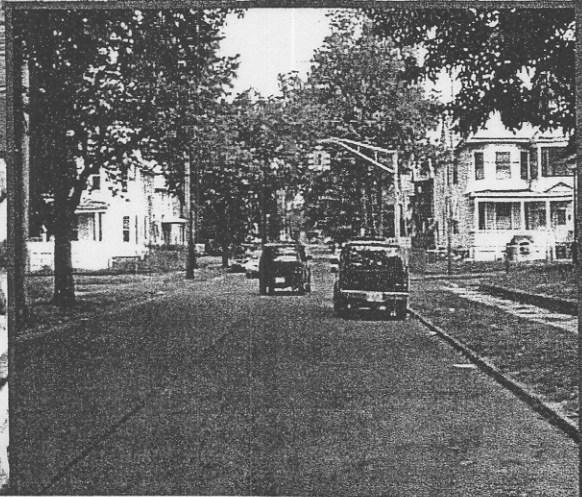
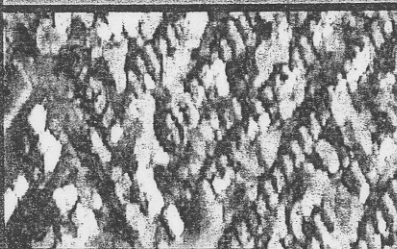
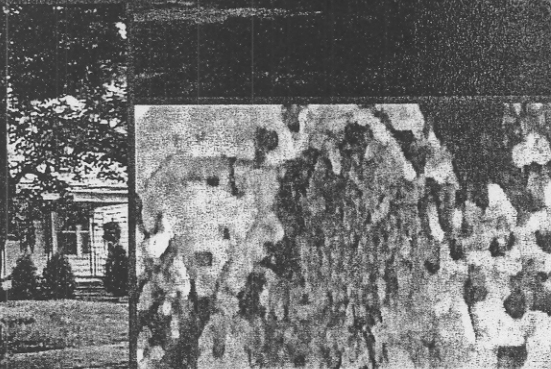
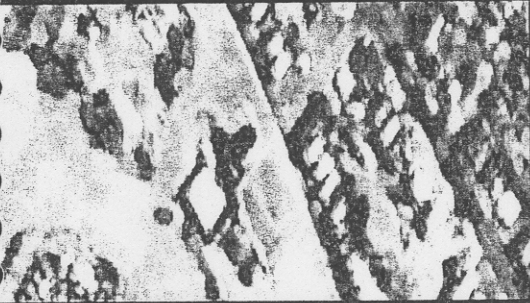
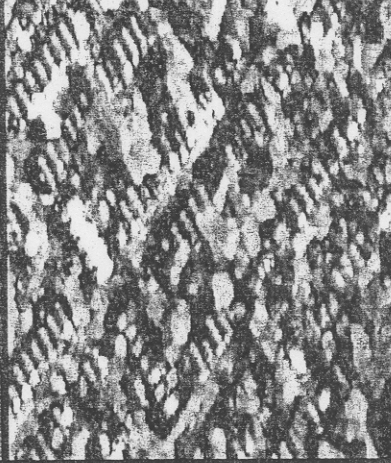


Central State Street Neighborhood Land Use & Transportation Study



City of Schenectady
August 2002

A Community and Transportation Linkage Planning Study

Central State Street Neighborhood – Furman Street to Fehr Avenue

1.0 Introduction

The City of Schenectady, in cooperation with the New York State Department of Transportation and the Capital District Transportation Committee (CDTC), has recently completed a Route 5 (State Street) Corridor Study (P.I.N. 1753.65). As part of this Corridor Study an "Transportation and Land Use Initiative" was proposed for a portion of the Central State Street Neighborhood. The funds for this initiative were adopted by CDTC's Policy Board in October, 2001.

This planning study is an extension of the CHA Report and examines potential opportunities to extend transportation improvements into a portion of the Central State Street Neighborhood. The study provides an opportunity to implement CDTC's New Vision Strategies to use transportation investments as a tool to revitalize existing City neighborhoods.

6.0 The Public Process

In order to engage the community in the development of a transportation and land use linkage plan, it was important to involve the Central State Street Neighborhood Association. Conversations with Association members resulted in the formation of an Advisory Committee that served as a focus for detailed discussions and the development of the plan. The Neighborhood Association was asked to select a group of community leaders who could provide direction to the study and serve as a conduit with the community. The Commissioner of Public Works from the City of Schenectady, a representative from the Capital District Transportation Committee (CDTC) and the consultant served with the Advisory Committee.

6.1 Beginning the Public Process

On August 9, 2001 the first meeting with the Advisory Committee was held. An introduction to the project was presented. While the community had many items to bring to the table, it was important to remain focused primarily on transportation issues. Further, the study was an extension of the Route 5 Corridor Study sponsored by CDTC. It is also important to note that the product of this study had yet to be determined. Dynamic discussion with the neighborhood would be a major determinant in the final recommendations.

