

ROUTE 18  
TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS

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**COMMUNITY  
PARTNERING TEAM**

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CITY OF NEW BRUNSWICK

**COMMUNITY PARTNERING TEAM  
MEETING NO. 7 REPORT**

October 28, 1999

**DATE:** October 19, 1999  
**TIME:** 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.  
**LOCATION:** Conference Room, Middlesex County Planning Dept.,  
Elks Building, City of New Brunswick, NJ

**ATTENDEES:**

Members  
Robert Grimm  
Linda Hunter  
Roberta Karpinecz  
Tom Kelso  
Thomas Loughlin  
Glenn Patterson  
Bob Spear  
George Ververides  
Frank Wong  
Alternates  
Julius DeSantis  
Helen Erdey  
Joe Lenahan  
Paul Morrissett  
T.K. Shamy  
Invited Guests  
James Baisley  
Bob Belvin  
John Donnelly  
Michael Heenehan  
Sgt. Ken Herman  
Doug Joyce  
Linda LaSut  
Carl Nittinger

**REPRESENTING:**

New Jersey Turnpike Authority  
University Mews Homeowners Assoc.  
Keep Middlesex Moving, Inc.  
Dewey Heights Area Neighborhood  
City of New Brunswick, Administration  
City of New Brunswick, Planning  
Rutgers, The State Univ. of NJ  
Middlesex County Planning Dept.  
Rutgers, The State Univ. of NJ  
  
Riverside Towers, Commercial Avenue  
Carpender Road Area Neighborhood  
Middlesex County Engineering  
Newell Avenue Area Neighborhood  
Dewey Heights Area Neighborhood  
  
New Brunswick Development Corporation  
New Brunswick Historical Association  
Piscataway Township  
NJ DEP, Green Acres  
Borough of Highland Park  
Township of East Brunswick  
NJTPA  
NJ DEP, State Historic Preservation Office



## Steering Committee

Bill Birch	NJDOT, Division of Project Management
Bill Cochran	NJDOT, Community Relations
Elkins Green	NJDOT, Environmental Services
Mike Morgan	Gannett Fleming
Paul Nowicki	Gannett Fleming
Martine Culbertson	M. A. Culbertson

## Visitors

Chris Barretts	NJDOT, Traffic Signals
Doug Fadool	NJDOT, Value Engineering
Rick Jaffe	NJDOT, Value Engineering
Mike Sheehan	Gannett Fleming
Al Tavares	NJDOT, Bureau of Mobility Strategies
Ed Tomaszewski	NJDOT, Environmental Services

## 1. PURPOSE OF MEETING

To examine the Commercial Avenue interchange issues and discuss improvements for Route 18 at the Commercial Avenue interchange; to establish CPT consensus on Commercial Avenue concept for the Initially Preferred Alternative. (Agenda attached)

## 2. MEETING SUMMARY

Martine Culbertson opened the meeting and introduced the new members. CPT members then introduced themselves. Martine reviewed the agenda and revised CPT handbook materials. Due to unavailability of the conference room, the schedule for the next meeting was discussed. Rather than select a new date, a new location will be determined and a notice sent out with this report.

Paul Nowicki then gave a presentation on the Commercial Avenue concept in the Initially Preferred Alternative and the alternate design concept with Route 18 over Commercial Avenue. A handout summarizing the issues was distributed, entitled Summary of Issues and Design Concepts for 10/19/99 CPT Meeting. After presenting each issue and the design concepts, conceptual drawings of the modified IPA were distributed to illustrate the view of the interchange from various view points. A map of Route 18 at Commercial Avenue with the modified IPA and a map of Route 18 over Commercial Avenue as an alternate design were also distributed.

Mike Morgan then presented the operational and safety improvements associated with each option, that of the modified IPA and the elevated Route 18 alternate design concept. An Evaluation Summary of Commercial Avenue options with comments was distributed. There are less moves and therefore one signal required with the modified IPA where the alternate design concept requires 2 signals. This also means the modified IPA has only one point of conflict for pedestrian access verses more points of conflict if Route 18 is elevated.

