

## North Triphammer Road Corridor Reconstruction

### Committee Meeting

May 2, 1996

**Bolded** items indicate action required

The first meeting of the Village of Lansing North Triphammer Road Corridor Reconstruction Committee (NTRCRC) was called to order by Chairman Fresinski at 7:10pm. Committee members Todd, Tull, Herrick, Cross, Sciarabba, Buck, Hickey and Kiefer were present.

Committee members introduced themselves:

Larry Fresinski, Village of Lansing Trustee

Tom Todd, representing District 6 on the Tompkins County Board, which includes most of the Town of Lansing, except for the Village

Jim Tull, Manager of Pyramid mall

Dave Herrick, T.G. Miller Engineer for the Village of Lansing

Brent Cross, Village of Cayuga Heights Engineer

Andy Sciarabba, Lansing Village Place

Cliff Buck, Village of Lansing Trustee

Ned Hickey, Chair of the Village of Lansing Planning Board

Dooley Kiefer, representing District 10 on the Tompkins County Board, which includes the Village of Lansing and Village of Cayuga Heights

Fresinski reported that the Committee has representation from the County and Village, as well as residents, businesses, and surrounding villages. The Lansing Board of Zoning Appeals felt it would be a conflict for their members to sit on this Committee, and have chosen to stay removed from the activity so they can objectively view the issues that arise. There are enough members on the Committee who are familiar with zoning issues so that the Committee is unlikely to develop a plan which conflicts with zoning regulations.

The objective of the Committee is to find a solution to the problem that N. Triphammer Road is deteriorating and not able to handle any amount of high traffic. This road is considered a corridor, hence the name of the Committee - the North Triphammer Road Corridor Reconstruction Committee (NTRCRC). This Committee will look at the whole road as it goes from the Village of Cayuga Heights across the bridge, into the Village of Lansing, and out to the Town. It's a major corridor which affects residents, businesses, and adjoining communities. And, the idea is to arrange the road in a way that makes the most sense for all involved.

The Committee will benefit from the range of expertise around the table when focusing on all the concerns that are raised. No particular methodology will be used and there may be various solutions. Once a solution has been developed which addresses all of the concerns, it will be submitted to the Board of Trustees. After they have endorsed it, they will pass it on to the engineers to design a proposal that will go the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). An MPO's are federally-mandated transportation planning agencies that implement a "continuing, cooperative and comprehensive

transportation planning process in urbanized areas. They provide an intergovernmental/interagency forum to consider transportation planning and project programming issues in a seamless manner. Our funds are 80% federal and 20% non-federal (15% State and 5% County, both in the form of "in-kind services"). These funds are administered by NYSDOT (New York State Department of Transportation) which reimburses the County for our direct expenses. The Village still has an opportunity to be considered by ISTEA (Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act) for 1997 funding if a proposal can be submitted to the Board of Trustees no later than September 1996. Without this funding, the Village of Lansing can't realistically fund the undertaking. That's the whole purpose of pursuing this aggressively now.

The Village has not applied for this funding before. This is a new attempt and it is important to the Village. The Village of Lansing has enjoyed low tax rates - taxes have gone up at half the rate of inflation - and that has a lot to do with the way the Village is managed. Going after funding like this is another way to keep expenses down. Triphammer Road is not expected to last until the next time that ISTEA funding becomes available in 2000-2001. If funding is not obtained now the Village will have to put some temporary solution in place, but wouldn't be able to get into solutions like traffic circles or widening the road. Those types of solutions would require a level of funding that the Village typically does not have available without going after some significant borrowing.

Along with the agenda, Committee members were given photographs and maps that may be useful in honing in on the kinds of things that may be reasonable solutions. The approach that Fresinski expects to take is to go over the tools and identify issues to see how they converge so the Committee can work toward solutions that benefit all involved. The idea is to move through this as quickly and efficiently as possible, but to not miss out on any relevant data. This sort of issue was looked at historically as well, and any history that is associated with this issue should be brought forward. Fresinski said that he understands that some time ago the Village was looking at a bypass to N. Triphammer Road because of the sense that there was going to be a continued increase in traffic. It would be very helpful for the Committee to learn of this and other things that were considered with regards to solutions for this road.