At this meeting, the Advisory Committee determined that it was important to establish a "reasonable" study area within the neighborhood. Attempting to resolve all of the issues raised through this study would be impossible. It was recommended that the focus of this effort be in an area defined by State Street on the south, Bradley Boulevard on the north, Furman Street on the west and Division Street on the east. The Advisory Committee also suggested identifying mitigation measures that could be transferred to other parts of the neighborhood in future years if they proved successful.

On August 23, 2001 a second meeting of the Advisory Committee was held. At this meeting, a review of the preliminary traffic and demographic data was discussed. As a whole the Committee decided that it was important to recommend mitigation measures that were doable. Further some of these measures should be capable of early implementation, possibly even undertaken by City forces, without the need for State or Federal funds. Further, the Committee recommended that the mitigation measures be transferable. This would permit the transfer of successful improvements to other parts of the neighborhood in subsequent years.

The Advisory Committee also suggested that a Public Information Meeting be held to both allow the neighborhood to become informed about the study and to voice opinions about issues facing the neighborhood, even if issues presented could not be addressed by this study. The public information meeting was held on September 20, 2001.

Following the Public Information Meeting, the Advisory Committee recommended that two public workshops be held to allow detailed participation by the neighborhood. These workshops would help in the identification of specific issues and subsequent mitigation measures. It was recommended that one workshop be conducted in the afternoon before 3:00 pm in order to allow those in the neighborhood who work at St. Clare's to participate. A second workshop would be held in the evening.

The afternoon workshop was held on October 23, 2001 and the evening workshop was held on October 30, 2001.

6.2 Results of the Workshops

A summary of the discussions at the public workshops identified the following key issues

- Excessive speeds on neighborhood streets
- Safety concerns where sight distance is limited, especially on the crest of hills and at key intersections
- Opportunities to increase the parking supply by the development of "pocket parking." These "pocket parking" areas might be located where homes scheduled for demolition are removed and replaced by a community parking lot.
- Increased pedestrian protection especially at intersections. While not specifically discussed at the workshops, this issue is supported by the accident history at Becker and Elm and Becker and Division.
- Methods to discourage "cut through" traffic along certain neighborhood streets. One such street mentioned was Bradley Boulevard that serves as a connector between McClellan Street and the Crosstown Arterial.
- Bradley Boulevard is a important community asset and needs improvements such as pedestrian crosswalks at important intersections to improve operations and safety. Other issues brought forth about Bradley Boulevard included the reduction of

importance of the driveway to St. Clare's Hospital. This driveway is opposite Division Street.

- Implement "Seward Place" type improvements where possible. Seward Place improvements included pavement treatment at intersections along Seward Place. These improvements have generally been well received by the Schenectady community.
- The creation of a "gateway" for the neighborhood.

6.3 Project Goals

Due to the nature of the funding for this study it is important to ensure that recommendations from the study meet the following goals

- Serve as an extension of the scheduled transportation improvements of the Furman to Fehr reconstruction project, consistent with concepts of the Route 5 Corridor Study.
- Provide new and enhanced transportation linkages between activity centers in the neighborhood.
- Identify and address key transportation issues relative to the neighborhood.
- Develop a plan that includes early action items that can be implemented.
- Successful mitigation measures can be expanded to other parts of the neighborhood.
- Examine opportunities for more significant improvements that can provide long term remedies to transportation issues.

6.4 Action Items

After review of the input received at the public workshops, the consultant met with the City to discuss possible action items that could achieve some, if not many, remedies to the issues sought by the neighborhood and identified by the transportation report. Further, the remedies should be consistent with the intent of transportation and land use linkage study and achieve, to the fullest extent possible, the goals set forth by the team.

In the development of recommended projects, it is important to keep in mind necessary public works functions that the City of Schenectady provides. Issues such as street cleaning and snow removal will continue to be an integral part of ongoing city services. In some cases remedies to issues brought forth by the community may be nearly impossible to resolve. For example, a change in vertical curvature to solve sight distance problems cannot be done from a practical sense. In other cases, a potential remedy requires actions by others for successful implementation. An example of this is the desire to create, where and when possible, "pocket parking" lots. The construction of the lots requires actions to condemn and remove buildings in the neighborhood that are in locations where "pocket parking" is a remedy to a parking problem. Further, mechanisms need to be in place to finance the operation and maintenance of the lots. Conversations with the Advisory Committee suggested that entities such as "Improvement Districts" may be a structure that can accomplish this. But the creation of these districts will require a commitment, both financially and personally, by the neighborhood to be successful.

After careful consideration of a wide range of potential strategies and extensive discussion with the City of Schenectady, a series of remedies has been proposed to the Central State Street Neighborhood. These remedies may reflect a potential \$3.0 million dollar project over a 5 or more year period. The remedies also reflect solutions to issues identified by the neighborhood and meet the goals established for the project.

