

MEETING MINUTES

MAIN STREET MULTI-MODAL ACCESS AND REVITALIZATION PROJECT

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING NO. 6

DATE: March 08, 2006

TIME: 12:00 Noon

LOCATION: Buffalo Place Conference Room

ATTENDEES: See attached sign-in sheet

ATTACHMENTS: Meeting Sign In Sheet

John Bidell distributed an agenda to all attendees. The main agenda was to review the traffic model, to resolve issues related to the train mounted lifts and bridge plates, station location and rail car modification/operational issues. The following is a summary of issues discussed:

Train Mounted Lifts and Train Mounted Bridge Plates

John Bidell provided the AC members and update on the issues discussed during the Technical Group meeting earlier in the morning. John Bidell described the train mounted lifts on the train car and a lift on the platform. Major issues discussed are as follows:

- John Bidell stated that the train mounted lift operation requires a minimum of 2 minutes to load or unload a passenger requiring assistance for the best-case scenario. John Bidell stated that apart from the delays, the train mounted lifts would cost approximately \$6 million of the initial construction cost, and the lifts on the trains would have to be provided prior to the completion of the first phase of construction. The cost of the lifts would severely affect the funding for the first phase.
- John Bidell stated that the traffic model demonstrates the real time delays to vehicular traffic due to the car mounted lift operations. Overall, this option is not a feasible option and therefore the technical group recommends that the train mounted lift option should not be considered further.
- John Bidell stated that in order to provide a 2' setback of a fixed object as required by the City of Buffalo standards (minimum clearance requirements), the station platform would be 2 feet away from the curb. This offset would create a gap between the platform and the train. In order to safely board the train this gap would have to be bridged. John Bidell stated that there are two options to mitigate this problem. One is to provide a train mounted bridge plate and the second is to provide a platform mounted bridge plate.
- John Bidell mentioned that the NFTA has studied the train mounted bridge plate option and is of the opinion that that the it would only be as wide as the door and would not bridge the rest of the gap along the platform creating a hazard to the public. In order to do so, a railing would have to be provided along the remaining section of the platform, which in turn would restrict the train operators stopping maneuvers at the station platform to a limited area that would be tough to achieve in adverse weather conditions. In an event a lift is stuck while loading/unloading a passenger the train will be unable to leave that station, as a result Main Street train and vehicular traffic would be at a standstill.

- John Bidell stated that the option to provide a bridge plate at the platform, operated by the train operator is the other feasible option. The platform mounted bridge plate would cover the entire length of the platform and would include a folding handrail to comply with ADA requirements. The plate would be manually controlled by the train operator and would be upright when not in use creating a buffer between the platform and the travel lane. The plate would have a manual release button in the event it seizes while in operation.
- Sheila Lopez inquired about the estimated cost for a platform bridge plate. John Bidell stated that the platform bridge plate option would be studied further and the estimated cost determined at a later date. However, it will be less expensive as compared to the train mounted bridge plate since there will be 10 stations as compared to retrofitting 27 train cars. In addition, costs to construct bridge plates would be spread out over each phase of construction, rather than being an up-front cost required with train cars.
- John Bidell stated that in an emergency situation the platform mounted bridge plate would have a manual system to retract the plate back into position.
- Keith Belanger inquired about the impact of the 2-foot setback to the sidewalk. John Bidell stated that the train stations are being redesigned and will be further reduced in size. Debra Chernoff stated that the sidewalk would still remain 21 feet wide.
- Sheila Lopez stated that in case of the plate breakdown it would be beneficial that NFTA comes and releases the plate. John Bidell stated that the operational issues will be discussed further between NFTA and the City of Buffalo. The system will be monitored by NITTEC for a quicker response in an emergency.
- Keith Belanger inquired if the catenary poles were being removed from the center to the existing light pole locations. John Bidell stated that the poles were being moved out of the center to the sides combined with street light poles similar to the existing catenary poles at the south end of the project.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE RESOLUTION

- The AC decided that the lift option not be considered further.
- The AC also decided that the train mounted bridge plate option should not be considered further.
- The AC agreed that the platform mounted bridge plate option should be studied further and that the design team should integrate the design of the bridge plate with station design.

Traffic Model

James Kollbaum briefed the attendees about the traffic model and outlined the assumptions made for the model. The traffic model was developed using the existing station locations and roadway geometry. Right turn lanes have been provided at intersections. James Kollbaum explained the short taper at the north end of the project for vehicular traffic to merge into designated vehicular travel lanes prior to the portal is not reflective of the design currently being evaluated. The traffic, parking and related data was used as outlined in the EA and presented in the draft forecasting memo previously issued. Two car and three car train configuration was used for the model with a 6 to 8 minute headway for the trains in accordance with the NFTA rail schedules. A ten (10) minute video of the PM Peak hour for the year 2025 will be presented to the attendees. Handouts with approach delays; the level of service at each intersection and the train travel time within the corridor was distributed to the attendees. The following are additional issues discussed:

- James Kollbaum stated that a 40 second to 60 second range was used for the dwell time at stations with six to eight minute headways based on field timings.

