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Focus Group: Transportation and Urban Design Issues

Attendees: Greg Szewczyk, NYSDOT - Planning
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Bob Franke, Forever Elmwood
Brian Rusk, NYS Thruway Authority
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Assuming no constraints exist – physically, financially or otherwise – what is the ideal for:

- A comprehensive circulation system in Williamsville?
 - Williamsville's Main Street Corridor Vision?
 - What role Williamsville should play in the larger context of Western New York?
- One agency that looks at circulation, with the existing system and with the improved system
 - Pedestrian and bike friendly
 - Maintain Village aura, history and role
 - Reduce traffic, reduce congestion and problems associated with traffic
 - Need to have a place to shop...priority of traffic made the residents secondary
 - Start with the big vision of giving Main Street back to the Village
 - Williamsville is really an urban village, shouldn't be afraid of that role and have some density
 - Have the residents here to support what you have on Main Street
 - Convince businesses that the people who are going 50 mph through the village, are not stopping to shop
 - Role in the larger context – historic place, starter of Amherst, where Benjamin Ellicott lived, should be one of the scenic destination
 - Safety should be the top concern
 - Need more than posting of speed limits to slow traffic, get people to feel the proper speed to be driving at

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- Pedestrian and bike traffic are reason people go slower, more aware of what is going on
 - Develop visual cues, gateway
 - Toll free section of the Thruway
 - Conceptually, endorse idea about interchanges, help regional traffic
 - Need a traffic-calming program, more than just Main Street, on side streets too
 - Circulation system approach, have roads where you want cars to be
 - Need to do more than small inexpensive improvements, the doors are open for future improvements
 - A median along Main - take out some of the parking, with parking taken off there is more space, to make narrower – for a median to work really need a parallel road to be able to maneuver around
 - Stop thinking about cars totally, for example, on Elmwood the roads were narrowed and the sidewalks much larger which helping Elmwood become successful
 - Continue to make improvements to pedestrian roads
 - Don't worry about a median as much, although possible in Williamsville because the street is so wide
 - Prevent parking in front of buildings and bring storefronts to the sidewalks, makes it easier for people to move around in - putting people in the back seat makes for more traffic and more parking
 - Parking – needs to be behind shop parking with access to the commercial district
 - Not an issue how fast to cross the Village, for example, Elmwood is slow but it is not meant to be a fast road
 - One thing we need in Western New York is a variety – Williamsville is great for that, has an identity, a village type of identity, hate to see Williamsville as another manifestation of the type of sprawl across the region
 - Medians along Main Street instead of continuous turning lane
 - Get rid of the turning lanes all together
 - Need proactive decisions - without a traffic management system we are making reactive decisions
 - Establish specific problems and creative solutions
 - Roundabout at each end of the Village, two lanes in each direction, no left turns, narrow median with trees and grass, friendly for pedestrians, parking on Main Street changed from parallel to perpendicular, cross traffic with lights at Cayuga and pedestrian crossings, maybe also at Union, Forest and Evans-Garrison if roundabout is not there - move traffic quicker
 - Traffic solutions with zoning solutions
 - No more drive thrus

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- Land use pattern is an important circulation
- Reconstruction task force – Village Board, Town Board, Chamber of Commerce, DOT, developers...having all different kinds of users will make for better issues
- Coordinate with different agencies/governments (infrastructure owners)
- Connect parking – there is so much parochialism, where you can see the parking, but you can't get to it because every single business had their own parking, connected parking would alleviate going onto Main Street
- 5500 Main with atrium in the middle, make it a plaza, clock tower, Town Hall has always talked about having more space
- People who get out want the experience of walking around
- Space out anchors so that people experience the rest of the Village
- Take office parking out, make them walk
- Focus on all modes of travel (motor vehicles, pedestrians, bikes)
- Address different types of activities (commercial, residential, retail/entertainment, deliveries)
- Divert more traffic onto the thruway
- Less congested traffic
- Good traffic flow in and out of Buffalo
- Provide good economic development without increasing congestion
- Make Village roadway appealing with trees, flowers and adequate free parking
- Safe and convenient access to restaurants, shopping, services and places of work to residents and workers
- Main Street that accommodates regional traffic flow in a way that doesn't impinge on resident access and attractiveness of Main Street
- For Main Street think of Route 5 through Batavia
- Role being the business district/corridor for Transit Oriented Development
- Improve and continue to have the "village" look – entering into the Village
- A highway system that would separate through traffic from traffic with an origin or destination in the Village and better more extensively utilized public transportation
- An aesthetically pleasing corridor with pedestrian dimensions, on and off street parking
- A supporting role as a commercial center in the region
- Increase mass transit
- Denser development around Transit
- Mixed use
- Livable community designs
- One piece of a large transit system
- Main Street should be the center of a pedestrian friendly commercial district accented by the Village's unique character
- Main Street should have bicycle lanes, well-defined crosswalks, bulb-outs, trees and wide sidewalks
- Other routes can and should handle other traffic – when traffic is directed through a single artery there is greater potential for clogs
- Need to divert traffic from Main Street
- Need to establish better East/West and North/South routes
- Need to establish traffic calming program for roads adjacent to Main Street
- Improve pedestrian/bicycle circulation

Identify deficiencies, issues and problem areas of the circulation system in Williamsville and its regional context.