The Committee members represent a large constituency. It is also important to get as much community input as possible. There is going to be a need for a lot of different ways of reaching people. The community will have a variety of vehicles to touch base with Committee members - through e-mail, newsletter, U.S. mail, and faxing (to the Village or to Fresinski). Minutes will also be posted and Committee members listed on a world wide web site. The community can access this web page through stations set up in the public library. Ned Hickey suggested that **public hearings be held**, particularly at the point that the Committee generates some kind of a document or tentative plan. Other suggestions were to **post the NTRCRC plan and progress on a kiosk in Pyramid Mall and to submit information to the Ithaca Journal.**

Todd suggested that the **Committee coordinate its work with the County**, which is currently making plans for their part of the road and already have an application in for ISTEA funding. He suggested that this **Committee find out what the County's plans are through Bill Mobbs, responsible for County Planning.** Kiefer said that the County still has not received word on when the funding will come through, but it would be the MPO that would coordinate the Village's project with the County's project.

Hickey said that years ago when Jim Hanson came on board, one of the first actions that he took was a Village of Lansing land use study. Part of that land use study, which involved the Town of Ithaca, Cayuga Heights, and the Village of Lansing, was a circulation plan for transportation. There were two road networks that were presented. One of them proposed to go out Warren Road and continue on up Hillcrest and connect to Hanshaw.

Cross said that he and David Herrick are both members of the MPO, and also members of Jim Hanson's committee which has recently been revived. The proposal is called the Northeast Bypass. There seems to be almost unanimous support of that bypass plan by members of the committee, with the exception of New York State DOT, which is a primary player in this whole MPO ISTEA federal highway scheme. Prior to this, the DOT had been completely uncooperative. At least now they're at the table but they are definitely saying that a need for this has to be proven. It doesn't appear that anything is going to happen in the way of implementing that plan very quickly.

Hickey suggested that the **Committee be brought up to date on all these studies that are being done at this same time.** Cross suggested that the Committee **invite Dave Boyd, who is the Director of the MPO, to speak to this Committee.** Cross expressed concern over the likelihood or desirability of the Village receiving this funding from ISTEA, and suggested that this group needs to really learn more about how it works. He is familiar with the process because he was involved in the Village of Cayuga Heights' application for ISTEA funds. He explained that each one of their segments has been put into what is called the initial Project Proposal Requests which get endorsed by the MPO and then goes to the DOT. If the DOT likes the project and approves the funding, then you have to meet federal highway specifications and design criteria and such. A year ago, the Cayuga Heights portion was successful in getting the MPO endorsement and the DOT endorsement. Cross wrote it up with his estimate of what he perceived to be necessary to do the project. Once the DOT agreed to take this project on, they looked at it closer with guidelines from the federal highway specifications, and as a result Cross' estimates were tripled, quadrupled, and increased as much as five times. The Village of Cayuga Heights had offered to contribute one third of the cost, but by the time the DOT got the estimate to where they thought the project could be funded because it has to meet certain specifications, the Village's one-third contribution was greater by 50% than if they had done the project with their own specifications and their own funding.

Cross continued to explain that **the IPP (Initial Project Proposal) process requires submission of traffic volumes.** For the traffic volume submitted, federal highway specifications called for a four-lane highway through the Village of Cayuga Heights. Those are the kind of things that this Committee will have to struggle with. If the Village wants this money, it is going to be subject to their requirements and traffic controls.

Fresinski said that in any event, it will still be worthwhile pursuing a solution that addresses all the concerns and all the constituencies. The Village is going to have to come to grips with this issue. It may require a different funding solution. However, it certainly is important to know the likelihood and to what degree the Village can obtain MPO funding

Fresinski asked the Committee to begin identifying the problems that need to be addressed as well as different traffic solutions. He relayed a concern of the Lansing Businessmen's Association with the traffic congestion and stacking of cars coming off of Route 13, which is not conducive to people wanting to

come into this area. Any solution should address that kind of problem, as well as the build-up of cars around the McDonalds area, especially at the peak hours of noon and dinner hours. Those kinds of issues are solutions for everybody; it's not just a business issue.