- Bill Jones inquired if the signals will be all timed intersections. John Bidell stated that the signals would be sequenced and tied to the NITTEC systems to provide assistance during an emergency situation.
- Steve Fitzmaurice inquired if the traffic model for the project detected any problems. Jim Kollbaum stated that no significant problems were detected in the model except for delays related to left turning movements. There were minimal delays to the train traffic movement.
- Bill Jones inquired if the traffic was modeled with the Theater District Station. Jim Kollbaum stated that the traffic was modeled with all existing stations. John Bidell stated that overall traffic model does not show any degradation of traffic along Main Street for the design year.
- The traffic model depicted the parking maneuvers (with 35 seconds average time to park), traffic at Scott Street intersection and under the HSBC building and along Court Street. Sheila Lopez inquired if the emergency vehicles would be able to access Main Street in the event of an emergency. John Bidell stated that access should not be a problem, as sidewalk could also be utilized in an emergency situation. In addition the Fire department will be consulted to assure access can be maintained. The system will be tied to NITTEC for assistance in such a situation.
- The model demonstrated the impact of a train-mounted lift by using a 2 minute dwell time at one station. The traffic backup was evident and there are safety concerns over an impatient motorist trying to go around the train as well as the potential for pedestrians to cross through standing traffic.
- Sue Sweet inquired if the platform mounted bridge plate would impact the travel time of the train/vehicles. John Bidell stated that there would be no impact due to the plate and the system would function as it does now.
- Donna Gonser inquired if Main Street would be designed as a thoroughfare street. John Bidell stated that Main Street would be more of a destination-oriented street with a 15 mph design speed.
- Bill Jones inquired if the 3D model is still required. John Bidell stated that the 3D model would incorporate the urban design, stations, and other project features to be presented to the public, the public can therefore visualize as to how Main Street would look in the future.
- Sue Sweet inquired the rationale for using the future time as the Year 2025. John Bidell stated that year 2025 is the design year. The year 2025 was the design basis in the EA also. John Bidell stated that the growth rate used for projecting the traffic is not conservative and the traffic generated is similar to today's Washington Street traffic and depicts the worst-case scenario.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE RESOLUTION

- The AC recommended running the model without right turn lanes.

Theater District Stations/Station Locations

- John Bidell briefed the attendees about the meeting with the Theater District and 600 block representatives. The Theater District Stations must move from the existing locations due to the roadway alignment and the taper required for the travel lane transitions. In a meeting held with the 600 block property owners, it was generally felt that the Theatre District stations should be eliminated. The recommendation in that meeting was to move the Fountain Plaza stations tight to the Main/Chippewa intersection on the northwest and southeast quadrants. The following was discussed:
- John Bidell stated due to the transition and safety related issues the northbound Theater Station has to move. The existing distance from Chippewa is approximately 700 feet; the proposed would be 350 feet from Chippewa. The current layout provides stations at every other block. The proposed Theater Station would be about 350 feet from the existing Fountain Plaza Station.

- Bill Jones stated that moving the station closer to the intersection and in front of the building is not a good idea. Sheila Lopez stated that the Theater Station should be eliminated instead of moving it closer to the intersection. Keith Belanger stated that moving the station closer to the intersection would make right turn movements difficult.
- Bill Jones and Keith Belanger stated that it would not be a good idea to move the Fountain Plaza southbound station and leave the stations where they are to provide safe left and right turns. John Bidell stated that moving the stations would provide more parking.
- Mike Schmand stated that the upkeep of the stations was an issue. John Bidell stated that with the new station design the maintenance requirement would be minimum. The elimination of these stations would put the 700-block farther from the stations. Mike Schmand stated that the longer walk would not be an issue.
- The general consensus of the AC members was to eliminate the Theater District stations and keep the Fountain Plaza Stations at the present locations. Paul Murphy stated that public using the Fountain Plaza to walk to the Theater District area would be more exposed to restaurants, the ice-skating rink, etc.
- Steve Fitzmaurice inquired if eliminating the Theater District Stations would have an issue with ADA compliance. John Bidell and Jim Kollbaum stated that there should be no issue relating to the elimination of a station, however it will be verified.
- Bill Jones stated that the two-car train should be the basis of design instead of the three-car design. John Bidell stated that this issue was discussed earlier and can be discussed again in the next meeting and will be resolved prior to the final design concept.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE RESOLUTION

- The AC agreed that the Theater District Stations should be eliminated.
- The AC recommended that the Fountain Plaza Stations location should not be changed.

General Issues

- Russell Stoll was introduced as the NFTA Director of Engineering.
- Donna Gonser inquired if bicyclists will be allowed on the tracks. John Bidell stated that bicyclist would not be allowed to share the track-bed and the bicyclist may share the sidewalk since there will be no designated bikeway. Keith Belanger inquired if motorcycles would be permitted. John stated that the motorcycles have a wider tire as compared to bicycles, and it would be the riders decision to ride the bike along Main Street.

Upcoming Meeting

- The next Advisory Committee Meeting will be held on Wednesday April 5th at 12:00 Noon at Buffalo Place.

These Meeting Minutes represent our understanding of the items discussed and/or agreed upon during this meeting. Any additions, corrections, or revisions by those present shall be directed (in writing) to the undersigned within (5) days of receipt of these Minutes or they will be considered accurate and complete.

Respectfully Submitted,

cc: Attendees
Committee members not present

Pradeep Simlote



DiDonato Associates