A public information meeting on the Route 146 over the Mohawk River Project was held on October 14, 2015 at the Rexford Fire Station to review the upcoming project and respond to questions and concerns. After a brief welcome from Rick Countermine of the Rexford Fire District and Tom Hoffman, Project Manager from the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT), a presentation was given by Roger Laime of AECOM, project designer for the design/build team that will construct the project.

Roger Laime began his presentation with a brief history of the development of the project. He said that the design/build team was given several parameters by NYSDOT – summarized as 1) maintain traffic during construction and 2) limit impacts to the roadway footprint, river navigation, pedestrian access, visual impact, historic properties and noise during construction.

There are four major elements of work: 1) replace the Route 146 Bridge, 2) build a roundabout at Route 146/Aqueduct Road, 3) widen Route 146 from Aqueduct Road to Riverview Road, with intersection improvements at Route 146 and Riverview Road, and 4) construct a Bike/Pedestrian Rail from the Mohawk-Hudson Bike/Hike Trail to the Town of Clifton Park Bike Route at Riverview Road.

Initial design and investigation work (subsurface borings) began in July 2015. Utility relocations and clearing of trees and vegetation will occur in the fall.

In 2016 the project’s contractor, Tioga Construction, will begin bridge construction (i.e., build foundations and erect steel), build the roundabout by using staged construction and temporary signals, widen Route 146, install new signals and build the bike trail. Temporary causeways will be built to construct the bridge (with the current bridge remaining intact until the new one is complete), with two main areas for river vessels to pass underneath. Noisy work activities will be limited to 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. and measures will be taken to limit dust.

The roundabout will be built in three stages, beginning on the eastern side. Once completed, traffic will be shifted to the newly built area while the work continues on the western side. In the third stage, grading and resurfacing the existing public parking area at the junction of Aqueduct and Route 146 with permeable pavement will be completed. The contractor will use temporary signals at Aqueduct Road; the staging will allow traffic steadily flow through the area while construction is underway.

East Street, in the vicinity of the roundabout, will be reconfigured to terminate in a cul de sac that will accommodate parking for people who want to use the Mohawk-Hudson Bike/Hike Trail.

Roger Laime detailed the new roadway layout, which will expand from two-lanes to four-lanes with painted medians placed in areas to serve as a safety refuge and to guide traffic into desired turning and through lanes. The left-turn lane on Riverview will be extended to 1,000 feet. The proposed road design generated numerous questions and comments from the audience.
The project will be completed in 2017. The new bridge’s concrete deck will be placed, along with the guiderail and bridge lighting. The existing bridge (deck and foundations) will be demolished and removed, followed by final paving.

Roger Laime said that a tree inventory has been completed and the design/build team will come up with a replacement plan. Throughout construction an archeologist will be on-site monitoring activity to make sure the historic Erie Canal walls are not disturbed. The Niskayuna Rowing and high school rowing clubs will have access to the river during construction, with limited periods (such as when performing demolition or erecting steel) when the river will be closed to vessels.

The presentation was followed by a one-hour public discussion as noted below.

**Roundabout at Aqueduct Road**

*How will people be able to walk across Aqueduct Road?*
There will be crosswalks at the roundabout, with pedestrian refuge islands in the middle of the crosswalks.

*Will there be any warning to motorists, such as a flashing beacon, when people are in the crosswalk?*
No, this is not in the plan as it would be atypical in a rural roundabout. Pedestrians always have the right of way in a roundabout. Roundabouts are designed to move traffic slowly so pedestrians will be more visible to motorists.

*There is a shallow angle for cars going on Aqueduct Road at the roundabout. Rowers rely on the signal to exit the parking area and head towards Balltown Road. It will be difficult exiting the rowing club. The roundabout will put them at increased risk. Is a caution light at the roundabout feasible?*
The speed limit at roundabouts in New York State is 15 mph. Through education and experience drivers will lean how to navigate a roundabout.

*Tractor trailers will not be able to go around the roundabout without going over the medians and using both lanes.*
We believe trucks will follow the guidelines on how to drive on a roundabout.

*Coming out of Williams Street headed north or south I will have to cross two lanes of traffic that will not be slowing down in the roundabout.*
All southbound traffic will have to stop for you once your vehicle is in the roundabout as you have the right of way. The roundabout at Aqueduct will be similar to a two-lane roundabout in Latham, a former traffic circle that is now a roundabout and which works much better. A roundabout is designed different from the traditional traffic circle. It has a relatively sharp turn for entering traffic so the traffic has to slow down.

