

S.R. 1005-A06 Highland Park Bridge Preservation

Virtual Public Meeting (January 22, 2025)

Questions and Answers

The following represents the questions and answers provided during the Virtual Public Meeting held on January 22, 2025. Common questions and answers were combined where appropriate in the interest of brevity and clarity.

Regarding sidewalk width:

- *Can you address how cyclists will get safely on and off the bridge. Currently, it is dangerous for cyclists to get across the bridge. The bike lanes on One Wild Place end on Butler street. The sidewalk on the bridge currently is difficult to access in fast moving traffic. If a cyclist is able to get onto the "sidewalk" on the bridge it is too narrow to safely ride on. It is littered with trash and broken glass. The plan is to soon extend the Three Rivers Heritage Trail to Allegheny Riverfront Park and cyclist will be coming across the bridge to access the trail. Please address how cyclist can safely cross the bridge?*
- *Will the pedestrian/bike sidewalk be widened as part of this project? - Pedestrian and cyclist access between the Zoo and Washington Blvd is blocked and/or very dangerous due to the south ramp configuration. No improvements are included in this major project?*
- *Can two wheelchairs pass each other with the existing width of the sidewalk?*
- *What information led to opting for roadway width increases? Could some of that space be better served widening the pedestrian ways in the fashion of the 31st St Bridge?*
- *One problem with the existing fence (for bicyclists) is that the fence is too close to the sidewalk, leading handlebars to hit the fence and cause a bicyclist to lose balance. Can anything be done for the future fence to move it further away from the sidewalk so that handlebars won't hit?*

Because the scope of the Highland Park Bridge project is bridge preservation work only, the existing sidewalk widths on the bridge will be maintained. The pedestrian fencing will be replaced so opportunities to move the fence post connections farther from the roadway barrier to minimize conflicts between the fence and bike handlebars will be investigated in final design. Widening the sidewalk adjacent to the southbound off ramp towards Butler Street and the zoo will be investigated in Final Design as well. The proposed roadway widening is for the Route 8 southbound on-ramp to the Highland Park Bridge and it is only to improve the ramp width available for tractor-trailers to reduce impacts to the barriers. There are no pedestrian facilities along this ramp.

Are people supposed to be riding bikes on a pedestrian sidewalk in the first place?

In Pennsylvania, cyclists can ride on sidewalks as long as the sidewalk is not located within a business district. However, cyclists shall yield the right-of-way to any pedestrian and shall give an audible signal before overtaking and passing a pedestrian.

Will this presentation be posted online (if not already)?

Yes, the presentation is posted to PennDOT's project website:

<https://bit.ly/HighlandParkBridge>.

Who determined that the impact on Highland Park is de minimus?

De minimus is language from the Section 4f regulations. PennDOT made the initial determination in coordination with the City of Pittsburgh based on the impact not adversely impacting features, attributes or qualities that qualify Highland Park for protection under Section 4(f). PennDOT will be coordinating the final decision with the Federal Highway Administration.

Was there any consideration given to changing the ramp from the bridge to Allegheny River Blvd? The turning radius is terrible and is evident by the amount of damage to the concrete median barrier.

As part of the deck replacements associated with the southern ramp structures, the curb-to-curb widths will be increased as much as the existing bridge steel girders and framing allow.

Additionally, narrower barriers and revised line striping will be provided to improve the available width for tractor-trailers and reduce impacts to the barriers.

Regarding minimizing traffic delays:

- *What alternate approaches were considered in order to minimize the length of time that the bridge is closed to vehicular traffic? This could include hours of work (# of days a week or # of hours per day), or the extent of closure (could 1 lane be closed at a time in each direction)?*
- *Will there be additional traffic controls on or near the Fleming Bridge in Sharpsburg?*
- *Will the project construction work be done 24/7? If not, why not?*
- *Living in Aspinwall, how are we supposed to travel to the east end?*
- *Will all the traffic lights on ARB (Allegheny River Boulevard) be blinking and also on Freeport road?*

Construction will not be scheduled 24/7 but longer work days and/or work weeks will be utilized. Contractors have difficulty staffing workforces around the clock. However, PennDOT will phase the planned work to minimize impacts. For example, the southern ramps will be closed one at a time. While a particular ramp is closed to replace the deck, work will be scheduled on the ramp reconstruction itself as well as the main river crossing. Traffic signal timings along the detour route will be analyzed and adjusted as needed to improve traffic flow. Changeable message signs will be used to inform the public of current conditions. An incentive can be added to contract to encourage the Contractor to complete the work as quickly as possible. Coordination with key stakeholders such as the Pittsburgh Zoo and Pittsburgh Regional Transit and others will occur to minimize impacts to their major events and operations.