REMEDY #1

Speed – As suggested early, this issue was a common thread to many of the discussions with the neighborhood. The straight line and traffic volumes on the local streets promoted speeds in excess of the 30 MPH speed limit, an undesirable speed for local streets. To address this issue, two remedies have been suggested.

1. In the block of Furman Street from State Street to Becker Street, parking will be changed from the current one side only parking to an alternate parking plan that has parking on one side of the street for part of the block, then shifted to the other side and then back again before the end of the block. This practice will present obstacles to a driver traveling the street that requires that the vehicle to weave back and forth to get around the parked cars. This action will require a slower pace and create a serpentine path through the block. This remedy will introduce difficulty to street maintenance functions such as street cleaning and snow removal. However, the City feels that the possible outcome of this action has a greater good than the difficulty created by the action.

Remedy Exhibit – Exhibit 6 - 1

2. In the block of Division Street from State Street to Becker Street, a different solution to the same problem is offered. In this case, rather than using parked vehicles as the means of laterally shifting moving traffic, a series of chicanes will be constructed that will create the serpentine path. The intent is the same – slow the traffic down.

Remedy Exhibit – Exhibit 6 – 2

Pedestrian Safety and Sight Distance - As part of the State Street improvements a series of curb extensions or "bulb-outs" will be constructed at the intersections. These bulb-outs will project the curb into the street for a distance about the width of a parking lane. It is suggested that these bulb-outs be created into the width of Furman and Division Streets at their intersections with State Street and Becker Street. These extensions offer better sight distance at the intersections and reduce the crossing distance for pedestrians. This reduction in crossing distance means less exposure to a pedestrian crossing the street. Remember, the accident history at Becker and Division suggests that one out of every 3 accidents at this intersection involves a pedestrian. An additional benefit to these bulb-outs is that they can provide additional landscaping opportunities that can enhance the neighborhood's visual appearance.

Remedy Exhibit – Exhibit 6-3

Bradley Boulevard Improvements – One of the focal areas for the neighborhood, Bradley Boulevard is a valuable asset to the neighborhood. Its 62-foot width and raised center islands offer a special entrance to the

neighborhood from the north. To address issues presented by the residents, it is proposed that, in the short term, striping be provided that extends the islands into the area of the intersections. Further, crosswalks will be provided at the intersections for pedestrians. The combination of crosswalks and striped, island extensions will provide pedestrians with a safe area, if necessary, when they cross the street.

Over the longer term, the City may program more permanent improvements to the street. These improvements would reduce the island width slightly and provide a wider travel way along Bradley Boulevard so that vehicles traveling on Bradley Boulevard can pass between the islands and parked cars without having to "jump" the curb. This project might also include treatment to each of the intersections to give them the Seward Place look mentioned by residents.

Remedy Exhibit – Exhibit 6-4A and Exhibit 6-4B

Cut Through Traffic, Pedestrian Safety, Speed and a Community Gateway – As a centerpiece to the project, it is suggested that the intersection of Bradley Boulevard and Elm Street be changed from an "All Way Stop" intersection to a roundabout. The introduction of the roundabout will reduce speeds in the area to 15 to 20 MPH. This reduction in speed along with the inconvenience of the roundabout may "discourage" some of the "cut through" traffic that uses Bradley Boulevard as a connection between McClellan Street and the Crosstown. The reduced speeds and geometric opportunities of the roundabout provide a transportation system more consistent with the Central Park Middle School and Central Park.

With a center island treatment and other features, the roundabout can be a special entranceway into the neighborhood.

Remedy Exhibit – Exhibit 6-5

Continued Neighborhood Participation and Discussion – The success of any program is dependent, in a large part, by the continued engagement of the community with the City, but more importantly among itself. Dynamic discussions can produce positive results. The suggestions of the participants in the Public Workshops clearly show the innovative thinking that can produce positive ideas. It is suggested that the Central State Street Neighborhood continue to pursue these strategies through the engagement of a planning effort currently underway in the Vale Village Neighborhood.

6.5 Advisory Committee Response

A presentation of these action items was made to the Advisory Committee on March 11, 2002. The City suggested that some of the suggested remedies might be implemented in this construction season as part of the State Street improvements and repaving project that the City has planned for Furman Street from Becker to Bradley. Other components such as the additional striping on Bradley Boulevard and Becker Street could be added to the City's list of projects without significant cost.

Remaining components of the program will require further financial analysis and design refinements before any final timeframe could be developed. Clearly the roundabout would require substantial funds and may require assistance from other funding sources.

6.6 The Next Step

In order to implement the program, two concurrent actions need to be continued. First, the Advisory Committee is asked to seek support from their community. The City has indicated its willingness to commit to a program but it needs to be assured that the neighborhood support is there. The Advisory Committee will be given copies of the final report for distribution within the neighborhood.

At the same time, a comprehensive summary of action items with cost estimates will be prepared. The project area includes Furman Street and Division Street along with Bradley Boulevard. A project package with timetables and a breakdown of estimated costs will be prepared for the development of an implementation program.