

Summary of Citizen Questions and Comments  
Henley Bridge Project Update Meeting  
December 8, 2009  
Graystone Presbyterian Church

This summary of citizen questions and comments is based on notes taken at the public meeting and on written comments provided on comment cards the night of the meeting or via e-mail in the days following. Approximately 65 members of the general public attended the meeting, in addition to city and state officials.

Comments are organized according to topics, so one person's spoken or written remarks may be located under two or more topic headings. A "W" at the beginning of a comment indicates the comment was received in writing via comment card or e-mail. To the extent possible, there is only one comment per person under each topic heading. Thus, if there are 11 comments under a topic heading, then 11 people commented on that particular topic.

Comments about the Henley Bridge project will continue to be received and recorded through Friday, January 8, 2010, and a supplemental summary of comments will be prepared after that date. Comments may be directed to [dmassey@cityofknoxville.org](mailto:dmassey@cityofknoxville.org) with "Henley Bridge" in the subject line or by mail to David Massey, Room 528, Office of Neighborhoods, City of Knoxville, P.O. Box 1631, Knoxville, TN 37901.

-- David Massey, Office of Neighborhoods, December 10, 2009

I. **BRIDGE DESIGN:** Sixth Vehicle Lane Versus Bike Lanes and/or Wider Sidewalks

A. Arguments Favoring Consideration

Several individuals — advocating that TDOT consider dropping the sixth lane in favor of bike lanes — contended that the decision for six lanes was made before a variety of more recent developments which they said compel or accommodate a more bike- and pedestrian-friendly design. They cited the closure of Baptist Hospital; the advent of the South Waterfront Project with its pedestrian friendly emphasis; the spike in oil/gasoline prices; completion of greenways and plans for additional greenways in the waterfront area; and the increased popularity of biking, walking and running. Persons making this argument represented the Colonial Village Neighborhood Assn., the Island Home Park Neighborhood Assn., the Lake Forest Neighborhood Assn., the Lindbergh Forest Neighborhood Assn., and the South Knoxville Neighborhood & Business Coalition.

B. Other comments favoring the addition of a bike/pedestrian lane

1. Addition of bike lanes and more user-friendly sidewalks would reduce the consumption of fossil fuels, benefit the environment and promote good health. The South Knoxville Neighborhood & Business Coalition specifically requests a review of dropping the sixth lane in favor of greater emphasis on bicycle and pedestrian traffic.
2. W: Add a good bike/pedestrian lane.

3. Assuming 6 lanes will be part of the final design for proposed future traffic, please consider re-stripping the design to allow for bike lanes.
4. W: Favors 5 car lanes and bike lanes and sidewalks.
5. W: Likes the design, but “I would like to see wider sidewalks, bike lanes, barriers for other means of transit in lieu of the 6<sup>th</sup> lane.”
6. W: Let the public vote on 6 lanes versus 5 lanes with bike lanes. Favors the bike lane option.
7. W: Favors bike lanes and sidewalks and endorses the idea of 5 traffic lanes, with middle lane being used inbound in the morning and outbound in the afternoons.
8. W: “Would like to see the Henley Bridge be pedestrian and bike friendly with wider sidewalks and bike lines, particularly in [light] of the upcoming South Waterfront Development. Build for 6 lanes, stripe for 5 with bike lanes and sidewalks.”
9. W: Supports 5 vehicle lanes with bike lanes.
10. W: Bike lanes and pedestrian thoroughfares are essential for South Knoxville to grow as an economically viable area. This would help increased activity downtown to overflow into South Knoxville “so people can see what a gem it is!”
11. W: Wants the 6<sup>th</sup> lane used for more bike and pedestrian friendly access.
12. W: “I would like bike lanes on the Henley St Bridge when it's renovated.”
13. W: “The upcoming Henley Street Bridge renovation project gives Knoxville a great opportunity to encourage the use of alternative transportation by incorporating dedicated bicycle lanes into the bridge.