Paul Nowicki presented the evaluation categories of environmental and noise impacts, right-of-way impacts and costs. He explained that the overall environmental impacts would be less with the modified IPA since it would have an improved view of Boyd Park, safer pedestrian access, less amount of walls meaning less fill and less obstruction of view. With the alternate design concept there would be increased noise which may require noise walls on the elevated structure. The costs listed on the summary are only the construction costs in which the elevated structure has a higher cost and would incur additional life-cycle costs such as greater maintenance. Other costs such as right-of-way, access and utilities are not included.

The summary evaluation indicated that the modified IPA was favored over the alternate design concept for operations, pedestrian safety, and less environmental impacts, noise impacts and costs. The alternate design concept with elevated Route 18 was favored for residential building access and less right-of-way impacts.

The following comments and questions were raised during the presentation for Commercial Avenue:

Q - How is the access effected from the apartment buildings on Commercial Avenue?

A - For the New Brunswick Apartments, the existing driveway on Commercial Avenue will be turned into a right out and right in driveway. In order to accommodate the left turn being removed from this driveway, the two parking lots will be connected to help circulation. For the Riverside Towers, the two existing driveways along Commercial Avenue will become right in and right out. The parking lot will be modified on the eastern end of the property in order to provide adequate circulation around the back of the building since residents will no longer be able to make lefts out of the driveway.

Q - Can piers be used instead of a solid wall for the modified IPA?

A - Yes, however there are higher costs and maintenance issues.

Q - What is the importance of the flood plain in comparing these options?

A - The modified IPA requires less fill and the alternate design concept would require more fill which is a consideration because Route 18 lies in the flood plain area. The amount of fill placed and location of the fill can cause greater environmental impacts.

Q - Regarding access from the New Brunswick apartments, could the one way be modified for the turn or made a two way roadway to allow access?

A - The traffic flow and access from this new point needs to be examined further to see if two way flow would help with access.

Q - Can auto access to Boyd Park occur at Commercial Avenue?

A - No, due to the difference in grade, it would be best to have vehicular traffic access the park at Rutgers boat house, PSE&G service road, or at the police station site.

Q - Can you explain the flood plain issue again?

A - By environmental regulation, you are able to fill only 20% net fill in an area which water occupies because it can alter the water elevation in the area and Route 18 is in the flood plain. If you want to move more than 20 % net fill, a hardship waiver is required and must be justified.

Q - How much area is required to widen Commercial Avenue? Is there an approximate number?

A - At this time we do not have individual parcel impacts. Comparing the two schemes, the modified IPA has slightly more of an impact than the alternative of Route 18 over Commercial Avenue.

Q - What year are the levels of service?

A - The design year is 2021, which is 20 years from the estimated construction start date.

Q - Could you explain the northbound collector distributor (CD) roadway access for Riverside Tower residents?

A - Those residents who turn off the northbound collector distributor roadway at Commercial Avenue and wish to access the Riverside Towers will continue on Commercial Avenue and make a left turn onto Neilson Street. To enter the parking lot, they will make a left at the end of Neilson Street.

Q - What is the purpose of all these changes around Commercial Avenue, is it just to ease traffic on Route 18?

A - The improvements in the Commercial Avenue interchange area are needed to maintain local access of Commercial Avenue and Route 18 while improving the operational and safety needs of Route 18, which are needed to address the defined transportation needs for this project.

Q - Why is there a single lane on the collector distributor roadway under the overpass with the modified IPA but a double lane with the alternate design concept of Route 18 over Commercial Avenue?

A - Vehicle can proceed with one lane with no signal in that area with the IPA, but with the alternate design concept which has a signal two lanes are needed to process the vehicles in that area. The abutment can be moved to accommodate the two lanes, but volumes do not require it for the modified IPA.

Q - Could you consider making it two lanes on the collector distributor roadway under the overpass so to accommodate or improve the traffic flow especially at peak hours heading northbound?

