the PSB, but this Coleman Avenue Plaza option could work
  - Purchasing right-of-way/ use of eminent domain might be too expensive
- Other options on side streets off of Arsenal: Haney or Duffy are really narrow / rural feeling and thus not appropriate for this kind of traffic
- CSX put the cement barriers up on Willow St. Vehicles from the PSB used to drive across that all the time, especially for emergencies to the east but this is no longer an option

## APPENDIX A

### Stakeholders Contacted for Interviews

Organization/Firm	Type	Agreed to Participate	Interview/Response Date	Truck Route Study	PSB/Industrial Park Access Study
ABF Freight	Freight/Logistics	No response			
City of Watertown Police Department	Public Safety	Yes	11/9/21		x
Development Authority of the North Country (DANC)	Economic Development	Yes	6/14/21	x	
Erie Materials	Freight/Logistics	Yes	4/5/21	x	x
FedEx Ground Terminal	Freight/Logistics	Declined			
Gaetano Transportation	Freight/Logistics	Yes	3/30/21	x	x
Jefferson County Economic Development (JECD)	Economic Development	Yes	2/26/21		x
Jefferson County Sheriff's Office	Public Safety	Yes	8/17/21		x
Knowlton Technologies	Business	Yes	3/3/21	x	
New York Airbrake	Business	No response			
Northern Logistics	Freight/Logistics				
Renzi's Food Service	Business	Yes	3/2/21	x	x
Roth Industries	Business	No response	3/1/21		
Trucking Association of New York (TANY)	Freight/Logistics	Declined			
Watertown Downtown Business Association	Economic Development	Yes	3/19/21	x	
Watertown Local Development Corporation	Economic Development	Yes	2/25/21	x	x
WESCO Distribution Inc.	Freight/Logistics	Declined			

## APPENDIX B

### Freight and Logistics Company Routing Map

The below map was created in Google MyMaps to document and visualize routes identified by freight and logistics stakeholders, as well as to record comments on proposed alternatives both for the Truck Route Study and the Public Safety Building Access Study.

[Interactive Map](#)

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**listen**  
*The power to*  
**solve**<sup>SM</sup>

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