Will the existing landscaping located in the interchange be maintained or replaced? PennDOT is not good at making final projects looks nice to the community and the existing landscape is nice for the neighborhood.

The existing landscape is anticipated to be maintained with minimal impacts. PennDOT does not own landscaping. The current landscaping is provided through a beautification permit and is maintained by others. Based on current District discussions the project is being considered for potential incorporation of aesthetics and/or artwork.

Regarding traffic patterns along Route 8/Allegheny River Boulevard:

- *Is there any possibility of a traffic study for flows from Washington Blvd to Highland Park bridge traveling north across the Allegheny to understand how backups might be minimized on Washington Blvd?*
- *Did you consider changing the traffic pattern when exiting the bridge going toward the traffic light at ARB/Washington Blvd? There are two thru lanes that go to ARB which end right after the signal? Please consider making it one thru lane and making the other lane right turn only.*

The scope of this project is to maintain the safety, condition, and functionality of the Highland Park Bridge so these adjacent intersection improvements are beyond the limits and scope of this bridge preservation project. However, these suggestions will be considered for future projects along the Route 8 corridor.

What coordination between PennDOT and the City of Pittsburgh is taking place?

The City of Pittsburgh was contacted at the onset of the project through the PennDOT Connects process and attended the Public Officials Meeting that directly preceded this public meeting. Coordination with the City and all stakeholders will continue throughout the design process.

Since this isn't starting for 2 years, how will the current condition of the ramps be addressed until then?

PennDOT's Allegheny County Maintenance forces will be resurfacing the southern ramps to improve rideability until the deck replacements and ramp reconstruction can occur.

What is the current safety rating of the bridge structure? How long would it take to design and implement a multimodal replacement bridge instead of doing this preservation project?

The planned and programmed project is for bridge preservation work to maintain the current functionality and safety of the bridge and extend its lifespan. A full bridge replacement project would take decades to plan, fund, design, and construct. The current bridge has a lot of serviceable life and value left in it.

Regarding lighting: Would you consider more decorative lighting like the Hulton Bridge? Apologies if this was covered earlier but could you review lighting improvements planned.

The existing light poles and fixtures will be replaced as part of the project. Decorative lighting will be evaluated during final design.

Other bridges on the Allegheny do not have cyclone fence enclosures, why does this one?

Protective fencing is required over railroad property. Also, protective fencing is the narrowest option which maximizes the clear sidewalk width. Consideration may be given to eliminating fencing in some areas that obstruct the view of the river and do not cross over railroad tracks.

The following represents questions/comments that were submitted outside of the public meeting through the website or received by email:

I'm an Ambassador with Friends of the Riverfront. There is no consideration in the description of the project for pedestrians and bicyclists. People WILL walk and bicycle over it no matter what you do, and, unless you provide for their safety, you will be responsible for the accidents, injuries, and deaths that are sure to follow. Please build this into the infrastructure.

Because the scope of the Highland Park Bridge is bridge preservation work only, the existing sidewalk widths on the bridge will be maintained. The pedestrian fencing will be replaced so opportunities to move the fence post connections farther from the roadway barrier to minimize conflicts between the fence and bike handlebars will be investigated in final design. Widening the sidewalk adjacent to the southbound off ramp towards Butler Street and the zoo will be investigated in Final Design as well.

Bike access across the Allegheny River may be best served from the Brilliant Line, which could be ready by the time your work is done.

Comment received; no response needed.

Sidewalk width for ADA Compliance & bicycle access. Due to the fence mounting, the existing conditions are 58", but the actual width is 65". Anything under 60" must have passing space every 200'. Moving the fence mount to the edge of the sidewalk, not on top. It would provide a consistent 65" path. Also, angle the fence outward to reduce chances of a handlebar striking the fence causing injury.

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