A - We will examine the volumes and determine if two lanes will improve the flow with the modified IPA option.

Q - Do the pedestrian ramps conform to ADA standards?

A - The pedestrian ramp on the New Brunswick Apartment's side is a ramp which meets ADA requirements. Due to space limitation, the pedestrian access on the south side near Riverside Towers is a stair tower, not a ramp. So individuals requiring the ramp would have to cross Neilson Street first to get to the pedestrian ramp. This is due to limited right-of-way available for a ramp on the south side.

Q - Where are the sidewalks on the modified IPA?

A - There are two 12' (twelve foot) sidewalks from the Boyd Park access point to the pedestrian ramp and pedestrian stair tower on each side of Commercial Avenue. The sidewalks on Commercial are 8' (eight feet) on each side. The sidewalk design minimum is 5' (five feet). The specific design widths and requirements for the sidewalks and pedestrian access will be determined during the final design phase of this project in which opportunity for community input will be also be included.

Q - How many pedestrians and what is the bus demand at Commercial Avenue?

A - The studies indicate that it is light, the Suburban bus line stops there, however there is more activity at Tabernacle.

Q - With this new design, is there a need for a traffic light at Neilson and Commercial Avenue?

A - No, with only right turns out and left turns in it would not be needed. Depending on the design of the parking and metering, it can be looked at in more detail.

Q - What about permits?

A - The modified IPA requires less fill, so permitting could be easier than the alternate design concept which requires more fill. The waterfront development with better view shed and less points of conflict for pedestrians would be more acceptable than the alternate design concept to permit.

Q - Are the noise studies going on or completed?

A - The noise studies are being conducted at this time and will continue until the entire corridor has been examined and sound testing is completed. The noise studies do not need to show an increase by a certain amount, but only to indicate that the sound is over the federal criteria in order to warrant noise barriers.

Q - Regarding the amount of property to be acquired, does the .54 figure include the .29 acres?

A - Yes, the .29 acres is included in the .54 acres, however this number is the difference between the amount of property to be taken with the modified IPA versus the alternate design concept, not the total acreage amount.

Q - Where is the .28 non-park land acres?

A - This indicates the amount of land on the city side of Route 18.

After the presentation and questions, the CPT took a brief break and then asked for each CPT member to comment individually on their preference for either option and why. They also shared concerns and possible refinements to consider. The comments were recorded on newsprint and are listed as an attachment to this report.

Martine asked each member for action items for the next meeting or feedback comments: the public information center may be in early December/January, George street to be discussed at the next meeting, overall corridor function and impact to circulation, noise study results, may need two CPT meetings before going to the public, information on traffic operation at New Street, frontage/access road at Newell avenue need further discussion, status on demolish of properties, noise study for elevated Route 18, information on stone retaining wall at Rutgers University, don't rush to the public: make sure CPT is in support or understands the information correctly, more concerns may come back from the public for further discussion by the CPT, need to discuss role of the CPT at the public meeting, need to be at a point where "we understand where we are at" - that the CPT has discussed "enough", input from affected neighborhood at Commercial Avenue, emergency service providers input needed, more time to talk about Paulus Boulevard with respect to the whole corridor, potential impact on New street given increase of parking spaces and the movement of traffic, great input from others, now put it all together, alot of progress, must look how the interchanges relate to one another, get comments from emergency providers both police and fire.

In closing, the question was asked about the properties to be demolished. Bill Birch responded that they are being processed and that there are asbestos studies to be completed and then bid Fall 1999 for the demolition schedule. He noted the graffiti issue to report to NJDOT maintenance and encouraged the CPT to keep him informed. Martine acknowledged and thanked the CPT for their efforts at sharing the project information with their constituents. The meeting was adjourned at noon.

