

Open House Public Meeting Summary Highland Avenue – Roadway Geometrics and Traffic Evaluation

An Open House Public Meeting for the Highland Avenue – Roadway Geometrics and Traffic Evaluation project was held at the Fort Mitchell City Municipal Building on Tuesday, January 15, 2019.

Mayor Jude Hehman began the meeting with a brief history and overview of the project. Highland Avenue has been studied before with the last review completed in 2013. No changes have been made to the corridor as a result of the prior studies. At this time, the City has engaged Bayer Becker to conduct an updated evaluation of the roadway and traffic on Highland Avenue. Bayer Becker has collected some initial data for the Highland Avenue project and has prepared exhibits for the meeting; however, no decisions have been made relative to the study and/or potential improvements identified.

The purpose of the Open House Public Meeting was to gather concerns, question, comments and feedback from the residents and to compile as much information as possible to help the City and City Council determine the next steps for the project.

The following project stations were set up within the City Building.

1. Issue identified: ○ Congestion at Dixie Highway during the AM peak hour and the interaction of the Blessed Sacrament School traffic with Highland Avenue residential traffic.

Potential Solution/
Improvement: ○ To help alleviate congestion and queues along Highland Avenue at Dixie Highway and extending through Oak Street to Floral Avenue, consider the construction of a westbound right turn lane on Highland Avenue at Dixie Highway.
2. Issue identified: ○ Impacts to vehicular traffic as a result of on-street parking.

Potential Solution/
Improvement: ○ To minimize Impacts to vehicular traffic as a result of on-street parking or to eliminate conflicts between opposing traffic because of encounters with parked vehicles, the on-street parking could be shifted out of the travel lane by widening the pavement along Highland Avenue.
3. Issue identified: ○ Sight distance concerns at the intersection of Lucerne Avenue and Highland Avenue.

Potential Solution/
Improvement: ○ To provide for adequate sight distance at the intersection of Lucerne Avenue and Highland Avenue, on-street parking within the defined intersection sight distance triangles should be eliminated.

The final station consisted of an exhibit that shows the existing conditions of Highland Avenue with no issues or potential solutions/improvements identified. The purpose of this station was to collect any additional information, concerns, and suggestions that were not previously presented.

A summary of the comments that were obtained during the Open House Public Meeting is provided as follows. Original comments are attached.

Seventy-one residents signed in during the meeting. While seven comment sheets were collected/submitted at the meeting, approximately 92 additional comments were also recorded by meeting hosts and/or on the meeting exhibits (i.e. poster notations, post-it notes, flip charts, etc.) and 188 sticker votes were recorded.

Station 1 - Consider the construction of a westbound right turn lane on Highland Avenue at Dixie Highway.





Issue Identified:		Sticker Votes
Congestion at Dixie Highway during the AM peak hour and the interaction of the Blessed Sacrament School traffic with Highland Avenue residential traffic.	Agree	28
	Disagree	0
Potential Solution/Improvement:		
To help alleviate congestion and queues along Highland Avenue at Dixie Highway and extending through Oak Street to Floral Avenue, consider the construction of a westbound right turn lane on Highland Avenue at Dixie Highway.	Agree	21
	Disagree	42

Comments:

