

October 3, 2023

Steve Cole
Maine Department of Transportation
16 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: Bowdoinham's Village Partnership Initiative (VPI) Letter of Interest

Dear Mr. Cole,

We are writing on behalf of Bowdoinham's Community Development Advisory Committee. We are a town committee that addresses items in our town's Comprehensive Plan relating to our local economy. One of our top priorities is to enhance a major pillar of our economic development, outdoor recreation opportunities, including safe walking and biking routes.

The Town would like to increase the village density and walkability. Consequently, outdoor recreation has become an important avenue for attracting people to our village center. As we are situated on the Cathance River leading into Merrymeeting Bay, our town has been steadily developing our downtown waterfront parks. A potential rail trail passes through this area and is slated for exciting new development in the coming years.

Route 24 leads through our village past the Three Robbers Pub and Country Store, our two primary businesses, as well as our skate park and waterfront parks. It has become a major thoroughfare for recreational biking. In the summer, the Farmers' Market, art gallery, boat launch, rowing club, and free concerts are active on the waterfront and bring large crowds. The highway-only use has become incompatible with substantial bicycle and pedestrian uses. Please see the attached village center map.

In response to reports of speeding traffic along Route 24 and concerns of pedestrian safety when crossing this road at the Main Street intersection, the town applied to Maine DOT to install a temporary crosswalk and gateway demonstration project at the intersection this summer to gather feedback before considering a permanent solution. Please see the attached demonstration project application illustrating the location and elements of the project.

Following the project over 100 residents completed the feedback survey. Elements that narrowed the roadway were not well received, most noted were the delineators. However, the painted crosswalk was appreciated and does not pose a hinderance to drivers, bicyclists, or pedestrians. Moreover, there were several respondents suggesting additional elements to the crossing such as a raised table, flashing lights, and more signage. Please see the attached survey results summary.

Others mention the need for a no parking sign along Rt. 24 or other signage warning those to slow down on Rt. 24 before entering downtown. Further, the survey did not specifically call attention to the sidewalk element of the project although a handful of comments were made about sidewalks that should be noted. Those ranged from concerns about the loss of parking on lower Main Street to sidewalks, the need for no-parking signage, and concerns about cars parking on Rt. 24 between Three Robbers and the curve headed south. Lastly, there have been suggestions of turning the lower portion of Main Street east of the intersection with Rt. 24 into a one-way. While these areas and elements were outside of the project scope, they warrant more investigation as part of a larger vision which should also incorporate the goals of the 2010 Walkable Village Plan to provide safe access to our village district. Further, our 2010 Walkable

Village Plan supports a sidewalk or a delineated walkway along lower Main Street and around the entire project area.

Additionally, what the survey results have told us is that there is a need for further public input regarding changes to this area. With the development of the new waterfront park and the potential rail trail we are expecting a significant increase in recreational use on both sides of Rt. 24. Currently, there is no sidewalk or crosswalk leading directly to the new park. Further, there are no direct pedestrian connections between the two parks. This is a need as they both serve as overflow parking for each other. Taking a wholistic approach to this entire village block will create a more cohesive vision for and appeal to our community. To summarize the scope of work will include the following:

January – March 2024: Upon award draft and issue an RFP for the project, interview applicants, and award a contract for the design consultant of the project.

April – November 2024: The consultant will develop three project concepts to share with the public. The consultant will design a public engagement process to acquire feedback on the designs. A second round of engagement will be held to address a revised design based on feedback from the first round. A third public engagement process will focus around public education on the project design and next steps.

The concepts created will propose solutions to safely move pedestrians across Rt. 24 at the Main Street intersection, as well as in between the two parks in alignment with the 2010 Walkable Village Plan. The extent of sidewalks down lower Main Street and along Rt. 24 in front of Three Robbers will be addressed. Other elements such as flashing beacons, islands, speed tables, and other gateway treatments at both locations will also be considered. Lastly, a study on the impacts of creating a one-way for lower Main Street and parking needs along that road will be included.

