

NYS Route 32 / Fair Street Intersection Study

Kingston, New York

Public Meeting

September 28, 2005

~ Meeting Summary ~

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A public meeting was held on Wednesday, September 28, 2005 for the NYS Route 32 / Fair Street Intersection Study. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the project to the public and to receive input concerning study area likes, dislikes, opportunities, and concerns. The meeting started with an introduction to the evening from Mr. Dennis Doyle, Director of the Ulster County Transportation Council (UCTC), the project sponsors, and moved into a brief presentation from the project consultants, Creighton Manning Engineering, LLP (CME). The majority of the meeting was spent in three (3) small “break-out” groups. Break-out group participants were asked four questions:

1. Strengths – What do you like about the intersection?
2. Weaknesses – What don’t you like about the intersection?
3. Opportunities – What ideas do you have for intersection changes?
4. Threats – What constraints and concerns are there?

Conversation in the break-out groups was lively and varied, with some common themes from each of the groups. Everyone agreed that the intersection is very confusing for people who aren’t from the area. Pedestrian safety, especially for children walking to and from the George Washington Elementary School, was a major point of concern. Overgrown landscaping and its impact on sight distance was considered a contributing factor to pedestrian and vehicle safety concerns. Unsafe travel speeds on Fair Street were also mentioned in all of the break-out groups. Intersection recommendations included installing a Stop sign on Fair Street, eliminating one leg of the intersection to create a four-leg intersection, installing a traffic signal, and changing the directional flow of Fair Street and Wall Street, among others. Less intrusive improvements, like pavement markings and additional signing for improved driver guidance, were generally favored. Construction of a roundabout was not a popular idea.

After the break-out group session, the meeting continued with each group facilitator relaying to the larger group the results of the smaller group discussion. The meeting concluded with a presentation of the next steps for the study.



~ Group Comments ~

Group No. 1

Strengths

- No problems with the intersection itself.
- Congestion is not an issue.
- Entire group notes that there are no problems with truck traffic, school buses, or King's Plaza.
- Are buses a problem? (group – no)
- Trucks not a serious problem.

Weaknesses

- There is concern over the northwesterly lane on Greenkill at Fair being used as a through lane and right-turn lane.
- The situation is more a matter of confusion than accidents. Fair Street is the real problem.
- Truck traffic creates problem accessing Boulevard.
- No crosswalks are present.
- Non-resident traffic entering intersection from Boulevard is unaware of traffic patterns and controls. Sight distances from all access points are inadequate. Fair and Wall one way is confusing.
- Fair Street flow is counterintuitive.
- There are problems with speeds on Fair St., ingress/egress at Stewart's, and an overgrown median between Fair St. and Wall St.
- Some trucks follow Route 32 on Wall to Henry and some don't.
- There has been a recent increase of truck traffic on Elizabeth Street.
- Pedestrian safety a major issue, especially school children to and from school.
- Trucks turning from Wall onto Henry (to follow truck route) creates conflicts with school pick-up and drop-off parking on Henry between Wall and Fair as well as child pedestrians.
- Plantings around Kings Restaurant parking lot, as well as median plantings, obstruct view from Greenkill northeasterly to see traffic coming from Fair Street.
- Fair and Wall identified again by group as a whole as a major concern.
- Greenkill southwesterly at Fair – through and right-turn a problem and fact that parking is allowed here (and in front of Brenn Auto).
- Overgrown median. Curbing around median is. Pedestrian concerns – both school and businesses. Non-local drivers figuring out what is going on in the intersection. Speed on Fair is excessive.
- Visibility and landscaping.

Opportunities

- Remove the flashing yellow at Fair and replace with Stop sign. Signs indicating One-Way on Wall and Fair and Do Not Enter on Fair should be relocated for better visibility. Better pavement markings are needed.
- Greenkill southwesterly should be one lane only – the perception is that it's two lanes (through and right-turn). Most confusion occurs at Fair and Greenkill. Suggest a Stop sign at Fair instead of flashing yellow.
- Remove landscaping in median between Fair and Wall because it obstructs visibility.
- Flashing yellow blocks the Do Not Enter sign. Extend median between Fair and Wall towards Greenkill.
- Maybe Wall Street direction should be reversed and school drops and pick-ups should be on Washington Avenue side.

- From Boulevard, the intersection can be viewed as a gateway to the city/community and improvements should take this into account.
- Add Stop sign at Fair Street for an All-Way Stop.
- Reverse directions of Fair and Wall one-ways.
- Reconfigure intersection to decrease it and make a 4-way.
- Improved pavement markings, signage (e.g. yield to pedestrians) or removable pylons in roadway. Smaller scale treatments are preferable. Better truck route signage.
- Truck route should be Greenkill to Clinton Ave to Henry Street. (residents all agree)
- Better pavement markings are needed.
- Maybe the whole intersection needs to be narrowed.
- Extend median between Fair and Wall towards intersection.
- Problem with cut-through in median between Wall and Fair – cars turning from both ways. Maybe cut-through should be eliminated.
- Address curb cuts into/out of Stewart's traffic flow. Other four commercial establishments are not a concern.
- Lighting should be considered – adequate existing replaced with decorative? Underground wires? Extend median between Fair and Wall. Remove planting, leave large tree, plant lawn-type grass. Possibly use pavers as cross walks in addition to striping.
- (Residents in agreement) Roundabout is not a preferred option.
- Access management and traffic calming should also be examined.
- Close off section of Greenkill between Washington and intersection as a way of eliminating at least one leg. This would force traffic down Washington to Boulevard and turn left towards intersection or right, south on Route 32.
- Re-designate truck route.

