

# Stakeholder Workshop – Evening Session

Watertown-Jefferson County Area Transportation Council

Brownville Bridge Planning Study

January 31, 2018

American Legion, Village of Brownville

6:00-7:30 pm



## Overview

On Wednesday, January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2018 the Watertown-Jefferson County Area Transportation Council (WJCTC), the region's Metropolitan Planning Organization, hosted a stakeholder workshop at the Village of Brownville American Legion from 6:00-7:30 pm. The purpose of the workshop was to share information about the planning study and obtain community feedback about the replacement and possible relocation of the bridge over the Black River in Brownville, NY. The workshop was attended by public officials, agency staff and members of the community. A full list of attendees is available in Appendix A.

Project website: <http://www.wjctc.org>.

## Workshop Format

Representatives of the MPO and the consultant team provided a brief presentation about the project background, scope, and timeline. Keith Ewald (Barton & Loguidice) described that the purpose of the project, which is to study replacement and possible relocation of the bridge over the Black River in Brownville. He described the project's scope (contractual and geographical) and the project's outcome. Susan Hopkins (Highland Planning) then described efforts to engage the community to date, future opportunities for engagement and a timeline of the project. See the project website for a copy of the full presentation.

During the Q&A session, participants asked for clarification of project boundary, the timeframe of the project, possible changes to vehicle routes, the level of community impact on the decision, and who would ultimately make the decision about the placement of the bridge.

Representatives of the WTCTC and the consultant team noted that the project boundary includes the area shown in the map (see the project website for a copy of the presentation with map) and areas west of the existing bridge. The boundary does not extend very far west of the existing bridge due to proximity with the Route 180 crossing in the Town of Dexter. The timeframe of the planning process is approximately eight months, with an anticipated report on recommendations due in late summer or early fall 2018. Keith reiterated that this a planning study only. Design and construction phases would be considered different projects that will occur after the planning study is completed. NYSDOT Region 7 will select a preferred alternative based upon the findings and recommendations from the planning study, which will include numerous opportunities for public input. The WJCTC is managing the current phase of the project. WJCTC membership includes NYSDOT and local municipalities.

Susan Hopkins explained the meaning of the term "evaluation criteria" and the role the community would play in helping shape those criteria. Attendees were then engaged in a discussion of the following questions:

- What do you like most about the Brownville bridge in its current location? What do you like least?
- What are your biggest concerns about this project?



- What are the greatest opportunities?
- What should we avoid?
- What are the most important factors the planning and design team should consider when identifying and evaluating potential new locations for a river crossing?

## **Summary of Feedback**

A summary of the feedback received at the evening workshop is below.

### ***Positive aspects of the existing bridge:***

- Located away from school zone;
- Has nice views of the waterfall on the Black River;
- Centrally located for efficient travel between destinations;
- Boon to local businesses.

### ***Negative aspects of the existing bridge:***

- Scary to cross;
- Steep approach and blind corner in Paddy Hill;
- Traffic congestion;
- Tractor trailers reversing into road from adjacent industry;
- Challenges for emergency vehicles that these conditions result in.

### ***Concerns about the project:***

- Taking of private property through eminent domain and how that is reimbursed;
  - [Note: Keith Ewald explained that an independent appraisal of the property is made and the owner is then offered fair market value on the property with some room for negotiation.]
- Increasing traffic near school zone that is already congested and dangerous during pick-up and drop-off hours.

### ***Opportunities:***

- Could have benefits for local tourism based on fishing and rafting;
- Smoother flow of traffic;
- No dangerous curves or steep grades;
- Fewer or no traffic signals;
- If the bridge remains in the current location, grades and curves could conceivably be made less extreme.

### ***Other considerations:***

- Take as few properties as possible;
- Avoid school zone;
- Ensure sufficient setback from homes;
- Properties taken off tax rolls and resulting population loss that could increase tax burden for other residents;
- If new location is too far west it will bypass businesses; bad for commerce;
- Emergency services like fire protection in Paddy Hill needs to be accommodated;
- There is a high school to the west so if bridge is located too far in one direction or another school zones become an issue;
- Appearance or aesthetic of bridge;
- Keeping the bridge in the current location would avoid taking property; however, this would result in the lack of any crossing of the Black River between the Town of Dexter and the City of Watertown for several months or years while the new structure is being built.
- Impacted property owners should be notified before the rest of the public.

***Possible locations:***

- Old Rome State Road (Paddy Hill) / Gould Street (Village of Brownville);
- Brownville Cemetery (west end of Village of Brownville);
- Village of Glen Park;
- Floral Drive (Town of Watertown);
- Between General Brown Elementary School and Neenah mill (Village of Brownville);
- Storehouse Street (Village of Brownville).

Other project related materials can be found at: <http://www.wjctc.org>.

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