- Based on the current concept plan, the proposed westbound right turn lane on Highland Avenue at Dixie Highway is not long enough (it was estimated to provide stacking for 10 to 15 cars per lane). Consider extending the turn lane to Oak Street.
- Yield to left turns coming from Greenbriar Avenue. - There is a fair amount of traffic entering the Dixie Highway and Highland Avenue intersection from the west via the connection provided to Greenbriar Avenue, including both through movements to Highland Avenue and also left turn movements to northbound Dixie Highway. It was noted that some southbound Dixie Highway traffic uses the Greenbriar Avenue connection to travel to eastbound Highland Avenue as a through movement instead of making a left turn at the intersection. As a result of oncoming traffic, the green signal timing for westbound Highland Avenue is minimized (i.e. they now yield to the additional opposing traffic). It gets worse in that the westbound right turn movements also tend to yield to the eastbound left turn movements because of desired lanes on northbound Dixie Highway (i.e. everyone wants to be in the inside lane on Dixie Highway which the eastbound left turners use; the eastbound left turners do not yield to the westbound right turners).
- In the morning, sometimes it is quicker to get to northbound Dixie Highway by using Oak Street and Idaho Avenue and then making a right turn onto Dixie Highway at the unsignalized intersection instead of waiting in the queue on Highland Avenue. However, on-street parking and school and bus traffic on Idaho Avenue sometimes causes delays along this route.
- The queuing issue on Highland Avenue is not only an AM peak hour problem. It occurs at other times as well, including when mass at Blessed Sacrament lets out on Saturdays.
- Widening for the proposed westbound right turn lane on Highland Avenue should also occur to the north along the City's side of the roadway (i.e. why is right of way only needed from the property on the south side of the intersection).
- Space for the turn lane should be taken from the City's landscaping/property (i.e. minimize private impact).
- Allow those turning right onto Dixie Highway to use the City Building parking lot during morning/school peak hours.
- Adding the turn lane and taking away on-street parking will encourage higher traffic speeds in that area, making it dangerous for the people living there.
- Contract with Highland Cemetery to open the gate at Lucerne Avenue as they did during previous Highland Avenue construction.
- Safety concern for sidewalk directly against the road, no green space. - As currently, shown on the proposed right turn lane concept plan, the sidewalk is to be located directly behind the proposed back of curb (i.e. the existing tree lawn located between the walk and curb is to be removed).
- If removing the space between the street and sidewalk, add a barrier to protect pedestrian traffic.

- Concerned for pedestrian safety associated with a proposed right turn lane on Highland Avenue. Drivers tend to focus on vehicular traffic while ignoring pedestrians which seem to increase with turn lanes (i.e. westbound to northbound traffic will look south only for gaps in traffic and turn without checking the crosswalk for pedestrians on the north side of the intersection).
- A bicyclist (child) was hit in the crosswalk located on the north side of the intersection by a vehicle traveling eastbound on the Greenbriar Avenue connection to northbound Dixie Highway.
- Look at the location of the crosswalks at the intersection. Consider switching the Dixie Highway crosswalk that is located on the north side of the intersection to the south side.
- Have we considered raised crosswalks at the Dixie Highway and Highland Avenue intersection, especially the crosswalk on Dixie Highway (i.e. a pedestrian bridge instead of the tunnel that is currently provided to the south of this intersection at Blessed Sacrament School which is scary unless crossing guards are present).
- Highland Avenue is impacted by a short light (i.e. green time) at Dixie Highway, backups on Dixie Highway at Beechwood, and Thursday prayer breakfast when the sheriff blocks Dixie Highway. Sometimes only one car can get out to the right.
- Make the traffic signal change more often (i.e. traffic signal timing modifications, increase green time and frequency of green phases on Highland Avenue).
- Install a traffic signal at the intersection of Dixie Highway and Idaho Avenue.
- Consider making the lanes on Dixie Highway reversible. In the morning, provide three lanes northbound and one lane southbound and in the evening, provide one lane northbound and three lanes southbound.
- Can Blessed Sacrament school traffic (cars and buses) use the traffic signal that is currently provided on their campus (i.e. Dixie Highway and Pleasant Ridge Avenue)?
- Modify the Blessed Sacrament exit at the traffic signal so that two left turn lanes are provided.
- Make Highland Avenue, Idaho Avenue, and Oak Street no parking during the morning peak hours on school days.
- School buses for Ft. Wright students and Ft. Mitchell students are already traveling on Highland Avenue. Can they provide busing for Blessed Sacrament School?
- Will Blessed Sacrament look at changes to their site to minimize Highland Avenue use?
- Reexamine the under-utilization of the Pleasant Ridge Avenue traffic signal at Dixie Highway. Blessed Sacrament directs 6 buses to the signal and 154 cars to Idaho Avenue. Have the new engineer consider reroute for school traffic.
- Reverse traffic to Blessed Sacrament.
- Address "peak" time through creative discussion with institutions (schools, streets).





Station 2 - Consider shifting on-street parking out of the travel lane along Highland Avenue.

