

ROUTE 18
TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS

**COMMUNITY
PARTNERING TEAM**

CITY OF NEW BRUNSWICK

MINUTES OF MEETING

PROJECT: ROUTE 18 - Section 2F, 7E, and 11H
City of New Brunswick
Middlesex County, New Jersey

PLACE: Middlesex County Planning Conference Room
New Brunswick Elks Building
New Street
New Brunswick, New Jersey

DATE: June 18, 2002

DATE OF REPORT: June 21, 2002

SUBJECT: Boyd Park Enhancements Group - Meeting No. 5

ATTENDEES:

Steve Mikulak	NJDOT-Inter Government Affairs	609-530-6558
Brenda Hammer	NJDOT-Landscape & Urban Design	609-530-5672
Cindy Bloom-Cronin	NJDOT-Landscape & Urban Design	609-530-5676
Pamela Garrett	NJDOT-Environmental Services	609-530-2721
Sue Dill-Wendrzycki	NJDOT-Environmental Services	609-530-2184
Jim Campbell	New Brunswick-Parks	732-745-5112
Tom Loughlin	New Brunswick-Administration	732-745-5007
Seth Richter	Rutgers University	732-445-2430, X642
Cathie Springer	Newell Avenue Neighborhood	732-828-7458
Morteza Ansari	KMM	732-745-2326
Paul Nowicki	Gannett Fleming, Inc.	908-755-0040
Michael Morgan	Gannett Fleming, Inc.	908-755-0040
Jeff Grob	Vollmer Associates	212-366-5600
Noriko Maeda	Vollmer Associates	212-366-5600
Nick Tufaro	Schlesinger Associates	609-924-1818



SUMMARY:

The main objective of this meeting was to review current and future pavilion area functionality and access issues, develop recommendations, and discuss High Priority design issue recommendations.

POINTS OF DISCUSSION:

- Paul Nowicki opened the meeting at approximately 10:15 AM by welcoming everyone and having all attendees introduce themselves. He reviewed the meeting objectives and the agenda (attached).
- To initiate the pavilion discussion, Jim Campbell provided input on Boyd Park and pavilion usage. With walls on three sides and roll-up doors onto the platform area, it was intended to function primarily as a concession area; this has never been fully realized, as park functions/events usually bring in self-standing concession operations. The enclosed areas are used by the NB Parks Department as storage. The platform area, on pilings to accommodate floodwaters, is used as a stage during the majority of park events. There are generally 2 to 3 major festivals each year, running from Wednesdays to Sundays, including a July 4th Show and Raritan River Festival. Another 20 or so single day events sponsored by non-profit, church or community groups also take place. There is not sufficient parking. While Boyd Park is now used as a City-wide facility, its original intent was to serve as a neighborhood park for planned residential tower apartments on the City Docks site and townhouses at the NB Police site. The Park improvements seen today were planned and placed to avoid impacts with the previous Route 18 widening project in mind.
- Noriko Maeda presented photographs of a recent carnival in the park where performers were using the pavilion platform as a dance/performance stage. The photos, her observations, the group's observations and the City's input revealed the following issues associated with current use of the pavilion area for events:
 - Platform hand rails obstruct views when used as a stage
 - Raised seating is not provided; people sit on the grass or stand to see stage events
 - Stage activities restrict access to rest rooms on pavilion platform
 - The tree canopy obstructs views of platform stage events
 - Stage use is often simultaneous with carnival activities in the northern Park area
 - Vehicles park in the Park's open space, at the NB Police site and on the City streets
 - NBPD control pedestrian crossings of Route 18
 - Small crushed stone area north of pavilion originally intended for use as a stage-it's now enclosed by trees
 - The Middlesex City Show Mobile has been used at north end of park for performances, with viewers sitting on the berms
- Jeff Grob continued the discussion of issues with the Park's current functionality. The pavilion itself interrupts the connectivity of the Park. The structure is aligned east-west, and disrupts north to south flow and connectivity. The pavilion forces pedestrians to move between Route 18 and the building on the west side, or between the D&R Canal and the building on the east side.
- Jeff Grob then initiated the discussion of future Park functionality conditions under the Route 18 project. The Northbound C-D wall's position close to the pavilion will eliminate pedestrian circulation around the west side of the structure. The current functionality deficiencies (obstructed views of the stage area by tree canopy, hand rails of platform, no viewing seating) will continue to exist. The project will create additional constrictions: horizontal and vertical C-D road wall encroachment and Park entry ramping structure.
- Jeff Grob then presented several option concepts to maintain yet enhance the ability of the Park and the Pavilion area to function and serve its uses and users under the Route 18 project changes:

OPTION 1

This concept depicted a berm area between the pavilion and the Park entry area. The berm would extend to the C-D road sidewalk elevation. The berm area and its orientation did not extend enough to be conducive for use as a seating area for continued use of the pavilion platform as a stage. Park trees still obstructed the view of pavilion stage.

