

MEETING SUMMARY

Sand Creek Road Complete Streets Study Village of Colonie, NY

Agenda: Focus Group Session #2 – Traffic Advisory Committee / Albany Bicycle Coalition
Date & Time: Thursday July 13, 2023, 6:30 PM – 7:30 PM
Platform: Presentation during monthly Traffic Advisory Committee meeting at Village Hall, 2 Thunder Road, Albany

Project Team Panelists:		
Name:	Representing:	Email
Andris Blumbergs	MJ Engineering & Land Surveying, P.C.	ablumbergs@mjels.com
Lisa Wallin	MJ Engineering & Land Surveying, P.C.	llwallin@mjels.com
Jacob Beeman	Capital Region Transportation Council	jbeeman@cdtcmppo.org

Presentation Summary:

See attached minutes from July 13th Traffic Advisory Committee meeting.

Mr. Gillivan provided comments from several residents via email:

- Mr. Bauer, a resident of 508 Sand Creek Road, stated that he has difficulties turning out of his driveway due to the amount of traffic. Motorists frequently use his driveway to go around vehicles waiting to turn left into Sunset Boulevard.
- Ms. Roberts, a resident of 555 Sand Creek Road, stated that there are several business and residential entrances and exits across the street from her house with no clear delineation between them, creating safety concerns. A signalized mid-block crossing is needed from Delafield Drive to Bauer Park as several pedestrians unsafely cross Sand Creek Road here. Traffic backups during peak times are a concern. Speed is a concern from Bauer Park to Watervliet Shaker Road as the corridor opens up into a straight away.

Roll Plot Comments:

- In the area of the Shaker Run apartments, weeds along the road encroach onto the shoulder, forcing cyclists into the travel lane. These weeds need to be cut back regularly.
- Consider turning mailboxes so that they are parallel to the road to give cyclists more room along the shoulder.
- A curb ramp and a mid-block crossing are needed at the Delafield Drive intersection.
- A roundabout should be considered at the intersection of Sand Creek Road and Computer Drive South.
- Pedestrian connections are needed across Sand Creek Road between Computer Drive South and Wolf Road.

Poster Board Comments:

- Left turns into the Hannaford Plaza are an issue.
- Delays from turning vehicles create bottlenecks, especially with left turns onto Sand Creek Road.
- There is a lack of crosswalks along Sand Creek Road, especially at the Hunting Road intersection and Bauer Park.
- Residents along Sand Creek Road have a difficult time exiting their driveways.
- Bike and pedestrian safety is a concern along Sand Creek Road.
- There are concerns of unsafe passing on Sand Creek Road due to delays / impatience.
- The traffic signals should be coordinated across the three jurisdictions (NYSDOT, Town, and Village).
- There is concern about the future development at the end of Watervliet Shaker Road.
- This study is a great opportunity to create linkage for bicycle users.
- There is a concern about “crosswalks to nowhere”.
- There is no stacking lane at the intersection of Sand Creek Road and Computer Drive South.



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MINUTES
VILLAGE OF COLONIE TRAFFIC COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, JULY 13, 2023

The Village of Colonie Traffic Committee meeting was held on Thursday, July 13, 2023, at 2 Thunder Rd, Albany, NY 12205. Chairman Prevratil opened the meeting with the pledge of allegiance at 6:30 p.m.

Roll Call:	Chairman, Frank Prevratil	Present
	Dan Hornick	Present
	John Gillivan	Absent
	George Lashoff	Absent
	Les Samiof	Present
	Michael Normandin	Present
	Liasion Ed Sim	Present
	CPD Liaison Investigator DePaulo	Absent
	Kevin France	Present
	Coordinator Hannah Curran	Present

The minutes from the regularly scheduled June 8th meeting were reviewed by the present members of the committee. Mr. Lashoff made a motion to approve the minutes, and Mr. Samiof seconded this motion.

Vote: All in favor.

Liasion Sim introduced the Capital Region Transportation Council and MJ Engineering as the groups working on the Sand Creek Road Complete Streets study.