Issue Identified:		Sticker Votes
Impacts to vehicular traffic as a result of on-street parking.	Agree 	17
	Disagree 	3
Potential Solution/Improvement: To minimize Impacts to vehicular traffic as a result of on-street parking or to eliminate conflicts between opposing traffic because of encounters with parked vehicles, the on-street parking could be shifted out of the travel lane by widening the pavement along Highland Avenue.	Agree 	12
	Disagree 	20

Comments:

- Eliminate on-street parking to provide better sight lines for drivers to see pedestrians which will improve safety (i.e. can see kids instead of having parked cars blocking a driver's view).
- It is expected that speeds will only increase if on-street parking is shifted or removed. Removing on-street parking will possibly result in more accidents.
- There are currently speeding issues on Highland Avenue. Consider the installation of speed humps (like those already in place in Edgewood). Speed humps were previously suggested; however, stop signs were installed instead (i.e. Oak Street).
- It was suggested that a speed study be performed. Measure the average speed on Highland Avenue now with on-street parked cars and then remove on-street parking for one day (i.e. for street cleaning) and re-measure speeds. It is expected that an increase in speed will be measured and that on-street parked cars help to reduce speed.
- Survey the streets for bump outs.
- Bump outs should not be on the same side of the street as sidewalk. There is too much pedestrian traffic including children.
- Widen Highland Avenue by 1' between the curb and sidewalk on each sides of the street.
- Enforce the no parking/limited on-street parking. Enforce stop signs and speed limits.
- Changes to Highland Avenue damages the residential nature and feel of the street.
- Residents should not think about property impacts as losing a foot or two from their front yard, instead, measure it as a percentage of their yard.
- Who has right of way on the street? If I do and am hit, is the other driver cited? Do they have to pay for my damage?

Station 3 - Consider eliminating on-street parking within the defined intersection sight distance triangles at Lucerne Avenue and Highland Avenue.

Issue Identified:		Sticker Votes
Sight distance concerns at the intersection of Lucerne Avenue and Highland Avenue.	Agree 	11
	Disagree 	10
Potential Solution/Improvement: To provide for adequate sight distance at the intersection of Lucerne Avenue and Highland Avenue, on-street parking within the defined intersection sight distance triangles should be eliminated.	Agree 	10
	Disagree 	14

Comments:

- This area is not as high of a priority as the stretch of Highland Avenue from Dixie Highway to Floral Avenue. The all way stop helps.
- No parking at all on Highland Avenue (i.e. side street parking or driveway parking is permitted only). There is plenty of off-street parking.
- Parking prohibition has negative impact on residential character and increases speeding risk.
- Taking away on-street parking will increase speeding throughout Highland Avenue, making it unsafe for the children living there and harder for those residents to pull in and out of their driveway.
- Clear vegetation to improve sight lines.

- When trees are trimmed back in greenspace between 211 Highland Avenue and the next house to the east, the sight line problem is solved.

Station 4 - Provide any additional information, concerns, and/or suggestions not previously identified.

- Turn lane improvements – encourage faster traffic. The affect is more dangerous for pedestrians, especially kids going to school.
- Parked cars on the street present a problem for emergency services. Fire and/or EMS block traffic to the rest of the subdivision and only one emergency can be handled at a time.
- Consider no parking on Highland Avenue during peak hours.
- Move curbs towards public sidewalks to add about a foot to each side of the road.
- Consider no parking for a day or week and do a study of speed to see if it is going to affect the parking.
- Consider development restrictions to prevent further excess density.
- Taking away parking for residents of upper Highland Avenue is unfair and encourages increased speeds which is dangerous to kids.
- There is plenty of off street parking.
- Get schools to stagger start times so that they are further apart.