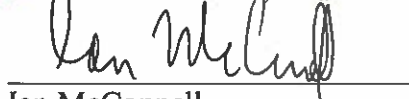
Once the design work is complete, we plan on reapplying to the VPI companion implementation grant program to undertake the work. We are fortunate in that the Town's TIF District has funds that can be used as grant match for both the planning and implementation grants. We expect the project to cost around \$50,000 in total with the Town's portion to be \$25,000.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,



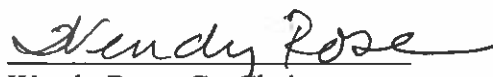
Jean de Bellefeuille, Chair



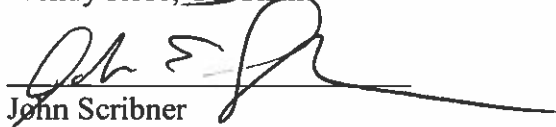
Ian McConnell



Lee Parker, Secretary



Wendy Rose, Co-Chair



John Scribner

Bowdoinham
Village Center

Key:

Demonstration
Project Location

Existing
Sidewalk

Potential
Rail Trail

Study Area

North
→



Bowdoinham Demonstration Project Proposal

Temporary Crosswalk and Gateway at Intersection of Main Street (Rte 125) and River Road (Rte 24)

6.14.23

Summary

In response to reports of speeding traffic along Route 24 and concerns of pedestrian safety crossing this road at the Main Street intersection to move pedestrians to our waterfront park, the town is proposing to install temporary traffic calming and placemaking features including:

- A temporary crosswalk connecting the existing sidewalk and landing at the southwest corner of Main Street and Route 24 across Route 24 to the northeast corner of Main Street and Route 24 at the Three Robbers restaurant;
- A temporary landing in front of Three Robbers pub using 5-foot-long planters;
- A R1-6 sign in the center of the road; and
- Delineator gateways at the southwest corner of the existing sidewalk landing and on the northeast corner in front of Three Robbers.

The installations will seek to slow motorist traffic to the posted speed limit and give pedestrians the safest directive and piece of mind as they navigate this intersection during our busy summer and fall months. The project is temporary as we plan on applying to the Village Partnership Initiative (VPI) to fund a permanent solution.

Figure 1. Yellow circle indicates location of proposed crosswalk

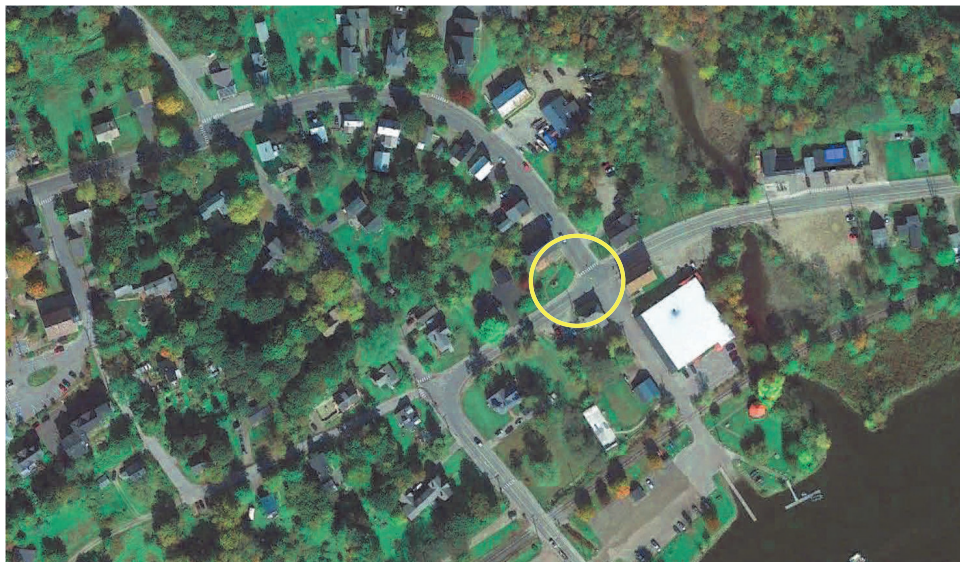


Figure 2. Visual of the installation facing north on Route 24, just south of the intersection with Main Street.



Purpose

We will use this project to gain feedback from the community on how a crosswalk will be received and get input on how to improve upon a more permanent installation.

Need

Over the past decade the town has built up a network of sidewalks within our village district with a goal of bringing foot traffic to the heart of our commercial district and the Maily Waterfront Park at the terminus of Main Street. Unfortunately, the town has not been able to fund a much-needed crosswalk to safely move pedestrians along Main Street across Route 24. Speeding along Route 24 has been an ongoing issue in the community. The town has invested in and deployed a speed feedback sign north of the intersection, but more needs to be done to make pedestrians feel safe crossing the road.