Mr. Jacob Beeman, from the CRTC, explained that the Study Advisory Committee was created to involve a myriad of agencies that have a stake in the Sand Creek Corridor. These agencies include the Village of Colonie, Town of Colonie, Albany County, CDTA, CRTC, South Colonie School District, CDRPC and DOT. He described the study area, which covers the stretch of Sand Creek Road between Wolf Road and Watervliet Shaker Road. Because this corridor is so highly traveled and connects many destinations, the study at hand intends to make recommendations to improve travel for all modes of transportation. A complete street is a street designed for all users and all modes of transportation. At the completion of the study, recommendations such as curb

extensions, bike lanes, widened shoulders, among others, *may* be made, based on calculations and other public input. It is important to consider the modal hierarchy, that offers it is not practical for all modes of transportation to be prioritized the same on a corridor, and this may be reflected in the concept recommendations. Further, it is also important to note that the future maintenance of these suggested changes should also be taken into consideration, and especially with Sand Creek Road, since it includes more than one municipality. Mr. Beeman went over the study milestones, beginning with the initiation of the study in Winter 2023, and the existing conditions summary that was presented in the Spring. Throughout the Summer, numerous public input sessions have been held to gather thoughts and concerns regarding Sand Creek Road. A draft concept plan will be available during the Fall of 2023, and another public input session will be held regarding these suggestions. Finally, in the Winter of 2023/2024, the final adopted plan will be made available to the Mayor and Board of Trustees. The completed report will then be used to apply for state and federal funding to implement these changes.

Mr. Andris Blumbergs, from MJ Engineering, introduced the existing conditions report for the project. He explained the difference between the land and zoning use along the corridor and noted some of the current bicycle and pedestrian accommodations present. The 5-year crash history was also analyzed and presented, which highlights how many crashes occurred at the intersections in question. It was also noted that for these intersections, the Village of Colonie, the Town of Colonie and DOT are involved in operating their respective traffic signals. Mr. Blumbergs stated that traffic counts were conducted over a 72-hour period from Tuesday, 2/14, to Thursday, 2/16. This resulted in an average of 10,114 cars traveling along the corridor daily. The turning movement counts were conducted during morning and afternoon peak times on March 7th. These counts were then used to determine the level of service, and how well the intersections seem to be operating. On average, according to these calculations, it appears that the Hunting Road and Computer Drive South intersections are operating between “excellent to good” levels. Chairman Prevratil asked who was monitoring the turns, and Mr. Blumbergs responded that it was representatives from MJ who physically recorded the turning movements.

Chairman Prevratil stated that he was shocked by the level of service determinations and claimed that it doesn't reflect what he sees daily. Liasion Sim added that he previously had this discussion with the Study Advisory Committee, as he shares these concerns. He reminded the committee that these are just the observed conditions, and it highlights the importance of including public input. Mr. Ed Brennan, representative of the Albany Bike Coalition, asked what the weather conditions were when the calculations were taken. Mr. Blumbergs stated that it was likely a sunny day, which is typically chosen to ensure accuracy of measurements.

Mr. Beeman added that there will be a section of the final report that will include a narrative of the observed conditions, as the Study Advisory Committee went on a site walk. It was noted that there are no crosswalks currently across Sand Creek Road, and sidewalks only on one side of the road. There were significant backups viewed, and especially with cars trying to make a left onto Sand Creek Road. It was also noted that the “Welcome to the Village of Colonie” sign has been hit numerous times and has had to be replaced.

Mr. Lashoff asked if this information would be available online, and Mr. Blumbergs stated yes, that the presentation would be posted. He explained that the Study Advisory Committee would

be meeting with business stakeholders the following week, and the input sessions would be concluded with a large public meeting on July 24th at the Recreation Center. Again, he reiterated that the draft concept plan would be made available by the Fall. Liasion Sim added that flyers have been mailed out to every Village resident notifying them of the meeting. Mr. Blumbergs also directed everyone to the project website, which includes a link to a live survey where residents can give their input. At the conclusion of the presentation, the consultants invited committee members to provide their comments.

Chairman Prevratil shared that he feels the Hunting Road/Sand Creek Road intersection is one of the greatest problems. He added that right turns aren't so bad, but trying to make left turns onto Sand Creek is nearly impossible. If there's a backup caused by a car attempting to make a left, other cars try to take unsafe right turns by going around them. Chairman Prevratil mentioned that while he was leary about the initial data collected, he appreciated the feedback gathered from the site walk, and agrees with those comments.

Mr. Lashoff stated that he feels that the lack of crosswalks is a great concern. He added that he went door to door on Sand Creek Road to bring awareness to the project. He was concerned with individuals in wheelchairs that often use Sand Creek Road and adding crosswalks to make their commutes safer. He mentioned that residents had discussed suggesting a crosswalk by Hunting Road, and also to connect over to Bauer Park. Mr. Lashoff asked if the proposed development of apartments off of Watervliet-Shaker Road had been taken into consideration, as those residents will likely add to the traffic and number of cars on Sand Creek Road. Mr. Blumbergs stated that they will take this into consideration.

Mr. Brennan shared that Central Avenue has become increasingly dangerous for bicyclists, which leads them to using Sand Creek Road as an alternative. However, traveling on the sidewalks can be hazardous, but there is currently no bike lane. He added that he has noticed some homeowners have turned their mailboxes sideways, which creates more room on the sidewalk. Mr. Brennan also mentioned that there is a gutter on the opposite side of Sand Creek Road that poses a danger to bicyclists. He added that in Albany, they have depressed the gutter to make it part of the bike trail and suggested this as a possible solution.

