

**City of Cohoes Van Schaick Island  
Transportation and Revitalization Plan**

**Public Meeting #1 (May 30, 2007)**

The City of Cohoes Van Schaick Island Transportation and Revitalization Plan public meeting was held on May 30, 2007, at 7pm, at the Van Schaick Elementary School. It was the first public meeting for this project. The purpose of the meeting was to inform the community about the plan, and to collect information and opinions from residents in order to guide the planning process. The meeting was announced on the City of Cohoes website Events calendar. Almost 50 people attended the meeting.

The meeting was facilitated by Mark Sargent and Tom Johnson of Creighton Manning Engineering, and by Martin D. Hull of Kise Straw & Kolodner, Inc. Following a short PowerPoint presentation, community members were invited to express their opinions on a series of questions about the project area indicating with dot stickers statements they supported or did not support. The results of this process indicate that Van Schaick Island residents are generally of the same opinion when it comes to the revitalization of Ontario Street, and that retail, residential, and recreational uses all need to be integrated into the existing streetscape. [Below is a summary of the meeting.](#)

**I. Poster Board Summaries**

**A. Retail Uses on Ontario Street**

1. Fine Dining Restaurants
2. Diners or Family Restaurants
3. Grocery Store
4. Dry cleaner
5. Clothing Stores of various sorts
6. Coffee shop / cafe
7. Bookstore
8. Hardware store
9. Other (please list)

*The residents of Cohoes strongly supported the idea of a coffee shop/café, even stating that the bakery should be brought back to Ontario Street. That use received the most votes of any of the options listed. Other ideas strongly supported included diners or family restaurants (more popular than fine dining), and a bookstore. Fewer people placed dots next to clothing stores and dry cleaner. Residents were divided on whether a hardware store was desirable on Ontario Street. No other suggestions were added to the board.*

**B. Pedestrian and Bike Accommodations**

A bike route to connect the Mohawk Hudson Bike Hike Trail and the new Delaware Avenue Trail is being planned.

What route should it take?

- A. Ontario Street
- B. Bridge Avenue
- C. Another Route

A majority of residents wanted the bike route to follow Bridge Avenue (no one supported a bike route along Ontario Street). One note added to the board requested a bike route to the high school. Another note stated “currently traffic turning left from west bound Ontario Street (Near 787) is allowed while pedestrians have a walk light!” Another resident noted that River Street south of Ontario should be “one-way south. Currently it is too narrow at the Breslin Intersection to support 2-way” traffic. Someone else agreed, adding that River Street should be one-way southbound in that area.

1. It is easy to walk from my home to the store.
2. There should be more pedestrian crosswalks on the Island.
3. It is easy for pedestrians to cross Ontario Street.
4. Having modern pedestrian activated traffic signals would make it safer to cross Ontario Street.
5. I would feel safe biking on Ontario Street.
6. I would feel safe biking on Bridge Avenue and local streets.

Most residents agreed that it is easy to walk from homes to retail, and that there should be more pedestrian crosswalks on the Island. It was noted that it is NOT easy to cross Ontario Street as a pedestrian, and that they would not feel safe biking on Ontario, Bridge, or any other local streets. One note added to the board stated that Cohoes “need[s] easier crosswalks at Bridge & 787, and at Oliver and Cedar.”

**C. What type of development density would you like to see along Ontario Street?**

- Low Density (2 stories or less)
- Medium Density (3-5 stories)
- High Density (6 stories or higher)

The overwhelming majority of residents stated that low-density development (2 or fewer stories) was desirable for Ontario Street.

**D. What types of uses are most appropriate for new development on Ontario Street?**

- Retail
- Residential (Single family)
- Residential (Condo or Multi-family)
- Recreation
- Office
- Other

The trend here was toward retail and office uses for Ontario Street’s new development. One resident added a note that read “‘new urbanism’ – 1<sup>st</sup> floor retail, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor lofts or condos,” and several other community members placed dots on that note. Recreation was also noted as being important.

**E. Transit**

1. Bus stops are adequate as presently located off the Island.
2. There should be a bus route that serves the Island.
3. If a bus does serve the Island, it should only travel and have stops on Ontario Street.

4. If a bus does serve the Island, which of the following destinations should it serve?
  - 4A. Downtown Troy
  - 4B. Albany
  - 4C. Lansingburgh
  - 4D. Downtown Cohoes

*Van Schaick residents do not feel that there is presently adequate bus service to the Island. They also felt that if a bus were to serve the Island, it should have a route that includes more than just Ontario Street. One resident added a note to the board here, indicating that the bus route should "connect one half of the Island to the other half, Ontario-Bridge Ave." Residents supported all the proposed bus route destinations, and one resident suggested an additional option of Latham, adding that it would help teenagers connect to movies and other activities off the Island.*

#### **F. Traffic Congestion and Parking**

1. Rush hour traffic congestion is a serious problem in the Capital District.
2. Rush hour traffic congestion is a serious problem on Ontario Street.
3. Maintaining on-street parking is important for the revitalization of Ontario Street.
4. On-street parking on Ontario Street should be removed as needed in order to improve the traffic flow.
5. There should be a commuter Park & Ride lot on or near the Island.
6. There is a need for additional off-street parking.
7. Modern traffic signals that sense traffic conditions would help relieve traffic congestion on the island.
8. As an alternative to signals, roundabouts would be a good idea to help relieve traffic congestion on the Island.