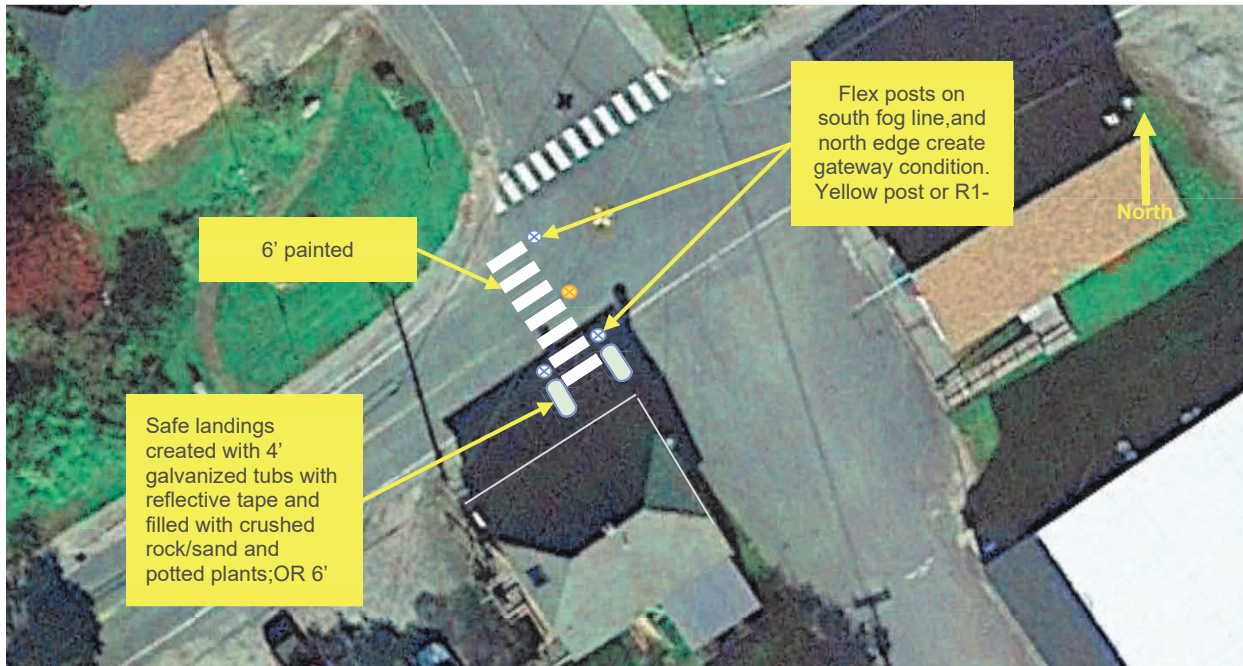
With the kickoff of a multitude of summer events being hosted at the park, from weekly Saturday Farmers' Markets, the Summer Sundays Concert Series, Open Farm and Studio Day in July, the Tour de Bowdoinham charity ride in August, and our annual Celebrate Bowdoinham weekend in September foot traffic to the park is at an all-time high. The town has hosted two site visits with Maine DOT staff to review options for this intersection this spring with hopes of applying to the VPI to help fund a permanent solution. Through their guidance we envision a crosswalk with a rapid flashing beacon, formal landing on the other side of the Main Street intersection to receive pedestrians with sidewalks extending on either side of the landing.

After participating in a Tactful Urbanism presentation and meeting with staff from the Bicycle Coalition of Maine the town would like to take the initiative to create demonstration project this summer to introduce a temporary solution to get us through

the end of the farmers' market in October while we work on the VPI to fund a permanent solution.

Conceptual Designs

Figure 3. Birdseye view and description of traffic calming and placemaking elements



Project Details

Crosswalk and Gateway

A crosswalk meeting Maine DOT sight line and speed limit requirements shall be painted using non-retroreflective paint between the edge lines on Route 24 at Three Robbers. A safe landing will be created by placing two galvanized water troughs filled with crushed rock and sand to weight them in place. The tubs will be marked with 3M reflective tape in white, and potted plants may be placed in them not to exceed 36" in height to create a more attractive landing.

Alternately, the safe landing could be created with rubber curb stops. See Figure 4.