Chairman Prevratil stated that he sees the need for stacking lanes at the Computer Drive South intersection, as cars also try to make unsafe passes. He added that the traffic signal at Sunset Boulevard helps to break traffic up, so perhaps a signal at Hunting Road would also be helpful. Mr. Lashoff agreed that a turning lane at Computer Drive South would be ideal. Ms. Lisa Wallin, from MJ Engineering, added that this feedback will be helpful once the concepts are drafted.

Mr. Hornick stated that traffic calming is one issue that should be addressed on Sand Creek Road. He added that ultimately, Sand Creek Road is a residential road, and he hopes that future development is taken into consideration with this study. He stressed the need for safe pedestrian crosswalks, but highlighted the problem that the crosswalk would lead to nowhere, since the sidewalk is only on one side of the street. He stated that with regard to bicyclists, we have the opportunity to create a linkage through the Village on this corridor, but the road would need to have some improvements made before it could be utilized as such. Mr. Hornick also asked the consultants if they have ever worked with a municipality that has so much different ownership of

the traffic signals. Mr. Blumbergs said yes, that they have a similar problem with a study between East and North Greenbush. Mr. Hornick stated that the residents that live on Sand Creek Road have difficulty getting in and out of their driveways, and this should be taken into consideration when timing the traffic signals. He hopes that through this study, we can create a more complete, calmer, and residential focus for our community. Liasion Sim added that at a previous meeting, the possibility of moving utilities underground had been brought up. This would result in no poles, bringing more of a community character to the street.

Mr. Brennan asked who maintains the brush on the side of Watervliet-Shaker Road that opposes the entrance to Shaker Run. He stated that the road is very narrow there, and when the brush is too overgrown, it makes it extremely difficult to travel. Liasion Sim stated that would be the town's responsibility, but the town is part of the Study Advisory Committee, so this information could be relayed back to them. Mr. Brennan also shared that while it appears there has been a decline in crashes since COVID-19, there has been an increase in fatalities and serious injuries when crashes do occur. He stated that this is due to increases in size and weight of new cars, as well as increased speeding. He stressed the importance of traffic calming and reducing speeds to reduce serious injuries from occurring. Chairman Prevratil agreed that speeding is a problem, and especially so on Central Avenue.

Mr. France asked if there were times and/or weather conditions associated with the crash history data, and Mr. Blumbergs stated that they could gather more information. Mr. France added that if some of these crashes were weather related, perhaps visibility issues should be addressed. Liasion Sim shared that the majority of the crashes are rear end crashes, and likely caused as a driver is waiting to make a left turn off of Sand Creek Road. Ms. Rima Shamieh, from CRTC, stated that the crash reports indicate a cluster of crashes on the Wolf Road end of Sand Creek Road, East of Sunset Boulevard. She added that she believes the character of the corridor changes here. Chairman Prevratil shared that he has witnessed cars passing each other on that section of the road, between Sunset and Computer Drive South.

Mr. Lashoff asked about the possibility of adding a traffic circle at the Hunting Road intersection. Ms. Wallin stated that this would change the flow of the intersection and may worsen some of the current problems. However, she added that this could certainly be looked into. Mr. Samiof added that some of the houses on Sand Creek Road are very close to the street, so it may not be possible.

Mr. Normandin addressed Mr. Gillivan's comments and traffic counts, which were also submitted to the consultants on his behalf in his absence. Mr. Normandin stated that Mr. Gillivan found the greatest number of pedestrians to be those traveling on the sidewalks, so it is important to keep their safety in mind while considering improvements. Pedestrian traffic is likely to increase as motor vehicle traffic does as well. Chairman Prevratil noted some of Mr. Gillivan's comments, as he went to speak with numerous residents from Sand Creek Road. He addressed one resident that asked why a light was placed at Computer Drive South in the first place. It was discussed that generally, this is a safer way to get in and out of Hannaford Plaza, but it could likely be improved and made safer with a turning lane.

Mr. Blumbergs handed out flyers and business cards to members of the committee, again, stressing the need for public feedback in order to create a comprehensive report. There is a live survey on the project website that residents should be encouraged to take as a means for providing their feedback.

Chairman Prevratil and members of the committee thanked the consultants for their time and presentation.

A motion was made by Mr. Hornick to adjourn the meeting at 7:32 p.m. This motion was seconded by Mr. Lashoff.

Vote: All in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Hannah Curran
Traffic Advisory Committee Coordinator
Village of Colonie