Buck said that he was not clear on the Committee's objective - for example, whether it is to maximize traffic flow or to smooth out areas of congestion. Fresinski said that maximizing traffic flow is one of the goals, within certain constraints, as well as managing traffic jams. It is also an objective to maintain the character of the Village. Hickey added that efficiency can be increased without maximizing capacity. It's not going to help anybody to create a four-lane highway here and maximize the number of cars that can pass through the Village to get downtown.

Herrick followed up on some of the issues that Cross raised. From a global project perspective, the engineers are looking at this project as a combination of capacity, efficiency, aesthetics, and funding. They recognize that in order to have the best chance of qualifying for ISTEA funding through the MPO, they had to adopt things like land use plans and to look at the entire Corridor with the curb cuts and other modes of transportation (pedestrians, bike-ways, bus shelters, etc.) The Committee is going to have to deal with zoning kinds of questions - uses along the front of the road, where curb cuts may be, where curb cuts are now that may need to be relocated. **The proposal should also include community input, looking at other modes of transportation, etc.** In the past the Village has submitted similar IPPs to the MPO for smaller reconstruction projects on Triphammer and the state has not seriously considered them for funding because those kinds of issues that the state is looking for were not included.

Hickey said that he would hope that we don't give up some of the aesthetics and some of the small Village character in order to qualify for ISTEA funding. He said that he has already served on a couple of committees on this issue, and it seems that there is a division between those people who want to run the traffic through and the people who would like to see a tree-lined main street that would be no more than two lanes, with bicycle paths and sidewalks, so that we can really make this a multi-modal transportation zone - not just dependent upon cars. People used to push shopping carts down Triphammer Road because there was no sidewalk to bring them up to the apartments that are on Graham Road. There are a lot of high-rise apartments here and often those people have no mode of transportation other than their two legs.

Fresinski said that the character of the Village that Hickey describes is what he has been most familiar with hearing since his tenure on the Board of Trustees, and it's that kind of thing that we're trying to hang onto. The antithesis to that is what was done down Warren Road, which is now a thoroughfare. He thinks the key to this project is increasing efficiency.

**Cross will bring to the next meeting a booklet which is a guideline to filling out the IPP.** It tells you that if you can't meet certain things, don't bother to apply. There are four categories. One is mitigation to improve safety and if you can't prove that you've had a death or major quantity of accidents, don't apply for that money. There is whole different branch of ISTEA that encourages character. It is known as Transportation Enhancement, rather than Transportation Improvement.

Sciarabba pointed out that a goal of the Committee should be to protect the commercial zone and continue to provide access to those commercial establishments on Triphammer Road. The Village was

created because of the fast commercial development here and the reaction was one of slowing that down and doing anything possible to mitigate any more development over the years. We have a very narrow, small commercial zone here. There is no high-traffic and very little low traffic commercial space left to be developed. But we have a four-lane highway feeding into a major source of revenues for the county, which is a tax base. Sciarabba thought the goal was to make the commercial area as safe and accessible and efficient as possible. It doesn't make sense to just talk about improving the two lanes that exists now. We have to look for ways of improving access to our commercial areas. The commercial area does exist here and it is a major factor in financing this town. We've got to protect and enhance that..

Fresinski said that they are looking for a balance. Hickey agreed with everything Sciarabba said about enhancing the existing commercial area, but does not want that misinterpreted into expanding the commercial area. He added that it is time to face the issue of **opening the back road to Pyramid Mall that goes out on Oakcrest**. We have to make an intelligent decision about whether it's justified or not. Another issue to look at is **opening a back road connection to Dart Road out of Cayuga Mall**. This Committee would shirk its duty to the public if they did not consider those options.