*Residents agreed that rush hour congestion is a problem in both the Capital District and on Ontario Street. Roundabouts were generally NOT considered a good idea, and modern traffic signals would help alleviate some of the congestion issues. Fewer residents responded to questions about on-street parking and commuter parking, but those that did respond were against removal of on-street parking and in favor of a commuter Park and Ride lot on the Island. Additional off-street parking was also thought to be a good idea.*

#### **G. Recreation**

1. Recreational opportunities are important to quality of life on the Island.
2. I would like to see dedicated bike lanes along streets on Van Schaick Island.
3. I would use a multi-use bike-hike trail.
4. Preserving open space on Van Schaick Island should be a priority.
5. Preserving the historical resources on Van Schaick Island should be a priority.

Priority sites to preserve include:

- 5A. Van Schaick Mansion
- 5B. Matton Shipyard
- 5C. Peebles Island
- 5D. Other buildings over 50 years of age

*The response to this set of questions was almost unanimous; community members support recreation on the Island and would use a bike-hike trail if it was implemented in Cohoes. Historic resources are also a priority, although fewer residents identified “other buildings over 50 years of age” as a priority than the other named sites.*

#### **H. Commercial Revitalization**

1. Traffic is a necessary part of a vibrant community and should be tolerated.
2. New development is needed along Ontario Street.
3. Buildings that contain more than one use (e.g. housing and retail) are a good thing.
4. It is important to improve the appearance of Ontario Street with trees, landscaping, and banners where appropriate.
5. Van Schaick Island should adopt design guidelines to encourage attractive buildings along Ontario Street.
6. Offices and other types of employment uses would be desirable on Ontario Street.
7. It is important to have a variety of stores within walking distance of residential areas.

*The vast majority of residents agreed with statements 2-7, although question 6 (“office and other types of employment would be desirable on Ontario Street”) had a lower response rate than the other questions. Residents were not in agreement with question 1, believing that traffic is NOT a necessary part of a vibrant community, and therefore should NOT be tolerated. Again, however, this question had a lower response rate than the other questions. One resident added a note at the bottom of the board that stated “better lighting on Ontario.”*

#### **I. What types of recreation facilities would you like to see?**

1. Community Pool
2. Marina
3. Boat launch for kayaks, motor boats, and canoes
4. Boat rental along the Hudson River
5. Bike rental along the Hudson River
6. Places to sit and watch the Hudson River
7. Ball fields
8. Gazebo or bandstand
9. Picnic area
10. Other (please list)

*Residents generally supported all types of recreation facilities noted here, with the exception of a community pool, which had more “do not support” votes. An addition to the list was a “bike lane from Island to Baker Avenue Park.”*

#### **II. Summary of written comments received**

- A. Please explore what can be done about the walk light on 787. When a pedestrian pushed the button and gets the light, Ontario Street gets a left turn arrow to go onto 787. Try crossing 6 lanes in 32 seconds with cars whizzing by!!!

B. Notes:

1. The western gateway to the area is a mess and desperately needs attention.
2. Consider underground utilities (telephone, cable, power) as long-term goals.
3. Waterfront parks should be encouraged. The city may have to purchase land.
4. Access to water must be public – too many condos and private access don't help the community.
5. Consider zoning change for greater set back from street for new construction
6. Avoid brick sidewalks and utility strips – too maintenance intensive over time.

C. My vision for the 470 corridor between 787 EAST to the 112<sup>th</sup> Bridge entrance to Troy/Lansingburgh would be a combination of Broadway in the Village of Waterford between St. Mary's Church and the Bridge before Hannaford Supermarket and the 5 corners area in Delmar. These areas both have plenty of shops/restaurants and places to sit and talk with Fellow residents as well as traffic flow that would accommodate both commercial and residential use.

D. *(Comments recorded by Tom Johnson, CME)*

1. April Kennedy (Council President): Councilwoman Kennedy would like the Delaware/Ontario intersection investigated for a roundabout. She is concerned with back-ups on the 112<sup>th</sup> Street bridge if a signal is installed at the intersection. She would also like access to the waterfront for all Cohoesiers to be part of the plans.
2. Joe Moloughney (Planning Board): Joe is concerned that the revitalization of Ontario Street may conflict with goals and plans for the on-going downtown revitalization.

**III. Comments during Q&A after presentation of dots exercise:**

Q: Will there be additional parking for stores?

A: Parking will be considered as part of the overall plan.

Q: Is a market analysis necessary to determine if there is a need for additional retail?

A: The study will develop alternatives for potential land uses along Ontario Street; a market analysis is not part of this project. As definitive projects come along at a later time, then it's possible a market analysis may be done at that time as part of that project.