Threats

- City, County and school buses frequent intersection. There's a lot of pedestrian traffic for commercial establishments.
- This issue is old. In 1997, NYSDOT said accident rate was too low to warrant redesign.
- Same confusion for Elizabeth Street (two-way) "T" intersection with (one-way) Wall. Wall Street is one way due to elementary school drop-offs and pick-ups.
- There should be school input for this process. No one from Kingston schools is here.
- Wall Street being one-way to Franklin Street, then two-way to St. James Street, then one-way again (past another school). All the way to North Front Street is a problem.
- Intersection problems are made worse by current construction detours for Wilbur Avenue and on-street parking on South Wall.
- (In response to resident) Historic district ends at Franklin Street.
- Lack of action and improvements up to now is a city/county issue in maintenance of median, snow removal (visibility), signage, striping. Done locally would be more cost effective.

Group No. 2

Strengths

- The width of the intersection allows time to react.
- Low number of accidents.
- The intersection doesn't back up.
- Nothing should change at the intersection. Generally polite so traffic moves smooth.

Weaknesses

- Lack of curbing at Stewart's.
- Can't see at Fair Street from eastbound Greenkill – landscaping at King's.
- Fair/Wall has an overgrown median.
- A “me first” attitude.
- People unfamiliar with the intersection.
- No clear ROW
- Too much pavement, no striping for lanes
- Character of roads change depending upon the peak hour.
- No stopping at the Stop signs, particularly on Route 32.
- High speed on Fair Street.

Opportunities

- Stop sign on Fair Street.
- Fair a two-way and close Wall St. Route 32 would then be on Fair St.
- School signing and bus stop signing.
- Landscaped median.
- Eliminate Stewart's access on Greenkill.
- Switch Fair and Wall directions.
- Create an All-Way Stop.
- Reduce the number of approaches to create a 4-way intersection.
- Signing improvements (may be inefficient).
- Lane designations.
- Roundabout – big enough for a tractor-trailer
- Roundabout – visibility around

Threats

- Route 32 goes past the school.
- Bus stop across from Stewart's.
- It may be inefficient to wait at a signal.
- Maintain access to businesses. Don't impede easy access.
- Child and pedestrian safety.

Group No. 3

Strengths

- There is lots of room for movement at the intersection (i.e. wide roads) which makes it safer.
- He has not seen any fatalities there in 32 years – so why do we need to change it? If a roundabout was installed many people would lose valuable property.
- Trucks not a big problem.

Weaknesses

- Since Fair Street has the ROW (i.e., no stop sign), she has had many near accidents – mostly with out-of-towners (out-of-state plates) not familiar with the intersection. It is also dangerous since most motorists are so busy watching the other cars that they don't notice the pedestrians. Un-cut shrubs can block visibility.
- Many cars traveling the wrong way on Wall Street each day. Many cars running the stop signs.
- There aren't necessarily a lot of accidents at the intersection; there are a lot of near misses causing people to get angry with the potential for road rage.
- He notes that cars on Fair Street travel 50-60 mph through the intersection. They beep their horns and pass on through.
- Stewart's has no curbing – can be a problem and can cause accidents. Cars backing out from gas pumps can be a problem.
- When it snows, it is hard to see (snow is piled 6-7 feet high)
- Sight distance is not adequate from any of the intersection approaches.
- Signage is confusing – drivers don't know what to do.
- He estimates that there are 10 cars a day going the wrong way on Wall Street – also speeding.
- The school bus stops at the restaurant and the kids have to walk through the bushes to get out of the intersection and on to the restaurant parking lot. They don't get dropped at a sidewalk.
- Wall Street signage in Uptown is confusing – cars stay on Wall Street going wrong way.
- Drivers will use Fair Street, then make a U-turn on Wall Street – hard to see when doing this.
- Recommends a 5-way traffic signal.

Opportunities

- School bus stops at Stewart's – which is a convenient location for pickup but really needs sidewalks for kids walking there.
- She tells her children to walk only on Fair Street – the others are too dangerous. A traffic signal at this intersection would be very helpful for the walking children.
- She is a 15-year resident – was involved in a petition 15 years ago to get a traffic signal installed. She got 400 signatures in 3 days. Would like to see installation of a traffic signal.
- Recommends signal for 5 or 6 directions.
- Would help if school buses used Washington Avenue instead of Wall Street.
- He is not opposed to closing Wall Street.
- Pavement markings and more intersection signing are a good idea.
- If a roundabout was installed, it would be even more unsafe for the kids (as pedestrians).
- Pedestrians need a sidewalk at this intersection.
- Having Route 32 run down Greenkill Ave makes more sense then running down Henry Street. Should post truck restriction signage where necessary.
- A median in the middle of Greenkill would help pedestrians. But it needs to be maintained – don't want it to attract kids like the median does on Pine Grove.
- Recommends narrowing some of the streets to slow down traffic (ex. Greenkill and Fair). Would only support a small roundabout – since no property would be taken from landowners – if it would accommodate trucks.

- A traffic signal would be the best solution.
- Could consider returning Fair Street to 2-way street (as it was many years ago).
- Noted that roundabouts can do good things like slow traffic through the intersection.

Threats

- Buses are a concern up Fair and Wall because of the one-way roads and narrow streets.
- Questioned the cost of installing a traffic signal versus a roundabout.
- Concern about how a roundabout would serve emergency vehicles. Don't want the emergency vehicles to be slowed at the intersection.

Additional Comments

- Do not want to see anything happen at the intersection.
- Many angry drivers at the intersection due to right-of-way confusion.
- Use traffic calming methods.
- City maintenance of medians and snow removal is a big concern.