Fresinski added that we probably aren't going to design something that is going to work at the peak times, but it could be certainly better. And, we don't have to go from 4 lanes to 2; it could be 4 lanes to 3. There might be solutions that already exist in the county that we can adopt. Hickey said at one time there was discussion of a Business Improvement District as a method of helping to finance some improvements. If we had that it might help us frame a picture of what is possible by doing it ourselves. Sciarabba referred to a proposal for a 3-lane road that was considered at one time. If the Committee **knew how much that would have cost**, there would be some reference for what the Village might accomplish on its own. Fresinski said that a solution that is already documented like that, or others, could be part of our tools to work with. Certainly having price tags would help as well. After hearing Cross' description of the difficulties associated with getting this funding, and the things that you do have to give up, Fresinski felt more skeptical that the Village would be able to get the funding and not be able to give up the kinds of things that are precious to us.

Hickey suggested that the Committee take a look at the objectives because the last part of the objectives as outlined in the newsletter talks about submission to the ISTE A agency. Maybe we can do that, but maybe that should not be the objective. Instead perhaps the objective should be to get a plan that fits the road and the Village and look at the funding second.

Herrick was concerned that the Committee may go down that path and get to the end and find that the plan doesn't fit the criteria required to qualify for ISTE A funding, and that is the whole point. If we precede hoping that we can get ISTE A funds, we're going to have a document they will have to accept. Hickey agreed, as long as we can strike a balance and the Village doesn't give up things that we want in order to qualify for ISTE A funding. Herrick said that this MPO has a long range plan, and what is trying to be accomplished around this table fits with that plan. The whole emphasis is to have a document that DOT can't reject because that's what they've done so far. They've been given these IPPs and the suggestion that N. Triphammer Road needs some improvement from Cayuga Heights north and south and they have been rejecting them. This will be the evidence, the proof, that both Villages have done their job and that this project needs to be funded using ISTE A funds, and the state can't reject it. Herrick said it has been tough sitting on the MPO looking at DOT's attitude toward local projects.

They've been very myopic. They believe that the DOT projects somehow deserve more credit or have more need than our local projects. We're trying to turn that around. Dave Boyd would reinforce this - that by creating an ISTEA fundable project we stand a lot better chance of getting it. If they turn it down we always can come back to something that maybe we can afford locally.

Kiefer asked if the Committee could be **provided with a map that shows a much larger area**. She would also like to know **what IPPs are and what has been turned down**. If we include Warren Road in our thinking, it should be included on the map. Herrick said that the Village will shortly obtain from NYSEG the GIS mapping to use, which includes side streets and buildings. Kiefer asked about access roads or service roads. Hickey said there are three access roads to Pyramid Mall. The only parallel road that we have on the west is Rt. 34 and Warren Road to the east. The Village is anticipating a plan for one access road to come in between Triphammer Road and Lansing Village Place. There is also a service road that services the YMCA. So we do have some access roads, but they're all on the west side. It's not possible to have them on the east side because there are too many residents. Cross said that the west side has the most area to expand, but the new car wash will affect that. The Village cannot do anything with Route 13 because it's a state highway. Herrick said it wouldn't be a bad idea to pursue having, for instance, an **exit access to 13 south as a way to mitigate traffic having to get back out onto Triphammer to get out of the mall**. Hickey added that the other argument has always been to allow the traffic to exit onto Oakcrest. There has been resistance to that for years. That road is not designed to hold a lot of traffic. Dart Drive and Oakcrest have limited road capacity.

Cross pointed out that there are two kinds of traffic to consider - the commercial traffic and the through traffic. The other corridor group, the Northeast Bypass group, is addressing the through-traffic issues. Hickey said that in all of the studies they have done with traffic flow, they always hear that traffic is like water - it meets the least amount of resistance and that's the way it flows. Hickey feels that the improvements on Warren Road have had an effect on the volume of traffic on Triphammer Road because it's a lot easier for people to get to that intersection since it has been improved. The intersection works well.

Sciarabba said that he doesn't think it's a bad situation now on Triphammer Road. It just needs to be more efficient. He doesn't think it's that big a project because we now have those major improvements on Warren Road. He feels that the major issue is not with the Village or Town of Lansing right now. It's with Cayuga Heights or the Town of Ithaca because of the traffic going to Cornell. Once traffic gets off of Rt. 13 going on Warren past BOCES, the road can't handle the volume. That was the whole point of the Northeast Bypass. The issue here is that we have a commercial center that is not very efficient and the way to arrange it and make it look better is what we're trying to accomplish out here, and not the County's traffic flow problems.