OPTION 2

This concept proposed berm area between the pavilion and the Park entry area, but grading was expanded to enable access from the entry area to a walkway atop of the berm/seating area. The berm scheme created a more substantial pavilion platform stage viewing area. The handrail was proposed to be removed and stairs were to be installed continuously around the platform to improve its access. The loss of west side pedestrian circulation area was mitigated by modifying the pavilion: removing a segment of the platform only on the east side to increase the open space between the structure and the Canal. However, seating area-to-stage orientation was not going to result in better stage viewing, and trees still obstructed the stage views.

OPTION 3

This concept showed a ground-level amphitheater area between the pavilion and the Commercial Avenue entrance. The trees and the river/canal would be the backdrop. Physical steps and stadium-type seating area grading would be implemented in the berm area in front of the Route 18 C-D wall. The berm fill elevation would enable multiple access points from the northbound C-C sidewalk. The pavilion platform could be utilized during performances for concessions and access to restrooms. The handrail was proposed to be removed and stairs were to be installed continuously around the platform to improve its access. The loss of west side pedestrian circulation area due to the Route 18 C-D wall was mitigated by modifying the pavilion: removing a segment of the platform only on the east side to increase the open area between the structure and the Canal. A larger, more prominent and grand entry plaza would also be implemented to facilitate park access from Commercial Avenue and access to the proposed seating area via a walkway off of the entry plaza.

OPTION 4

This concept was similar to Option 3; it provided for a larger entry plaza that could also serve as seating for a second ground level stage area in the Park between the Canal and Commercial Avenue. To further improve circulation in the Pavilion area, the concept also called for eliminating the platform in the center of the pavilion area, creating two separate pavilion platform areas around the existing concession buildings. Seating oriented to the performance area just off the pavilion would also be enhanced. This option was generally an elaborate refinement of Option 3.

- Each of the Options was discussed by the Group. Generally, the Group felt Options 1 and 2 did not do much to mitigate the Park impacts resulting from the walls required for the Route 18 project. Option 4 was felt to be too involved and too elaborate. Option 3 was favored because it provided improvements to the ability of the Park to accommodate stage performances and improve pedestrian circulation, and it provided a signature entrance area to the Park that would serve as a focal point from the City. Option 3 was felt to provide a minimal cost opportunity to enhance the existing facility and allow it to better function under project. It was discussed that the Group should recommend to the Steering Committee the final level of the mitigation/enhancements to the Park. This would also include the level of tree removal to enhance the performance viewing area.
- It was felt that enhanced access to the Park would enhance and increase its use. It was suggested that the City should identify Park users and future plans or vision for the Park, and that the ultimate Design Option could therefore address that vision. The City' indicated its goals were to have more music/art performance events, to increase interest in the historical aspects of the Park and its relation to the City, and to enhance parking in the Park. It was felt Option 3 best suited this vision.

- Issues were also discussed. It was recognized that the City had invested significant money and effort into the Park and that the modifications as a result of the project were only to be aimed at mitigation or enhancement consistent with impact of the project. Cathie Springer raised the question of demolishing the pavilion to “start over” with a more functional facility. Tom Loughlin stated that such a proposal would not be supported by the City. It was pointed out that because Green Acres funds were involved in the Park construction, full demolition of the pavilion would be problematic. Finally, Pam Garrett stated that DOT and FHWA would not support full demolition, because the Environmental Assessment/4f investigation process found that while the Park and pavilion area were impacted by the project’s alignment (specifically the retaining walls), only mitigation and associated enhancements were required to address for that impact. The Route 18 project DID NOT render the Park or its functions useless, and therefore DID NOT warrant demolition of the pavilion.
- Noise and the noise wall warrants were discussed. Again it was stated that final noise studies would have to be conducted, that noise walls would likely be warranted for the area along the Park, but that public and City input would be obtained to determine whether or not the walls would be implemented. However, the positioning of the performance area and seating below and behind the Route 18 C-D wall was felt to be a benefit to mitigating the noise that could impact artistic performances.
- The Group then reviewed the high priority items and provided direction for the 6/24/02 Steering Committee meeting:
 - Safety and security considerations
 - s Group supports the proposed law enforcement/emergency medical service officials review forum to be schedule by the Design Development Group.
 - Gateway concepts (entries/exits into/out of Park) to encourage community feeling
 - s The Group felt that the gateway concept in Option 3, which provides a focal point at Commercial Avenue with fill allowing more access points along the Park, should be advanced into design.
 - Lighting and streetscape elements
 - s Not yet specifically addressed by the Group.
 - Access to/Demolish old NBPD station site for development
 - s The Group, concurring with the City’s position, recommended early acquisition of the right-of-way, demolition of site structures, maintenance of vehicular access, provision of pedestrian access, and provision of a temporary parking surface.
 - Boyd Park impacts acceptable with City Docks Enhancements
 - s Again the Group recommended Option 3, with a modified Pavilion area to improve access, pedestrian circulation, and utilization of the pavilion and surrounding area. The previous City Docks recommendations (passive park area, picnic pavilion, boat launch parking) were still supported.
 - Richmond St-pedestrian access
 - s Group supports providing pedestrian access the Police Station site from Richmond Street or Hiram Square area.