- Village location relative to major Thruway interchange
- Poor public transportation – no park and ride lots for ridesharing
- Lack of parallel streets
- Car culture – need to focus on building a pedestrian friendly environment
- Wide road, narrow sidewalks – not pedestrian friendly
- Parking is a problem now and much to be solved
- Route 5 is a main thoroughfare on one hand and a Village on the other hand
- At one point in time there was a real distinction to the Village, but over the years it became all the same
- Do we want that to be, enter some place special...do want it to be different?
- Cars going by fast, doesn't bode well
- Traffic, everyone trying to go through, bypass road
- Who owns what?
- What can be accomplished and what can't?
- How to proceed (Toll free at Transit, Interchange at Youngs, Traffic calming Techniques)?
- UB impact on the Village as largest employer in Western New York, something that places like East Aurora don't have
- Geometries that have been created, are for high traffic – no surprise that there is such high traffic
- Lower speed means simply more speeding tickets, people drive according to geometry
- All a question of money
- Traffic throughout the whole village, cut through the side streets and main arteries in the village
- Inconvenience of slowing down for toll
- Still a lot of population growth
- If you move the toll there are going to be some impacts, still going to be a ton of traffic
- Route 5, owning too much traffic, west of Village, traffic there is similar to amount of traffic on thruway
- Every time development on Main Street, calls from side street residents to not approve it because of increase in traffic, keep traffic off side streets
- Main Street's continuous turning lane is confusing and doesn't do anything to increase business
- Left turn is a problem for all of traffic
- Disconnect between jurisdiction that make decisions and jurisdiction that has impact (Williamsville) institutionalizing SEQR process
- People feel like they're giving up their parking, they're not, it's helping

Identify assets, opportunities and locations in Williamsville to create a comprehensive circulation and urban system.

- Look at eliminating parking on-street (perhaps one side/both sides)
- Look at municipal parking lots/service roads
- Add Thruway entrances at Youngs Road and at Gunnville or South of Sheridan Drive
- Sufficient public owned land to consider options
- Sufficient variety of stores/shops to support a “walkable” environment
- Town start up of Traffic Management System to track changes in circulation
- Gateway treatments/potential for roundabout
- Bike Lanes (w/color or pattern treatment)
- Develop a zoning plan which supports Village vision
- Roundabout at Aero at Wehrle and Aero at Youngs and Wehrle at Garrison
- Over time bring buildings closer to the street where they are currently set back
- Traffic on Main Street – either narrowing or median in middle of street
- Closing certain streets i.e. Rook Street
- DOT has become sensitized in a positive way in looking at things in a very localized manner, East Aurora has a good relationship with DOT and has been able to keep traffic circle
- Making deliberate steps to evolve the local area when working with DOT
- Main Street can be narrow because you have all kinds of alternative routes
- Main Street has the opportunity for bicycle lanes
- With a roundabout at Aero and Wehrle the very first right would be around Aero, and would divert traffic off Wehrle
- Roundabouts could be employed without having long-term issue of lights
- If you don’t take the step to make the changes now, it won’t change
- Williamsville toll barriers have to be moved down
- Interchange at Youngs Road
- Take regional traffic off of 5 and bring it to the office parks
- Don’t widen Wehrle Drive, short sighted and a colossal waste of money
- Aero Drive should be an area to encourage traffic
- Encourage traffic to go up on Sheridan

Describe any efforts you, or your business or organization, could provide that could help the Village's vision become a reality? What initiatives are currently underway that we may not be aware of?

- The Thruway will work with GBNRTC, Town and Village
- Toll barrier to be removed – it will be done by 2010
- Toll barrier, do plan to have it all done by 2010, all paid for by tolls – hope to have it a toll free area from the new toll barrier, from 8 or 10 mile east of transit to Lewiston, largest section
- Corridor study – Buffalo corridor study from Transit Road to West Seneca DOT is paying for half the study, but not the owner of the facility, just getting started
- DOT is spending as much money on Transit as they can to improve it - widening down at the southern end
- Regional planning organization, they plan where the money goes with interchanges
- County is considering a roundabout at Youngs