Hickey suggested that the Committee identify where the problems areas are on Triphammer. Problems that were identified were the narrow environment once you get past the malls, around Marine Midland and Catherwood Road. It's a confusing and dangerous area. McDonalds is a problem. The stop signs at Graham have helped by slowing the traffic down. Now we're beginning to get problems at the intersection of Craft Road because we've got the development at Janivar Drive. There are something like 160 units up there to be built. If that ever gets built out to maximum amount, there will be some connecting roads to Warren but there are still going to be people coming onto Triphammer to shop. Also, coming onto the ramp from Rt 13, the stacking gets excessive at times. Hickey said there is

enough room there to put in a right turn lane and two left-hand turn lanes, and that would solve half of the stacking problem there.

Herrick said there are opportunities to bring those issues to the state. One of the things that they did in the past was to bring one of these project plans to the MPO to reconstruct the overpass. At that time the Village stepped forward and said if in order to make those improvements, you've also got to consider the rest of N. Triphammer and the state temporarily removed their plan to reconstruct the overpass. However, that's going to require some action in some years, and that might be an opportune time to talk to the state and bring up that efficiency/capacity issue. Herrick added that another solution that would be very helpful and seems very straightforward but has a big price tag is **coordinating traffic lights**. If you coordinate the lights at the entrance ramp with the entrance lights to the malls, you have flow-through. Right now they are not coordinated because they're not connected. The connection itself would require money, and light controls itself are fairly expensive. Those are all the kinds of things that have to be put on the table here and put into this plan so that it can be submitted and hopefully funded.

Sciarabba suggested that people are being forced to use the Pyramid entrance and the cars are stacking. If you have improvements for Pyramid at the Catherwood entrance and then the northern entrance, then people are going to have various options so you are going to have that flow. Those are things that are within our means to do. Hickey said that one of the things the Village is hoping to look at in the near future is to move McDonalds to the opposite side of the street and then make the entrance to McDonalds on the reverse service road so they won't be dumping out onto Triphammer. Sciarabba said that that would be a major improvement for the Village - to push a high traffic use from the east side of the road to the west side where it belongs, and then it would belong to that traffic flow.

Fresinski reviewed some of the issues that had been mentioned: roads coming off of Rt. 13 into the malls, other access roads, sidewalks, pedestrian and bicycle paths, and vehicular traffic are all things we'll be trying to solve at the same time. He said that he can imagine the Committee developing a full plan even though it may not all be done at the same time, because it might involve the state and that might get done at a later time. But the power of having it all together would say a lot. Hickey mentioned that the Village would, at some point, like to have an area designated as a Village center somewhere along Triphammer; though the Village is not prepared to build it right now, there would have to be access to it.

Other things to bring to the next meeting is seeing **what the IPPs are and why they were refused**. Hickey will see if he can find the **Hunt's plan for the Triphammer corridor**.

Hickey said that the new plan should go right through to where the road was improved two years ago. He also informed the Committee that the Montessori School broke ground on Craft road yesterday, and that will be an additional factor in September - bringing the kids in and picking them up. Kiefer mentioned the pedestrian path behind Triphammer Mall as something that should be looked at by this group. Cross informed the Committee that Kendall has donated an additional 50 feet of right of way to the Village of Cayuga Heights, which he is hoping to take advantage of by creating a boulevard between the Sheraton and that entrance, along with maybe sidewalks along both sides of the street. He also noted that there is a walkway that comes from Highgate up through Savannah Park. Perhaps there is a way to create some kind of a pedestrian connection through Kendal.

Fresinski mentioned other members of the Committee who were not able to attend tonight's meeting:  
Jeff Cleveland from the Town of Lansing  
Jon Reis, Conservation Advisory Council  
Jeanine Kirby, Supervisor of the Town of Lansing  
Carolyn Spicer, resident  
Joan DeBoer, resident  
Kim Jacobs, Engineer with TG Miller working for the Village of Lansing

Fresinski moved to close meeting. Hickey second. Passed. The meeting ended at 8:30pm.

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Comments to: [Larry Fresinski](#)