

Colchester Ave: Bikeways, Parking & Intersection Safety

Advisory Committee Meeting #3 – February 18, 2021, 6:00 – 8:00 PM, Via Zoom

The presentation and a video of the meeting are posted at: <http://bit.ly/colchester-ave>

Meeting Notes

1. Introductions

Jenn Conley of VHB shared that the meeting was being recorded.

The meeting was called to order at 6PM by Jason Charest of the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC). The goal for this meeting is to agree on a preferred design alternative to forward to the Department of Public Works (DPW) Commission, the Transportation, Energy and Utilities Committee (TEUC) of the City Council, and the full City Council. Introductions were made.

2. Public Comment Period.

Note: Concept 2 East provides raised, separated bike lanes east of East Avenue. Concept 2 West provides raised, separated bike lanes west of East Avenue. Intersection 2 (East Avenue and Colchester Avenue) Alternative provides for traffic signal and striping upgrades at the existing signalized intersection)

Zoe Kennedy, an Intern with Sustainable Transportation Vermont, expressed support for Concept 2 East, Concept 2 West, and Intersection Alternative 2. She feels this is a unique opportunity to make Colchester Avenue a model corridor by providing safe and efficient passage for all users. She acknowledged that other members of public are split between Concept 2 and Concept 4 for the intersection of Colchester Ave & East Ave. She's lived on Colchester Avenue and she feels safer with a roadway focused on pedestrians and bikes rather than a roundabout which is focused on cars.

Lani Ravin of UVM asked about additional comments received after the public meeting. Jason Charest responded that he received emails from four or five supporters of Concept 2 East & West with one or two also expressing support for Intersection Alternative 2.

3. Takeaways from the Alternatives Presentation and Public Meeting

Drew Gingras of VHB reviewed the agenda and noted the goal of the meeting is to select a preferred alternative to advance for consideration by city committees and ultimately the City Council. He reviewed the project scope/schedule.

Drew recapped the alternatives that were presented at the January 11th public meeting. There was strong support for Concept 2 West and raised separated bike lanes in the east section. There were concerns about the "mixing zone" presented in Concept 3A for the east end section. Feedback for the roundabout option was mixed. Participants encouraged addressing

bus considerations. With this input, and a series of polls at the meeting, the Project Team refined the alternatives and eliminated those that were not supported by the public (Corridor Concepts 1 and 4, and Intersection Alternatives 1 and 3). The Advisory Committee agreed with this action.

4. Review and Discuss Remaining Corridor Concepts

Corridor Concepts to Move Forward for Advisory Committee Evaluation

Corridor Concepts	General Description
Concept 2 West of East Avenue	Raised, separated bike lanes in both directions
Concept 2 East of East Avenue	Raised, separated bike lanes in both directions
Concept 3 East of East Avenue	Raised, separated bike lanes both directions with enhancements (including parking for businesses)
Concept 3A East of East Avenue	Raised, separated bike lanes both directions with enhancements and the modal “mixing zone” at Kampus Kitchen

East Ave Intersection Concepts to Pair with Corridor Concepts

Intersection Alternatives	East Ave. Intersection Alternatives
Alternative 2	Signal equipment and striping upgrades with realignment of the intersection and new bike signal
Alternative 4	Roundabout

Drew asked David Cawley of the Ward 1 NPA to share his data collection results for parking utilization outside Kampus Kitchen. Dave, Jason Stuffle, Jack, Zoe, and Nathan observed traffic at Kampus Kitchen. They found 350 daily customers during the week with peak traffic from 11AM-1PM. Sixty-five percent of customers arrived by car and 35 percent arrived by foot. Over 50 percent of drivers parked in the nearby UVM lot when the three designated 15-minute parking spots in front of the deli were occupied. Volumes are lower during the winter and also due to the pandemic. The team observed that the available parking is vital to the operations of Kampus Kitchen, as previously assumed.

The two 15-minute parking spots beyond Kampus Kitchen were not used, likely because the UVM lot is closer to the deli. Jason Stuffle feels the UVM lot can be reconfigured to hold more cars and thereby remove the 15-minute spaces in front of the deli. Dave noted that the delivery trucks use both the 15-minute spaces and the UVM lot.