- Identify architecture features

s Recommendation was to continue to meet to further to address these issues.

- Noise Barriers, Bridges Retaining Walls

s The recommendation was to incorporate noise barriers, develop noise barrier concepts, set required limits and develop treatments along the Park where warranted for review by the Group, and to go to the public for input and comments. The City favors minimal noise wall treatment north of the pavilion.

s Bridges were not felt to be the charge of the Group.

s Walls: Recommendation was for stepped berm areas and to incorporate seating into the berm scheme near the pavilion. Keep wall areas as alive and green with berming and landscaping as possible to reduce visual wall height. Relocate trees affected by walls and berms to keep mature developed landscaping in the Park.

- Impact to existing Park infrastructure

s Recommendation was to minimize impacts to the pavilion but do what was possible to enhance its function as affected by project impact. Maintain and do not affect utilities (water, sewer, electric) in the Park.

- A final recommendation was that the Group should continue to meet regularly as design develops to review Park impacts and issues.
- The Group then wished to briefly discuss the Continuous Riverwalk along the Rutgers Boathouse. It was recommended to advance the investigation of the easement required along the Rutgers property frontage with the River, to investigate the fencing design required between the boathouse property and the proposed walkway, and to initiate the coordination and discussions with Rutgers University.
- NJDOT's Sue Dill-Wendrzycki also added as recommendation the feasibility investigation of "daylighting" any existing streams that are presently culverted/piped under the Park. This encompasses removing the pipe and allowing the watercourse to run in a shallow, gentle swale, where grasses, vegetation, and natural environmental conditions help to clean the water. Small bridges or culverted sections over the swale would be required. This water quality initiative also has added benefits of providing enhancements to recreational areas. It was recommended that the design team look to see where stream daylight opportunities existed.

We believe the foregoing to be an accurate summary of discussions and related decisions. We would appreciate notification of exceptions or corrections to the minutes within three (3) working days of receipt. Without notification, we will consider these minutes to be record of fact.

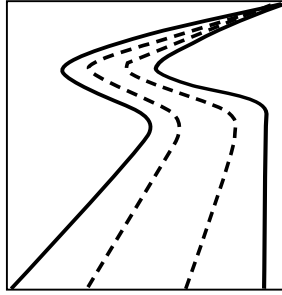
Michael A. Morgan, P.E., P.P.

Project Engineer/Planner

C: Attendees

Steering Committee

Boyd Park Group Members



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TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS

**COMMUNITY
PARTNERING TEAM**

CITY OF NEW BRUNSWICK

**BOYD PARK ENHANCEMENTS
MEETING NO. 5**

AGENDA - DRAFT

June 12, 2002

Elks Conference Room, Elks Bldg.

New Brunswick, NJ

10:00 a.m.-Noon

Objective: To review the Group Issues, to discuss the retaining walls, noise wall option and the proposed facilities; to develop recommendations to bring forward to the Steering Committee and next CPT meeting.

- I. Welcome and Introductions
 - Agenda and Goals
 - CPT Group Issues Review

- II. Boyd Park Enhancements Discussion
 - Retaining Walls
 - Noise Wall Option
 - Proposed Facilities
 - Recommendations

- III. Summary and Close
 - Action Items / Next Meeting
 - Feedback / Closing Comments



State of New Jersey Department of Transportation

Division of Project Management