Figure 4: Parking stops or galvanized tubs used for safe landing on south side



The crosswalk will be enhanced with a “gateway” of white Pexco DP 200 or FG300 (or equivalent) delineators positioned where the parking and bike lane stripes meet the crosswalk. The gateway designs are adjusted as needed to meet the needs of the location. Yellow delineators or R1-6 signs will be used at any centerline locations. Nominal lane widths of 11 feet shall be maintained. See Figure 5 for representative image.

Figure 5. A simple delineator gateway at a crosswalk. R1-6 sign used on center line; a single yellow post may be substituted. Image from Augusta installation 2021



If used, R1-6 signs will only be used at crosswalks, never in advance of them.

The spatial needs of turning vehicles will be considered, and delineators will be placed to minimize impacts.

The delineators used shall be white (for roadway edge) or yellow (for centerline) with matching retro-reflective tape on them for visibility during nighttime hours.

The proposed treatments have been studied recently in Michigan and proven effective.

Reference studies include: <https://traffic.transportation.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/26/2017/07/Gateway-Treatment-for-Pedestrian-Crossings-Bott.pdf>
<https://conservancy.umn.edu/bitstream/handle/11299/189957/CTS%2017-05.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

This project is intended to be seasonal. Delineators will be removed no later than November 5, 2023 or sooner by Bowdoinham staff.

Traffic Safety During Installation and Removal

This project will only have minimal needs for the project team members to actually be in the travel lane exposed to traffic. The Bowdoinham Road Commissioner will have staff on hand with a town vehicle to control traffic. The project team will use cones near any area where people are working. At least one person will be tasked with simply monitoring traffic and helping to keep project installers safe. All persons on site during installation and removal will wear high vis vests. There will be minimal impact on vehicular traffic at the sites during installation or removal.

The crosswalk will be painted one lane at a time, with cones blocking access during the painting.

Timeframe

The installation will occur as soon as possible, with hopes of approval prior to our Open Farm and Studio Day on Sunday, July 23, 2023. The installation is intended to be seasonal and removed no later than November 15, 2023 or earlier if winter weather threatens.

Metrics

The effectiveness of the installation will be measured by feedback solicited through our bimonthly newsletter, Facebook page, and a QR code leading visitors to an online survey. Feedback will be incorporated into the design of the permanent solution.

Maintenance Plan

The project will be monitored regularly by members of the project team, and any knocked down delineators will be replaced by project team members within 48 hours of a report. Bowdoinham will do what it can to support keeping the installation in good condition. Delineators or other project elements that are subject to excessive impacts or wear may be removed.

Public Notification

Bowdoinham will use its bimonthly newsletter which is sent to all residents as well as our Facebook page with 1,500 followers to notify the public about the project and gather feedback. Additional measures to inform the public will be implemented as needed and requested by the public.

Approval and Permission:

This project has been approved by Bowdoinham's Town Manager and requires written approval by the Maine DOT.

Purchase of Materials

The Town of Bowdoinham will purchase the materials for the projects.

Cost (optional)

- \$337.58 = (2) 2'x2'x4' galvanized stock tanks
- \$180.02 = (4) Pexco DP 200 or FG300 delineators (3 white, 1 yellow)
- \$38.00 = 3M reflective tape
- \$0.00 = Compost (Solid Waste Dept.)
- \$0.00 = Plants (donated)
- \$0.00 = Chalk line (donated)
- \$161.82 = (18) cans white spray paint

Total: \$717.42

Contact

Yvette Meunier
Director of Planning and Development
Town of Bowdoinham
207-666-5531
planning@bowdoinham.com

Temporary Crosswalk and Gateway Demonstration Project Survey Results

Introduction

A feedback survey on the demonstration project was launched on 7/21/23. The survey and a project factsheet were posted on either side of the crosswalk as well as on Facebook and on our website. The survey was also advertised in the September newsletter on the front page which is sent to all residents. On August 28, DOT requested its removal for paving. On September 21 the survey was closed and we received 107 respondents, of which 103 live in Bowdoinham. Further, 17% (18 respondents) own a business in Bowdoinham. Lastly, 51% (55 respondents) offered their ages, which ranged from 28-84, with only one reporting in their twenties and one in their eighties. Current results are as follows:


Driving Experience

The majority, 86% of respondents, reported driving the area the area daily, with 13% weekly, and 1% rarely. 43.3% of drivers reported a worse experience, compared to 29.3% who said there was no change, and 27.3% that said it was better. Overall, a majority, 57%, found the project either did not interfere with their driving experience or created a better experience.

