

NYS Parks Meeting 21-November focused on

“Share the Road” Bike Path Compromise

By: Mike Madigan - Councilman

On November 21st Supervisor McMurray and I met with Mark Thomas Dir. NY Parks for 2 hours. The meeting focused primarily on Option 5 - The "Share the Road" concept that Councilman Ray Billica suggested as a compromise between option 3 and option 4 at the 09-November Parks meeting. The following is a summary of our meeting:

Reviewed how Option 5 program works:

- Program runs May 1 – October 1 (the five peak outdoor use months)
 - The Parkway is closed to vehicles on weekends – **making it an event!**
 - The Parkway remains open on weekdays - the peak vehicle traffic use days
- From October through April (7 months) the Parkway remains in use (accept when conditions prevent use due to snow or ice)
- **Similar programs are in place in Washington DC and Philadelphia and are incredibly popular**

Reviewed what I contend are the advantages of Option 5 over option 3:

Accomplishes primary project objective to separate pedestrians from motor vehicles; minimizes area resident exposure to increased vehicle traffic on their residential streets during peak traffic periods reducing health and safety risks associated with accidents; cost is well within the \$2.5M budget; minimizes the traffic shift and associated street wear and tear on town streets that would impact the Grand Island town budget; minimizes impact on resident quality of life resulting from the traffic shift; retains most of the access to the scenic Parkway drive for Americans With Disabilities (ADA) and the elderly (who already have limited opportunities); minimizes environmental impact (most migratory bird nesting is completed by May 1st as per NYS DEC); Compromise Option 5 is supported by a majority of the town board; Public feedback suggests it will be supported by a majority of the public and possibly even a strong majority.

Reviewed follow-up questions and requests associated from meeting with the Town and New York State on 09-November-2016:

-The Parks agreed to meet with Chris Aronica to review the cost details of Option 4 and how the final cost was arrived at (Chris request)
-Question: Renderings in Town-hall of Option 3 showed large sections of the median not mowed raising concerns for residents. Inquired whether a mowing maintenance agreement could be entered into between the State and the Town? Parks Response: The State is committed to ensure residents have adequate view sheds. Certain sections (meadows) will be treated differently based on if there are required view sheds based on home locations (as a possible example the State said meadows may be mowed twice yearly vs. view shed locations being mowed 3-6 times). The state committed to providing a maintenance plan later in the project but stated a contract is unlikely to be put in place.
-Question: Could an agreement with the town be enacted securing duck blind locations, committing to not disrupt those locations and permitting vehicle access? Response: State will look into best way to structure a commitment to allow hunting long term including vehicle access to blinds – Director Thomas has high regard for these folks which he stated are some of the most responsible users of the park.
-Regarding Docks: It was stated that docks are and will continue to be out of scope and off limits for discussion for this project – there shall be no change in current status.
-Six Mile Creek Bridge: NYS-Parks confirmed it is owned and maintained by the state and the state is fully committed to future maintenance.
-Question: Could the state enter a long term agreement with the town to ensure the path surface is maintained in a safe condition. It has been stated there are concerns for cost to maintain the Parkway that has 1500 cars/day – why would this concern be different for Path users? Response: Mark Thomas believes it will be maintained, but is not certain any contractual agreement can be made in writing; he will check but believes such an agreement is unlikely
-Question: Is there any future plan for parking lots in the median: Response: There are no plans, no need and no funds available for any parking lots.

At the end of the meeting NY State Director Mark Thomas committed to performing a “comprehensive” review of the Compromise Option 5 and will report on the points listed above in relationship to Option 3. Director Thomas did not provide a timeline for when he would complete this assessment but did mention it would take at least ten days. Director Thomas committed to ensuring it will be a detailed assessment. Stay tuned....

At the end of the Meeting I informed Director Thomas that based on his commitment to perform a comprehensive feasibility assessment of Compromise Option 5 “Share the Road” program that I would rescind the motions I had planned on seeking a vote on that same evening at the Town Board meeting. I trusted he was acting in good faith so I would similarly make a good faith action by rescinding them.

Supervisor McMurray and I both thanked Director Thomas and his team for a constructive and productive meeting.

Supervisor McMurray, Director Thomas and the Parks team were professional, respectful, and fully engaged in the conversation and I greatly appreciated the opportunity they all provided through this meeting.