

Report from the Harvey Road Traffic Calming Committee to the three Arden villages

Background and purpose

The HRTCC was chartered by the villages of Arden, Ardencroft and Ardentown to jointly represent them in discussions with the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) concerning the development of a traffic calming plan for Harvey Road. The eight-year history of these discussions, the interactions with various government and other agencies and public officials and the evolution of the plan have been presented at town meetings, public workshops with DelDOT and *Arden Page* publications. The negotiations with DelDOT have now reached a stage where a formal report is desirable, accompanied by specific recommendations from the HRTCC to the three chartering communities.

Status

In early 2003 DelDOT and the HRTCC reached agreement on a "concept" plan, which was presented to the three villages at that time. Each village supported the concept plan and authorized the HRTCC to enter into a more detailed planning phase with DelDOT. That phase is now complete, meaning that there is now a more detailed plan ready to proceed to final engineering drawings. Once those drawings progress, further changes in the plan become expensive and difficult. In principle, construction could begin in the summer of 2004. DelDOT will sponsor a public information session on September 29th, 2003 from 4:00 to 7:00 pm at the Gild Hall for public comment and presentations associated with this report will be made to all three town meetings in the month of September.

Results

The decision was made to handle in different ways those components of the traffic calming plan involving changes to the roadway and the proposed "Gateway" structures. These are presented separately below.

Roadway changes

The final plan for the roadway between Marsh and Sconset adhered extremely closely to the concept plan approved by the villages last winter. The plan will be presented in detail in a graphical manner at the town meetings and the public information session. The materials used there may be considered as a technical annex to this report. To include them all in this report would make it too lengthy. The plan includes the following improvements/changes:

- **Pedestrian Crossings:** As in the concept plan there will be multiple specially treated crosswalks with areas for pedestrians on either side clearly marked at 9 locations.
- **Sconset Road Intersection:** There will be significant changes to the intersection at Sconset, including a median, a diverter and lane realignment, all to make traffic lanes appear narrower while not actually reducing operating width. The broken cable guardrail around the power derrick will be replaced with a wood post/rail design. The median and diverter will be made of gray natural-appearing rocks.

- **Veale Road Intersection:** A stoplight will be added at Veale, and changes made to the alignment of that intersection to discourage people cutting across the corner past cars waiting to turn.
- **Shoulders:** The wide shoulders in the Ardencroft/Ardentown section will be altered to incorporate “checker blocks” that allow some grass to grow through. The objective is to make the surface appear green while remaining drivable for mail, trash and other service vehicles.
- **Signage:** Funds will be available for “your speed is...” indicator signs, which will be portable. Road signage will be rationalized, with less sign “clutter” overall but more effective spreading of speed limits signs in particular.
- **Bridge lighting:** On the bridge over the railroad track coming from I-95, which is already broadly lit by federally mandated lighting structures, much shorter “city level” light posts will be added to provide a visual cue that the roadway and context are changing. (Net light increases will be negligible).

During the past six months the HRTCC has worked with DelDOT to define all of the above in detail. The types of poles used for lighting and the stoplight, the material used on the median, the material used on the guardrail and many other such details were discussed over several meetings. The results can all be seen on the graphic materials.

One point could not be totally completed. Just as the process was reaching its end, another DelDOT department announced an engineering review of materials and techniques used to make the type of special crosswalks such as that now present at Sconset and a key part of the plan throughout the three Ardens. In lieu of a final decision, the DelDOT design team assisted the HRTCC in a clear statement of what options would and would not be acceptable for this project, and a final decision will be possible well before construction would begin. The HRTCC will have the final decision on which options to take from those the broader DelDOT engineering study on this topic makes available. A key specification is that sound levels produced when cars cross the crosswalk be the same or less than that at the prototype crosswalk in place for the last several years at Sconset and Harvey. In fact the potential successor technique to that used at Sconset results in even less sound. The HRTCC is satisfied that under both the technical options being examined by DelDOT the sound level will be within specifications. [Note: after the committee approved this report the issue was resolved as will be discussed at the town meetings. We will be able to use the materials tested at the Sconset crossing. A more natural pattern will be used.]