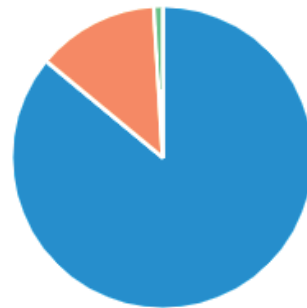
Taking a closer look at comments left by the 43.3% of respondents that had a negative experience, 24 individuals advocated for the removal of just the delineators, another 22 specifically said they were in favor of keeping just the crosswalk, and only 13 individuals called for a removal of all elements of the project including the crosswalk.

9. How often do you drive in this area of Bowdoinham?

[More Details](#)

 Insights




 Daily	92
 Weekly	14
 Rarely	1



1. If you have driven through this roadway since the demo was installed, how was the driving experience?

[More Details](#)

 Insights

 Better	29
 No Change	31
 Worse	46



Temporary Crosswalk and Gateway Demonstration Project Survey Results

Walking Experience

24% of respondents reported walking the area daily, with 48% weekly, and 28% rarely. Most walkers, 51.6%, found the project to improve their walking experience. 9.7% of walkers reported a worse experience, compared to 38.7% who said there was no change. Overall, 90% found the project either neutral or positive.

10. How often do you walk in this area of Bowdoinham?

[More Details](#)

 Insights




 Daily	25
 Weekly	50
 Rarely	29



2. If you have walked along this roadway segment since the demo was installed, how was the walking experience?

[More Details](#)

 Insights

 Better	48
 No Change	36
 Worse	9



Bicycling Experience

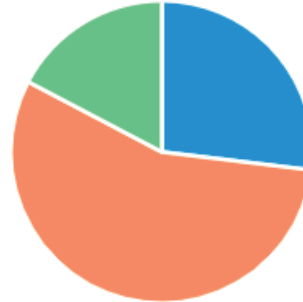
A majority, 83%, found the project to either not interfere with their biking experience or created a better experience. 56% said there was no change, 27% determined it was better, and 17% of reported a worse experience. The survey did not ask how often individuals biked through the location.

Temporary Crosswalk and Gateway Demonstration Project Survey Results

3. If you have bicycled through this roadway segment since the demo was installed, how was the cycling experience?

[More Details](#)

● Better	14
● No Change	29
● Worse	9




Slowing Traffic

When asked if the project slowed down motor vehicle traffic a resounding 51% said it did, while 25% said it did not, and 24% were unsure.

4. Do you feel that the changes to the roadway slow down motor vehicle traffic?

[More Details](#)