“As a South Knoxville resident and bike commuter, I can attest that safe routes into the city are limited. Bicycles are road-legal vehicles, but cyclists are often forced to ride in debris-filled shoulders or on crumbling, uneven sidewalks in order to avoid certain dangerous stretches of road—like the Henley Street Bridge. A dedicated bicycle lane could greatly improve this situation by giving cyclists a safe space out of the flow of automobile traffic. Including bicycle lanes on the bridge now would also make it more likely that future road planning along Henley Street and Chapman Highway will make similar provisions for bicycles.

“Please help make it easier for Knoxvillians to get exercise, save money, and pollute less by riding bicycles.”

14. W: “It is necessary to have bike lanes for safety's sake on the Henley I think. Please make it happen.”

15. W: “Please have bicycle lanes included in the re-construction of the Henley Street Bridge. The addition of such lanes would immensely increase the safety of traffic into "South Knoxville". There are many times that I would visit the retailers along Chapman highway, but do not because I worry for my own safety, never mind my own children. This would also be a great way to connect to the South Knox waterfront once it is all completed.”

16. W: We need bike lanes on the bridge in both directions for safety and to promote our city’s responsibility to alternative transportation.

### C. Favoring All Six Lanes Dedicated to Vehicles

Owner of business located on Chapman very near the bridge: Given traffic jams he witnesses now on Chapman at rush hour, he advocated for all six lanes for vehicles. “We need as many lanes as possible.”

### D. Bike and Pedestrian Safety

1. W: “Seriously? You’d make a bike lane, having it be the “buffer” between the sidewalk and cars? I don’t want to be a buffer! I want to be protected.”

2. W: Favors bike/pedestrian improvements, but “I would be afraid to use a bike lane with no separation from all that busy traffic. I would still ride on the sidewalk so I’d like to see the sidewalk wider. May be a compromise with narrow bike lanes and a little wider sidewalk.”

### E. Related Lane Configuration Issues

1. Asked for confirmation that the bulk of the rehabilitation expense is not in the way the top of the deck is configured.

2. Consider placing a wider sidewalk just on one side of the bridge.

3. What about an elevated platform above the bridge for bicyclists and pedestrians?

4. How will TDOT tie in an extra lane or bike lanes on either the north or south end of the bridge? There are no such lanes on either end now.

## II. MITIGATION MEASURES

### A. Impact of Cut-Through Traffic on Neighborhood Streets

1. The 200 homeowners in the Island Home Park neighborhood will be impacted by the bridge closure, due to increased traffic on Island Home Avenue and increased cut-through traffic. Urged TDOT and COK to work with the neighborhoods, because residents can offer insight on which mitigation measures may work best.

2. Drivers from Moody/James White origins heading south on Chapman Highway already use South Woodlawn as a way to hit Chapman south of Young High Pike, so they can avoid two major traffic lights. Cars get backed up now during rush hour. Concerned that the Henley Bridge closure will make this congestion/use of South Woodlawn even worse.
3. Asked if the traffic studies included a look at the impact on (North) Woodlawn and if not, whether TDOT or COK would examine the impact on Woodlawn.
4. Concerned about traffic ignoring the detour route and cutting through neighborhoods. Asked if “traffic calming money” could be spent on bridge closure mitigation.
5. W: Will there be patrols/speed enforcement increased for side streets like Woodlawn or other roads people might take to avoid Moody?
6. W: We hope Woodlawn traffic will not be even worse than it is.
7. W: Suggests a barrier so that vehicles in the two dedicated right-hand turn lanes from James White to Moody are physically prevented from turning left on South Woodlawn and therefore are forced to travel down Moody.

#### B. Impact on Businesses

1. Concerns about the impact of reduced traffic on the businesses on Chapman Highway between Moody Avenue and the bridge. Will TDOT help promote the fact those businesses are still open?
2. Owner of business said he will have to provide customers with an alternate route to his business on Davenport Road and wanted to know if the route he had in mind would be feasible.
3. W: Understands need for repair but “I am worried about the local businesses and those things unique to South Knoxville, such as Candoro, Vestal businesses, Ijams and the Book Eddy. I’d like to see the City do something to promote these businesses.”
4. W: Is there a specific plan to promote South Knoxville businesses within TDOT’s communications plan?