Ashley Bishop of UVM Medical Center asked if the lane widths in Concept 3A East allows vehicles to pull over for emergency vehicles to pass. Drew responded that the lanes are 12-foot wide, the minimum required for emergency vehicles to pass. Jason Stuffle asked if Concept 2 East connects the bike lane to the Riverside Avenue bike lane. Karen responded that there is a known preferred alternative for the reconfiguration of the Colchester Ave & Barrett St intersection, and that the preferred alternative would seek to tie into this in the engineering design phase.

Drew reviewed the concepts in more detail and provided an evaluation matrix (see online presentation for details). Jim Barr of UVM reminded the group that parking was removed along the north side of Colchester Avenue when the recent bicycle facility improvements were made,

and that this was controversial at the DPW Commission (where he is a member). If parking spaces are eliminated in Concept 3A East, it could be a problem. Karen Sentoff of VHB noted that the spaces in front of Kampus Kitchen could be used as a bus pull over.

Jim has spoken to UVM and its partners. They support short-term parking at the small Centennial Field lot but no long-term residential/overnight parking.

Zoe Kennedy has 121 signatures on a petition in support of Concept 2 East, Concept 2 West, and Intersection Alternative 2.

Jennifer Conley of VHB noted that the public didn't support the "mixing zone" and the team feels that it can revise the cross-section shown along the remainder of the corridor (i.e. the bike lane and sidewalk can maintain their standard 5' width) in front of the Kampus Kitchen. Dave noted that this is an expensive project and the utility impacts are great for all the options. It will take time to raise funds to implement the plan. This allows time for us to look more closely at the parking issues. Concept 3A East could unite the community.

Jason Charest discussed the options with Chris Damiani of GMT who was unable to attend the meeting. GMT is interested in concepts that remove striped lanes on the street in order to allow buses to reach the curb for pick up/drop off. All the concepts under consideration achieve that. On-street parking can complicate buses reaching the curb. It's not a critical issue for them and all the alternatives under consideration work for their operations. They will work with DPW to identify and potentially revise their stop locations.

Jason Stuffle would like to see a safe place for delivery vehicles to park to avoid blocking through traffic. Perhaps this could be achieved with the included parking/loading bump-outs, and/or side street parking.

Jack shared that he supports Concept 2 because we need to be serious about shifting our transportation system. Transportation is the number one cause of the climate crisis; automobile access and roadway accidents are a leading cause of death. We are car dependent. Maintaining the level of parking doesn't embrace the future, rather it perpetuates an auto-centric culture. Shifting away from cars and parking is part of a comprehensive transition that will change behavior. This has been proven in other cities. This is a big project and a big investment and will last a long time.

The seven-member committee held a straw poll for two options:

- 1) **Concept 2** has raised, separated bike lanes and no on-street parking. Members in support: Jason Stuffle, Jack, Jim, Ashley.
- 2) **Modified Concept 3A** has the mixing zone removed in favor of a consistent 5-foot bike lane and 5-foot sidewalk and retains the parking/bus pull-offs/loading zones. Members in support: Will, Mario, Dave

Jason Stuffle sees these two options as similar except for the three cut-ins that can support buses, businesses, and deliveries. He feels this distinction is splitting hairs and we have time to work out these details. He wants continuous bike facilities and sidewalk throughout corridor and doesn't want on-street residential parking.

Nicole Losch of DPW has heard consistently that the community wants to support neighborhood businesses and Kampus Kitchen parking.

Dave thinks we should not punt on the decision about parking. If we eliminate the parking, Kampus Kitchen and some neighbors will actively oppose the project. He feels we can't alienate these people at this point in the process.

Jim agrees with Dave's thoughts and may be convinced to switch to modified Concept 3A East because eliminating parking is a challenge.

Will Clavelle of CEDO supports Concept 3A East because he supports Kampus Kitchen. Residential bump-out parking isn't an issue for him. It was noted that in the beginning of this study, everyone said they wanted to accommodate the businesses while make it safer for walkers and bikers. In the future, if these spaces are not needed, we could make those three spaces into something else – gardens, park space, etc., but they should be kept in the preferred alternative for now.