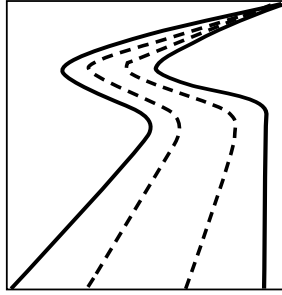
### **3. ACTION ITEMS**

- Members and Guests review Commercial Avenue modified IPA and the alternate design concept with your constituents. Provide any comments to Mike Morgan at Gannett Fleming or bring them to the next meeting. CPT issues or comments, please contact Martine Culbertson.
- Gannett Fleming will incorporate CPT comments into the design options for Commercial Avenue and will develop similar materials and maps for George Street for the next CPT meeting.
- Martine Culbertson to determine location for November 9th meeting and to notify CPT, to prepare agenda and materials for next CPT meeting, write and distribute meeting report, and track CPT issues.

### **4. NEXT MEETING**

Date: Tuesday, December, 1999 (to be scheduled)  
Time: 9:00 a.m. - Noon  
Location: Middlesex County Planning Conference Room  
Elks Building, City of New Brunswick

Report prepared by:



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**CPT MEETING No. 7**

**AGENDA**

October 19, 1999

Objective: To examine the Commercial Avenue interchange issues and discuss improvements for Route 18 at the Commercial Avenue interchange; to establish CPT consensus on Commercial Avenue concept for the Initially Preferred Alternative.

I. Welcome and Review

- Agenda and Goals
- CPT Update

II. Commercial Avenue Interchange

- Presentation
- CPT Discussions
- Develop CPT Consensus

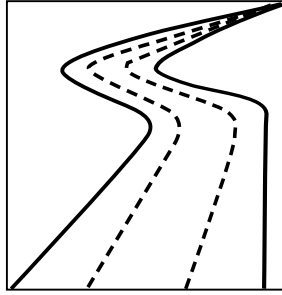
III. Summary and Close

- Project Status and Next Steps
- Action Items and Feedback



**State of New Jersey Department of Transportation**

Division of Project Management



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**CPT MEETING NO., 7 - ATTACHMENT  
COMMENTS FROM CONSENSUS DISCUSSION  
COMMERCIAL AVENUE AREA**

OCTOBER 19, 1999

- Prefer modified IPA - northbound with out a traffic light
- Prefer modified IPA - a single traffic light rather than two lights
- Prefer modified IPA - due to better access for pedestrians and their safety
- Refinements to IPA makes it more functional and better choice
- Examine how the improvements will function in the overall corridor
- Leaning toward the modified IPA - but concern for graffiti on the walls
- Prefer modified IPA - because the noise walls on the elevated roadway would be a greater obstruction otherwise access appears better on the alternate design concept
- Like modified IPA - access from apartments and high rise a concern but the flow is better
- Prefer modified IPA - but u-turn is not an option and concern for a "cliff" feeling to the collector distributor roadway so try to minimize wall height and bring grade down - every inch could help to improve the view points.
- Prefer modified IPA - due to its operational improvements
- Prefer modified IPA - but south side of Commercial should consider ADA access, may be too far for handicapped individuals to travel to get to the ramp on the other side
- Prefer modified IPA - better option for safety of pedestrians and less noise than with elevated roadway
- Prefer modified IPA - improves the view shed and noise lower for residents but concern of access for residents, better operationally
- IPA appears better aesthetically - but need to see how it will look up the road - need to look at the whole corridor
- Prefer modified IPA - Single traffic light versus two traffic signals is a big factor
- Prefer modified IPA - for reason previously stated +++
- Need to examine the impact of emergency service vehicles
- Need to obtain comments from residents of the apartments on Commercial Avenue
- Prefer modified IPA - pedestrian friendly, but need to consult with EMS providers, fire department and Johnson Hospital
- Need to examine flood figures carefully when considering these improvements
- Look at total picture, of improvements and potential development along the corridor
- Consider extending the project limits to include local streets into the City - George Street



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- Modified IPA works best overall - could contract limits expand west to George Street and the geometry of Nielson.
- Consideration of Gibson u-turn scenario improvement to enhance the modified IPA option
- Consider changing the single lane in the collector distributor roadway to two lanes under the Commercial Avenue roadway by moving the abutment back.