*It seems like the roundabout is designed with sharp granite edges that can cut tires. We have to change that.*

*How can you force the southbound traffic to slow down before entering the roundabout as the turn into it seems shallow?*
It is not obvious on the plan but the road turns slightly left at the end of the bridge before the turn into the roundabout. The area will also have raised sidewalks and curbs, cues to the driver to slow down.
What's going to happen to the garage at the corner of Aqueduct Street?
The limits of the project are away from the garage property so there should not be any impact.

Skip Smith, owner of the garage at Aqueduct said he appreciates the project improvements, especially the closing of an entrance to his property that some motorists used as a cut-through. Getting into his property will be improved but he thinks getting out may be dicey. He wondered if the turn into Aqueduct will be sharper than it is now.

**Difficulty getting on and off Route 146 (between the Bridge and Riverview Road)**
Why don’t you have a turning lane at Main Street? There is no trouble getting in from Route 146; the problem is getting out.
Designing the road is a balancing act. NYSDOT studied this and did not want to widen the road any more than it is. Currently we have designed an 11-foot median (stripped area) that can be used as a turning lane.

As a community resident of the village on Main Street, I find it hard to go northbound. Has any consideration been given to installing a traffic light?
Nothing in the design analysis completed has triggered the need for a signal. By going from 1-2 lanes, spacing and flow on Route 146 will improve.

At a previous meeting we were shown on a computer generated model how the roundabout will keep traffic flowing, providing no gap. Trying to make left hand turns in and out of Main Street with 4 lanes will be difficult. We were told access was considered in the design and that bigger gaps were anticipated. If not, what can we expect? Richard Filkins said in a letter that we will have a left turning lane.

When was the most recent traffic study done and at what time of day?
The latest study was conducted 2014. It studied traffic at peak hours, when traffic is heaviest.

I would like to invite you to come for coffee at 8 a.m. and try to leave for Schenectady from my house.

The movement of boats in and out of the yacht club is very difficult. We would like to have a smart light at the entrance, one that would only be triggered when there was a vehicle needed. Who would make the decision?
NYSDOT would decide.

It’s a death trap getting on and off 146 at Main Street. A traffic light there will stop cars while a roundabout will increase speeds.
The signal timing of the traffic light will change to adjust to the new road so turning movements are expected to improve.

I live on McLane. In previous meetings we were promised a center lane to be used as a refuge for vehicles headed towards Schenectady before merging into traffic. There is no center lane shown.
We will go back and look at this.

You have to understand our frustration. We’ve come to these meetings before and do not feel like we have been listened to.
You have not been ignored. We will look at your issues again.
Riverview Road intersection
In the morning, traffic backs up on Riverview Road about a mile from the intersection with 146. In the evening, it is about a 20 minute wait on Riverview Road to turn left southbound on 146. Are there plans to add a turn lane at this intersection?
We will be installing a left-turn lane approximately 1,000 feet in length.

At Stewarts there should be a right-turn lane for vehicles turning on Riverview Road. Better traffic signage is needed to direct motorists to yield the right of way when they do not have an arrow. Available property is scarce at that intersection. There is an historic commission property on the south west and a lot of underground utilities. We do not have the Right-of-Way to widen much further.

Are we getting one or two left-turn lanes southbound on 146 at Riverview Road? I thought it was two. One left-turn lane will be built.

Right now there is no ability to turn right or northbound at Riverview (though there is almost enough shoulder for a lane). I would like to see a right-turn lane there. During our analysis we concluded lengthening the left- turn lane at that intersection will improve traffic conditions in all directions.

In many places they have signals with red turn arrows when the time to make a turn is done. Could we have this on Route 146? We will look into this.

Construction staging area, noise, traffic and land impacts
Where will the staging areas be located?
The exact laydown areas for equipment and materials have not been resolved as yet. Workers will need to park near heavy equipment and will not be allowed to park along local streets or in parking lots.

Will you notify residents when blasting will occur because blasting can set off triggers for veterans?
The design is not yet complete but do not believe blasting will be needed in this project. There will be noise generated by hoe rams as they break up the concrete. We have noted your comment.