 Insights

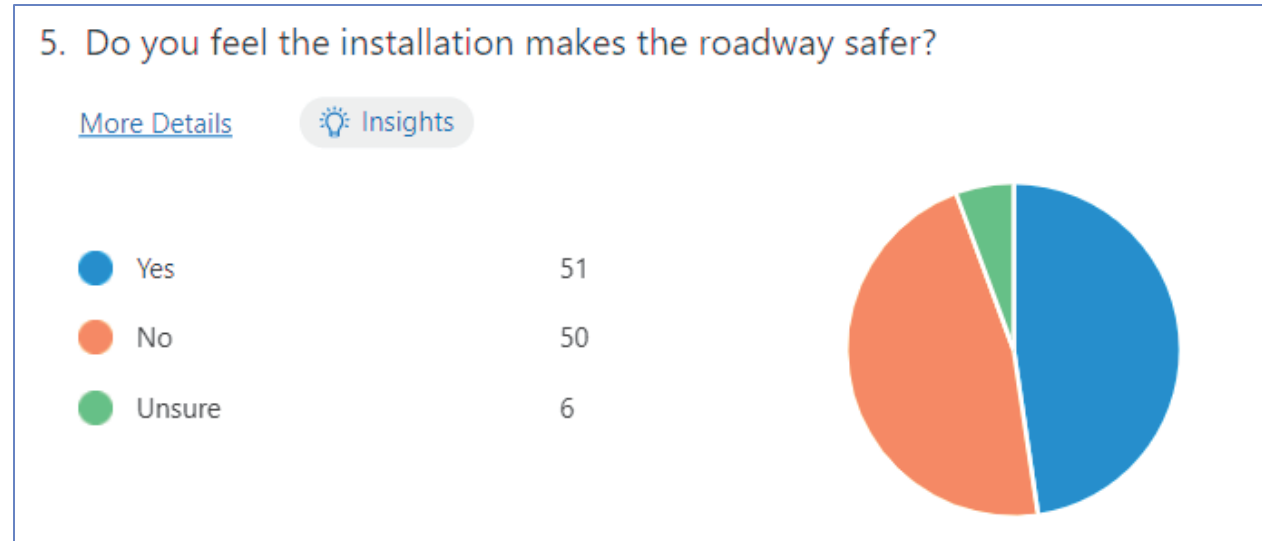
● Yes	54
● No	27
● Unsure	25



Safety of the Roadway

When asked if the installation made the roadway safer it was a toss-up with 51 respondents saying yes, 50 saying no, and 6 were unsure. Examining the comments left by respondents that reported the project made the road less safe, 23 individuals advocated for the removal of just the delineators, another 19 specifically said they were in favor of keeping just the crosswalk, and only 13 individuals called for a removal of all elements of the project including the crosswalk.

Temporary Crosswalk and Gateway Demonstration Project Survey Results



When asked what they liked about the project answers fell in these general comments:

Generalized comments	Number of comments
Clearer pedestrian crossing traffic markings	25
Calms traffic and makes pedestrians feel safer	21
More welcoming area for pedestrian traffic to businesses	9
There are laws and expectations crosswalks bring that promote safety	1

Criticisms of the project included:

Generalized comments	Number of comments
Delineators and/or planters narrows the road too much for users	28
Just keep the painted crosswalk lines only, all else is distracting	16
No need for the project	11
The installation could be more assertive, i.e flashing speed signs or lights, speed table, more signage.	9
Signage/delineators has caused confusion	7
Requests for more crosswalks at the intersection and elsewhere in town	5
Should cross at Masonic Lodge	4
Concerns about costs	3
Sidewalk takes up too much needed parking space	2

Here are some actual comments that capture the overall sentiment:

Pros

"This is a creative solution to this problem. I think it is super! There has been a need for a safe crossing here."

"In spite of the (usual and expected) griping on social media, there has also been chronic complaints about traffic speeding through town. You can't have it both ways, but I am glad that we're going for safety over convenience and unregulated speed. We can't (and can't afford) our own Police Dept., and the Sherriff isn't in town enough to stop the speeders, so this is a cost-effective and much needed experiment. Good job!!!"

Temporary Crosswalk and Gateway Demonstration Project Survey Results

“Vehicles know this is where people cross. There are laws and expectations with crosswalks that promote more care and caution.”

Cons

“The poles narrow the road way a bit, it might be more difficult for vehicles with trailers. Also if the sidewalk that goes down towards the waterfront is supposed to be a no parking zone that will need signs or designated parking spaces.”

“Don’t take the much needed parking away. The crosswalk is on the wrong side because most people walk to the waterfront from the other side of the street. People are not using the crosswalk and are walking through the intersection, so it clearly is misplaced. The posts make it harder for large trucks to navigate the corner.”

“All the markings make the area confusing to navigate. Cars coming off Main Street think it’s an all-way stop, which it is not. Get rid of everything except the zebra stripes.”

Other considerations:

The survey was up for a few weeks before all elements of the project were in place. For example, the painting the crosswalk and hanging the crossing signs were not completed until more than a week after the rest of the elements were installed. Further, having an incomplete installation required us to hang a new traffic pattern sign which likely was the source for some of the confusion before it was taken down a few weeks into the installation.

Also, the survey did not specifically call attention to the sidewalk element although a handful of comments were made that should be noted. Those ranging from concerns about the loss of parking, need for signage if there is not to be parking along side of them, and concerns about cars parking along Rt. 24 in between Three Robbers and the curve headed south.

Conclusion

Elements that narrowed the roadway were not well received, most noted were the delineators. However, the painted crosswalk was well received overall and does not pose a hinderance to drivers, bicyclists, or pedestrians.

Further, there were several respondents suggesting additional elements to the crossing such as a raised table, flashing lights, and more signage. Others mention the need for a no parking sign along Rt. 24 or other signage warning those to slow down on Rt. 24 before entering downtown. While these areas and elements were outside of the project scope, they may warrant more investigation as we develop the new waterfront park and gateways.