The group discussed moving forward with modified Concept 3A East with a recommendation the bump-outs be used for businesses (customers and delivery) and transit, but the preference was established that these areas should not be used for residential parking. Jack supports transit pull-offs but not on-street parking. He feels there are always people who will support the status quo when faced with change. Dave agrees that people will adapt to change but sometimes people are resistant to change because they don't have options to respond. The committee has an obligation to facilitate this change for everyone. If we support Concept 2, we've walked away from the parking issue. We have to help the businesses, as directly expressed in the project purpose & need statement.

The committee held a vote to determine if Concept 3A, modified to allow bump-outs only for non-residential uses, e.g. transit and businesses (customers/delivery), could be agreed upon. The committee fell one vote short of unanimity, with Jack Hanson voting against. The committee agreed to move forward with this recommendation.

5. Review and Discuss Remaining Intersection Alternatives

Karen Sentoff of VHB presented the alternatives for the Colchester Avenue & East Avenue intersection. Alternative 2 includes upgrades the signal equipment and lane striping, realigns the intersection, and adds a new bike signal. Alternative 4 is a roundabout and also realigns the intersection. Karen provided an evaluation matrix for the intersection alternatives (see online presentation for details).

There was discussion about safety for vehicles, cyclists, and pedestrians in the roundabout alternative. A roundabout reduces the number of conflict points as compared to a four-way intersection, thereby making it safer for vehicles and pedestrians – as research shows.

A preliminary safety benefit-cost analysis was presented to the Committee, which characterizes the return on investment for the safety improvement for the particular intersection. Alternative 2 has a higher benefit/cost analysis ratio (1.12) than Alternative 4 (0.40). Mario Dupigny-Giroux from VTrans calculated this metric. Dave Cawley requested the details of the analysis and Mario was happy to send them over via email.

Jason Stuffle feels the analysis does not fully calculate the personal cost for those who experience crashes. Jim feels roundabouts benefit vehicles more than cyclists. He would like to see a western-leg pedestrian crosswalk included in Alternative 2. Jenn noted that the roundabout is a viable alternative that would operate well in this location. From a regional transportation perspective, Ashley prefers a standard intersection. Dave believes the roundabout would help address the High Crash Location (HCL) classification of the intersection, it provides long-term climate benefits, and is aesthetically pleasing. Jason Charest noted GMT would've expressed preference for Alternative 2 had they been able to be present for the meeting but could work with the roundabout if that was the committee's preference.

The group voted as follows:

- Alternative 4 Roundabout: Dave, Jason Stuffle
- Alternative 2 Signalized Intersection: Will, Mario, Ashley, Jim, Jack

The recommendation is that Alternative 2, a signalized intersection (with the addition of a crosswalk on the western leg) will move forward. Nicole asked that those who supported Alternative 4 to let the Project Team know if there are any points that would sway them to Alternative 2.

The Colchester Avenue Bikeways, Parking & Intersection Safety Advisory Committee recommends that the City of Burlington and Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission move forward with Corridor Concept 2 West, Corridor Concept 3A East modified to remove the mixing zone for a continuous 5-foot sidewalk and 5-foot bike lane and allow bump-outs for non-residential use only. For the intersection of Colchester Avenue & East Avenue, the Advisory Committee recommends Alternative 2, a realigned signalized intersection with an additional crosswalk across the western leg of the intersection.

6. Next Steps

- Preferred alternative refinements
- Draft Report development
- Preferred Alternative recommendation to the DPW Commission, Transportation Energy & Utilities Committee (TEUC), and the City Council

Jenn and Jason thanked the committee for their enthusiasm and hard work. The meeting was adjourned at 8:20PM.

Participants

AC Members: Jim Barr, Ashley Bond, Dave Cawley, Will Clavelle, Mario Dupigny-Giroux, Jack Hanson, Lani Ravin (Alternate), Jason Stuffle.

Guests: Zoe Kennedy and Nathan Greenstein (Sustainable Transportation Vermont), Teagan Betori.

Study Team: Jason Charest (CCRPC), Eleni Churchill (CCRPC), Jenn Conley (VHB), Marshall Distel (CCRPC), Drew Gingras (VHB), Nicole Losch (Burlington DPW), Diane Meyerhoff (TSA), Karen Sentoff (VHB).