How much private land will this project impact?
Early on in the project NYSDOT acquired all the private property needed for the project. The project will only use DOT right-of-way. A member of the public confirmed that the state had already acquired his property.

The Environmental Assessment indicates this project would cause an increase in noise. What have you done to mitigate noise? Will there be sound berms; noise barriers?
The noise analysis done determined there would be no significant change as a result of the project. Certain thresholds have to be met to install noise barriers and were not met. We looked at measures to mitigate noise to consider how long and how tall would barriers have to be to reduce noise. The bigger the sound barrier, the more property is taken. A gentleman from the audience spoke up and said, “I want to keep as much of my yard as I can.”

Will traffic have to stop during construction?
Our plan is to keep traffic flowing throughout construction. There may be intermittent interruption to traffic flow when equipment is moved within the construction area but this will occur usually at night.
**Will there be night construction?**
Yes, but the contractor will only be allowed to do work that does not generate a lot of noise.

**Trees**

*Does the tree inventory include trees to be cut down by the utility company as well as NYSDOT?*
Yes it does.

*There are trees north of Main Street on the west side that obscure visibility. Will these trees be cut down?*
Some of the tree line will be taken but not a significant amount.

**Project design**

*Was any consideration given in the design to flooding; seismic impacts?*
The bridge was designed for waters in excess of a 100-year flood. The elevation of the bridge, 20 feet above high water line, was determined by the US Coast Guard. It is a very high bridge and is at maximum elevation. The bridge foundation and piers are designed to withstand the forces of water, earthquakes and boat collisions.

*Have you considered the new casino traffic that will be coming through Aqueduct Road?*
Yes. A supplemental traffic study has been done and it concluded very little additional casino traffic would be on Aqueduct. Most would be using Freeman’s Bridge and I-90.

*Will utilities be buried as part of this project?*
Some utilities will be buried near the bridge but it won’t be a significant amount, about 60-80 feet in length. Burying utilities is very costly so the current plan is to re-install them above ground.

*Will the view of the river from the bridge be affected, like it has been on the new Gateway Bridge, where a solid concrete barrier obstructed the view?*
The new bridge will have a steel pole railing that will allow motorists to see the river on the west side. On the east side of the bridge there will be two steel railings in order to accommodate the bicycle/pedestrian trail. It will still be see-through but will not have the same visibility of the west side.

*It is common for bike trails to pass under bridges. This area also has an historic aqueduct that should be accessible for people.*
We looked at making connections from the new bike/ped path but the topography is steep. Slopes would need to be constructed and we did not have the land. There is access to the aqueduct along a path by the Schenectady Yacht Club. We assume that this project will clear the vegetation and open up access.

In addition to public dialogue at the meeting, several written comments were placed in the comment box, sharing the following ideas that were not previously mentioned above:

- Please consider signage for turning/yield for traffic that enters the intersection heading west at Riverview Road onto 146 south.
- Can the sensors at the Route 146/Williams Street intersection that were disabled several years ago be reinstalled to assist motorists getting out of Williams Street?
• Riverview Road needs more turning lanes. Please don’t shorten the light. At times the traffic backs up to past the second club on Riverview and it takes 30 minutes to get up to the light at Route 146.
• A center lane to turn left from McLane and Hollister onto Route 146 south is needed to allow merging. It is already a dangerous crossing into a 2-lane road, now it will be virtually non-stop traffic.
• Is it possible to lower the speed limit to 30 mph from Glenridge Road, Balltown and Blue Barnes Road intersection down through the roundabout? A great deal of the traffic is rush hour traffic – rushing to work and rushing home. I think a new traffic study is needed.
• How safe is the existing bridge?
• Please provide tie down anchors under the bridge for putting a boat dock from the rowing clubs. What a perfect covered boat dock.
• The design looks reasonable. Is it possible to get any of the traffic studies in downloadable format?
• The person that gave the presentation did an excellent job. Well done.
• Provide a safe, continuous two-way turning lane with appropriate arrows throughout, not a patchwork of two short turning lanes and slightly out of the way detours for going left from the village neighborhood.
• Provide a striped crossing at Route 146/Main Street and the roundabout at Aqueduct with warning signs and flashing beacons to alert motorists of a pedestrian crossing.
• Provide a roadway and bridge design that fits with the historic and rural character of the community and Rexford village.