Other Comments

- Please try to protect the residential character of old Highland Avenue.
- Some residents observed voters placing more than one red sticker in the disagreement box (occurred at several or all stations).
- Add a left turn lane on Dixie Highway at Highland Avenue.
- The big problems are traffic in the morning and parking on the street. Suggest adding a turn lane and limiting parking on the street.
- Turn lane on Dixie Highway, left onto Highland Avenue - No parking on Highland Avenue, from Dixie Highway to Longmeadow Lane.
- On-street parking is the main cause of traffic backups from Oak Street to Dixie Highway. Is there any way to eliminate on-street parking from the intersection of Oak Street and Highland Avenue to Dixie Highway?
- Ft. Wright should be open minded about creating a safe exit for their residents and pay for it.
- Will Ft. Wright be helping to pay for any suggested road changes?
- Solution: No parking on Highland Avenue (parking in driveways or on side streets) with a longer and more frequent green light on Highland Avenue at Dixie Highway.
- Extend Highland Avenue to Orphanage Road.
- Against any action that would impact home owners on Highland Avenue in terms of reducing green space (i.e. front yards). The yards are small as is and widening the street would negatively impact property values. In addition, speeding would be an issue.
- Do not take residents property away to make for a turn lane.
- All of the proposed solutions require money. Blessed Sacrament traffic is a variable that can be changed if at least tried (i.e. staggered arrival/earlier times for car riders to not conflict with bus drop off and use the signal at Blessed Sacrament or only allow individuals from Blessed Sacrament that are turning northbound to use Highland Avenue (i.e. left turns must use the Blessed Sacrament signal).

After the Open House Public Meeting, additional feedback was accepted until January 25, 2019. A summary of the comments received during this period is provided below, and original comments are attached.

Comments were obtained separate from the meeting from 16 residents via the Fort Mitchell website, comment sheets delivered to the City Building, and/or via email communication to City representatives.

- Complaints associated with the construction of a right turn lane on Highland Avenue will include those relative to green space and trees lost.
- Post a “left turn yield” sign for eastbound Greenbriar Avenue to northbound Dixie Highway traffic (i.e. most of Highland Avenue traffic needs to be in the inside lane on Dixie Highway to access Beechwood Road which ends up yielding to the Greenbriar Avenue left turning traffic).
- Some residents traveling southbound on Dixie Highway will use Greenbriar Avenue to access Highland Avenue as an eastbound through movement instead of a southbound left turn movement which impacts westbound left turning traffic on Highland Avenue to southbound Dixie Highway.
- Move the Dixie Highway crosswalk that is located on the north side of the intersection to the south side to provide more visibility (i.e. most traffic turning from Highland Avenue and Greenbriar Avenue is going northbound on Dixie Highway).
- Construction of a turn lane on Highland Avenue would be a lot of expense for very little benefit. Consider routing right turning traffic on Highland Avenue through the City Building parking lot to Silver Avenue, designating a specific path that would not interfere with police and other traffic in that parking lot.
- A turn lane on Highland Avenue to Dixie Highway is supported. Traffic will continue to increase with the additional development under construction on Floral Avenue.
- To accommodate the proposed turn lane on Highland Avenue, consider removing the retaining wall on City property rather than acquiring land from the property owner on the other side of Highland Avenue.
- Suggest providing sidewalk along one side of Highland Avenue (instead of two sides) and consider moving the no parking sign further down on Highland Avenue.
- Eliminate on-street parking along Highland Avenue from Dixie Highway to Oak Street (24 hours per day/7 days per week).
- Modify the traffic signal timing at Dixie Highway/Highland Avenue so that Highland Avenue gets more green time (i.e. turns green more often and for longer intervals).
- Consider modifying the traffic signal at the intersection of Dixie Highway and Highland Avenue so that the traffic signal heads serving Highland Avenue can display a flashing red indication so that at predetermined times, the traffic signal can operate in flashing red mode while at other times, the signal would operate in normal mode. While in flashing red mode, motorists will have the opportunity to turn left on red as conflicting traffic on Dixie Highway will allow.
- Any issues related to traffic at the top of Highland Avenue relate to a problem on Dixie Highway, not due to the number of cars on Highland Avenue. A turn lane on Highland Avenue will not fix the problem on Dixie Highway. A turn lane on Highland Avenue at Dixie Highway will only lead to faster speeds on Highland Avenue. The parked cars are the only thing that keep people moving slow and safe.
- Permit residential traffic only on Highland Avenue (i.e. no Blessed Sacrament traffic).
- Highland Avenue traffic backs up from Dixie Highway to Lucerne Avenue.
- Direct Highland Avenue traffic to Idaho Avenue via Oak Street where right turns are permitted and consider removing the left turn restriction.
- Study Blessed Sacrament traffic. There are typically no traffic issues on no school days.
- Look for an alternate route for Blessed Sacrament traffic (one that doesn’t utilize Highland Avenue).
- Eliminate Blessed Sacrament traffic from Idaho Avenue.
- Route Blessed Sacrament traffic to the traffic signal at Pleasant Ridge Avenue.
- Route Blessed Sacrament and other left turning traffic on Idaho Avenue to the traffic signal at Pleasant Ridge Avenue.

