

The Saratogian (saratogian.com), Serving the Saratoga Springs, N.Y. region

Planners discuss Route 50 Southern Gateway Study

Friday, June 18, 2010 By PATRICK H. DONGES, The Saratogian

SARATOGA SPRINGS — The second public information meeting in the Route 50 Southern Gateway Study was held at 6 p.m. Thursday at the Park Administration Building of Saratoga Spa State Park. Planners and engineers from **Elan Planning, Design & Landscape Architecture** and Greenman-Pedersen Inc. (GPI) Engineering and Construction Services presented one short-term plan — of five being considered — and four long-term options for the route that connects Saratoga Springs with the county capital of Ballston Spa.

Commissioned by the Capital District Transportation Committee (CDTC), the focus of the study is improved accessibility to Spa State Park for pedestrians and bicyclists through the creation of safe connections from both existing and new trails and residential areas on the side of the roadway opposite the park. The first workshop of the study was held Jan. 21.

“We started from that information and built on it,” said Lisa Nagle of ELAN Planning, referring the Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Plan, Saratoga County Green Infrastructure Plan, Geyser Road Multipurpose Trail Plan and other municipal and grassroots initiatives cited while coming up with options under discussion.

The solutions presented focused on the mitigation of traffic at three key intersections at West Fenlon Street and New Street at Ballston Avenue, West Avenue at Route 50, and Geyser Crest Road and the Avenue of the Pines at Route 50. Short-term options to improve pedestrian crossings, the installation of high-visibility crosswalks and the installation of improved, pedestrian-operated traffic signals that would indicate when someone is crossing on a sign with flashing lights, were criticized by some residents as not going far enough to mitigate the traffic on the busy route.

“We’re looking for alternatives that could be implemented quickly and provide a safe crossing,” Peter Faith of GPI said. “It’s still up to a pedestrian to make a safe choice.” The Geyser Road intersection will eventually connect the Geyser Road Trail to the park, but before that trail is complete planners said they considered an improved connection from the shoulder to the existing pedestrian bridge which crosses into the park.

Organizers of the 2-1/2-mile trail, planned to run from the Milton town line to the park, are currently seeking \$80,000 needed to draw up complete architectural plans. Four long-term alternatives were also discussed: a “traditional” option that would maintain all traffic lanes and current traffic control devices with formal bike lanes on both sides of the route and a new sidewalk along the east side; an option which would install three traffic circles, or roundabouts, at the three intersections; and two “road diet” options which would reduce the number of traffic lanes by one or two, leaving room in the median for green space and aesthetic improvements or along the shoulder for dedicated multi-use paths.

“Some people love them, some people hate them,” Faith said to those who were unenthused about the idea of traffic circles. “At the right location they can provide suitable benefits to traffic flow.” Based on the input from Thursday’s meeting, planners will compile a report to present to the study advisory committee, which is made up of representatives from several municipal groups including the CDTC, city of Saratoga Springs, Saratoga County, New York State Department of Transportation and the Capital District Transportation Authority. Those options recommended in the report will be presented to the CDTC and DOT for consideration for funding.

“The critical aspect is always getting the public’s input,” said Bradley Birge, advisory committee member and administrator of planning and economic development for Saratoga Springs.

To view copies of the plans presented at the meeting and leave comments for the advisory committee, go to <http://route50corridorstudy.wordpress.com>.

URL: <http://www.saratogian.com/articles/2010/06/18/news/doc4c1ae4ae00659036641838.prt>

© 2010 saratogian.com, a **Journal Register** Property