#### C. Gay Street Bridge

1. Asked if there was any effort to deal with the north end of the Gay Street Bridge. “The north end is not functional, and another lane is needed.”
2. W: Will there be detour signs at the end of Chapman Highway at the north end of Henley Bridge? If not, why? U.S. 441 is a major highway... Out-of-town folks will not know what to do if they miss the Moody detour and end up at the north end of the bridge.

3. Asked if there was a prohibition on the use of salt or salt brine on the Gay Street Bridge, and if the other alternate-route bridges (South Knoxville Bridge and Alcoa Highway Bridge) have this same restriction.
4. W: During construction, will the City eliminate on-street parking on the part of Gay Street near the Gay Street Bridge?
5. Business owner on Chapman asked if there are plans to provide detour signs in and around downtown to Gay Street Bridge. He has customers coming from UT and Fort Sanders area, and he thinks Gay Street Bridge would be their best detour route to reach his business, located very near the Henley Bridge.
6. W: "Is the redesign of the north end of the Gay Street Bridge under consideration? What would be the [weight and loading] impact on the Gay Street Bridge of traffic jams and long lines of cars? It seems to me that little attention has been given to traffic problems on the street that are not on the detour."

D. Speeding

1. Wants to see speeding addressed on Chapman Hwy.
2. Echoed the concern about speeding on Chapman Hwy.
3. Expressed concerns about speeding on (north) Woodlawn, noted that KPD does a good job but cannot be on the street all the time, and asked for more monitoring.
4. Worries that bridge closure and detours will raise frustration levels and exacerbate driver aggression.
5. W: Concern is getting run over by fast and aggressive traffic at Chapman and Stone Rd. leaving and entering Stonewall II apartments. "People drive fast and aggressively, change lanes when they realize a car is stopped in front of them. All this is true all along Chapman."

E. Church Street United Methodist Church

1. On behalf of Church Street United Methodist Church, what is the impact on Front Avenue and Hill Avenue? Will it be left open and usable by the church during construction?
2. Will the driveway entrance to the church be affected? Will there be work on Sunday? The church would prefer no Sunday work, at least not during the morning hours when church services are held.

F. Other Mitigation Issues and Concerns

1. How will KAT reroute buses during the time the bridge is out?
2. Communication plan seems quite comprehensive and well thought out.

3. Consideration should be given to the environmental impact of the construction on the river itself. "Can anything be done to make the bridge more environmentally friendly? I assume run-off from the bridge goes straight into the river? Also, how will traffic on the river be affected?"

4. Since Baptist Hospital is now closed, how will the Henley Bridge closure affect the emergency response times between South Knoxville and Fort Sanders Regional Hospital?

5. Mitigation concerns arise from fact that the extension of the South Knoxville connector has been stopped.

### III. OTHER BRIDGE CLOSURE ISSUES

#### A. Traffic Count Projections

1. Asked if the projected increase in traffic in 2022 included an assumption about the cost of oil, noting that higher gasoline prices in today's economy might impact this estimate.

2. What factors were included in the traffic projection model? What model was used?

#### B. Bridge Safety

In the wake of the collapse of the freeway bridge collapse in Minneapolis several years ago, how confident is TDOT that Henley Bridge is safe? Expressed concerns that the practice of selecting the low bidder might result in a contractor not qualified to make adequate repairs. What about alternative methods of bidding and contracting?

#### C. Funding

Question about the impact on the project timeline if the State Legislature does not approve the bridge funding in Spring of 2010.

#### D. Local Employment

Is it possible to use local contractors and sub-contractors on the project so that local people can be employed?

#### E. Follow-up

Asked if anyone from the City or TDOT would state at the meeting, "I will take responsibility to push this issue."

#### F. Historic design

Favors keeping the historic design of the bridge.

#### G. Bike Traffic on South Knoxville Bridge

W: "I very often use the wide shoulders on S.K. Bridge as bike routes. Others do also. I hope those shoulders will remain available for bikes."

#### **IV. OTHER COMMENTS**

A. Concerns about the traffic flow problems identified in the Chapman Highway Corridor Study.

B. Concerned whether Blount Avenue would remain open if the Baptist Hospital site were redeveloped.

C. There is an unused or abandoned railroad bed that stretches from the south end of the bridge all the way to Sevierville. This should be considered for a greenway.

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