- Consider a staggered start time for both Blessed Sacrament and Beechwood Independent schools. If Blessed Sacrament relies on busing from the Kenton County School District (and as a result cannot change their schedule), consider the adjustment/staggering of Beechwood start times for both the elementary school and high school. Also suggest a one-year trial period to evaluate traffic and changes and to determine if actual infrastructure changes are needed.
- Beechwood Road traffic backs up onto Dixie Highway with drivers waiting on Dixie Highway, unable to turn on Beechwood Road (both northbound and southbound). A left turn lane on Dixie Highway at Beechwood Road will increase this effect. Consider providing school busing from Longmeadow Lane to Beechwood to help alleviate congestion on both Highland Avenue and Beechwood Road.
- Eliminate all on-street parking on Highland Avenue (i.e. parking on side streets and in driveways only).
- Consider changing the code to allow private side driveways (like 217 Highland Avenue). Is there a study or data that would provide an impact to property values if private parking pads are built?
- If on-street parking is to remain, consider providing centerline striping (i.e. similar centerline pavement markings as Beechwood Road) and add signage that states “yield to incoming traffic” to clarify that to outgoing traffic that they do not have the right of way.
- Do not remove on-street parking, it is a residential area. Parked cars are the only thing that keeps people moving slow and safe.
- Install some sort of courtesy/non-regulatory visual aid/marking along Highland Avenue to provide drivers with a spatial awareness of their vehicle relative to parked cars and oncoming traffic. For example, two painted stripes, one separating a parking lane and a second line located equidistant from the first line and the opposite curb. This would provide drivers with a lane and allow them to continue safely while passing oncoming traffic and parked cars.
- To alleviate speeding concerns, once on-street parking is eliminated or parking pads are constructed, perform a stealth study and if appropriate, reduce the speed limit to 20 mph and provide enforcement (i.e. would rather move at a slower speed than to stop and start around parked cars).
- Sight distance is a problem at the intersection of Lucerne Avenue and Highland Avenue and extends to Ross Avenue. Solutions to consider in this area include the elimination on-street parking, construction of parking pads, widening of the roadway, installation of a divider line.
- There have been some close calls on Highland Avenue between Ross Avenue and Lucerne Avenue. Eliminate on-street parking in this area (it is understood that some residents have limited parking but nearly every house has parking (driveways) for two cars) or construct on-street parking pads (i.e. bump outs) (could be helpful to provide for overflow parking options) to allow for two-way traffic. Consider speed bumps to address speeding concerns; however, position speed bumps and on-street parking pads appropriately.
- There is a little blind spot in the bend by Lucerne Avenue, but tree trimming would help with visibility. While witnessing a side mirror taken off of a car once, no other accidents have been observed.
- An updated contingency plan for emergency vehicles to get past Lucerne Avenue is needed. Previously, a response from the City was provided indicating that should Highland Avenue be blocked, the incident is given a high priority to reopen the roadway quickly. Consider the construction of a private drive from Highland Avenue to Orphanage Road or explore other possibilities.
- Disagreement with all proposals. More problems will be created than solved (i.e. speeding).
- Any money spent on any of the projects would be a waste. None of the “problems” are safety concerns. Inconvenient does not equal safety issues.
- Find another way to access Highland Avenue and involve Fort Wright. Additional access will alleviate congestion and also will provide options for emergency vehicles.