Gateway Structures

This topic was handled separately for two reasons. First, DelDOT understood the sensitivity of the topic for the community. Secondly, it was recognized that to a much greater degree than roadway changes, any gateway would have a very strong artistic rather than engineering component, and so different methods of choosing a design were needed. The following procedure was agreed upon and is being implemented:

- Using procedures approved by artistic associations, a “call for proposals” is underway at the time of writing. This was circulated in the community and also published on a nationwide website. Detailed rules, in part taken from templates

provided by artistic associations, were agreed upon, legally reviewed and published as part of the call for proposals.

- Artists may apply for a package containing information and details of the project. They may then submit a rough design as specified in the rules.
- A jury composed of 4 members from Arden, 3 from Ardencroft and 3 from Ardentown, plus the chair of the HRTCC, will select a limited number (3-5 if a sufficient number of promising entries are received) for a second round. However, the jury may decide to choose none of the submissions.
- The jury will in part consist of members of the HRTCC, but the town chairs will provide for further members of the jury. Those individuals will serve only on the jury and will not become additional HRTCC members. DeIDOT will provide a non-voting member of the jury to comment on technical aspects of the designs as related to road safety and practicalities of building.
- Those artists selected for the second round will submit a more detailed design as specified in the rules.
- The jury will select either none or one of the designs. While the jury will make the final selections, individual members will take their voting instructions from their respective town meetings. It is up to the town meetings to decide how their votes are to be allocated.
- If a design is chosen, DeIDOT or its contractors will build the gateway, but the artist may participate as specified in the rules. This arrangement appropriately deals with potential legal issues.
- Timing: the deadline for the first round is September 7. Finalists are to be informed within a month, and second round entries due a month thereafter. This should make possible the presentation of finalist submissions in the November or January town meetings, with the final selection anticipated by February 1, 2004.

At all times a no gateway option remains. In addition, DeIDOT has facilitated the process by making possible the budgetary separation of the roadwork and gateway construction, so that in principle further designs could be solicited and the gateway constructed later. However, the separation in time is not unlimited.

Recommendations

The HRTCC respectfully submits the following recommendations to the town meetings of Arden, Ardencroft and Ardentown:

1. That the villages indicate to the Delaware Department of Transportation their separate and collective support for the changes to the roadway and immediate surroundings envisioned in the traffic calming plan as described in this report and as detailed in the drawings and graphical material presented. This includes all components except the gateway, which is addressed below.

Discussion: The HRTCC realizes that the plan will not be as effective at slowing traffic as originally hoped. However, given the limitations imposed by the fire department with respect to vertical displacements and by the community with respect to road widening for other traffic calming devices, the plan is the most effective possible given current technical and political realities. While not ideal, it establishes a precedent and future direction for changes to Harvey Road, making changes advocated by some in the community outside the Ardens for widening and other changes to speed traffic far less likely to succeed.

2. That the villages indicate their support for the procedures in place to choose either one or no design for a gateway structure.
3. That the villages agree that the Harvey Road Traffic Calming Committee's charter be terminated and the committee dissolved at such time as final engineering drawings are completed by DelDOT, construction on the roadway is ready to begin and a gateway structure, if any, has been chosen by the procedures outlined in this report. The villages further undertake, at the time the HRTCC is dissolved, to appoint one representative each to serve as liaison with DelDOT during the construction process if such a representative is not already available from a standing committee.

Discussion: The HRTCC was created for a specific purpose, and when that purpose is fulfilled the committee is best dissolved. The liaisons will serve to deal with any logistical or other issues that may arise. Some villages may already have structures in place for such tasks. DelDOT has informally requested that at least one of the liaisons be familiar with the design phase now completed, ideally a member of the current HRTCC.

Finally, the HRTCC respectfully requests of the three town meetings that in order to avoid confusion, the three town meetings approve or disapprove the above report by voting on identical motions as follows: "Moved, that the assembly of A, together with the villages of B and C, approves the three recommendations of the Harvey Road Traffic Calming Committee".