



City of Ellsworth Public Feedback Session #2 for High Street Corridor Study

4/28/26, 4-5pm

Public Comment/Q&A *(City staff/Project consultants remarks in italics):*

John De-Leo: 50-year resident, serves on planning board. Police and police chief. Beals Ave. development came to planning board as a housing project. People do not want Beals Ave to be cut off; this was heard loud and clear—bypass for high street. Studies have been done. MDOT still looking at this—may be connected to rails to trails. Closing it off would be adding several hundred cars more that used to be able to go down Beale’s avenue back on high street. Lots to be considered and not decided tonight.

Charlie Pearce: *More data and future studies needed during next steps and looking at different seasons and impact on other places.*

Ken Eaton: Lives on Beals. Not in favor of closing it off. Not sure having parking there is helpful for sunrise trail access.

Cindy Meyer: Not in favor of this plan for a few reasons. Traffic flow not a main component. Everyone is for safety—great goal, but to give up the main thing that area does—traffic flow—in favor of beautification—excellent idea but not at the expense of people having to sit in traffic for long period of time—both tourists and residents. Unclear in terms of how this would be funded. Ellsworth investing into this—roads unimproved like road I live on—we need to get taxpayer roads all working and in good shape before considering other projects. Safety, traffic flow is good, but make what we have already all good before new stuff.

Jarod Farn-Guillette: *Reiterates that Maine DOT is the owner of the corridor and responsible for maintaining and paying for it. Next steps would have to prove traffic computer modeling to show it is feasible before we would make any decisions.*

Sarah Buck of RCAP -- asked to explain why childcare is in there—does not seem to fit. She responds that it was identified as a priority in the needs assessment process/LOI and tie ins to transportation but not directly with High Street.

Kenn Grant: Born and raised here—used to be one lane one way and one lane the other—then for safety City widened high street and put 2 lanes both directions. If this is reduced, he believes people will be impatient and may have the opposite effect. Do the study off season – for example even at 7am in February and again at 3:30-4:30 in the afternoon there is heavy traffic both ways—not just summer. High street traffic backed up all the way to LL Bean.

Charlie Pearce: Yes, we do have 9,000 people here—also service center for 90,000 people plus influx of people who work here—not just a summer traffic problem.

Rhonda Carter: Resident of Beals Ave—big housing does not belong there—closing it off a big mistake—there has not been one accident to my knowledge. Do not want parking for ATVs etc. there. Beautification projects may be nice but with the salt and dirt needed for snow over the winter months, it will be destroyed. Maybe not best use of money.

Leslie Harlow: Lives on Beals Ave—seems practical to leave it open—steady flow there but does not seem like too much traffic. Real problem at end of Beals at Washington Junction—it's all day long especially on weekends—trucks and trailers—off on Beals Ave on ATVs. In the 70's-Bar Harbor had a police officer at Main St and Cottage St directing traffic—when Jackson Lab only had 150 employees, and that helped. In Ellsworth, the corner of High Street and Main street— especially from 3:10-4:48—abundance of traffic here with the whole state of Maine on route 1 moving to next hotel room or Airbnb or campsite—if we had an officer even for two hours weekdays just waving people through, it could help a lot. Had to wait to get here because all of hospital traffic and commuters from Downeast and sat through lights—intersection people could not move—if officer was there—do this around the country and world—it would be a cool gesture. Placement of new court house and worked with Charlie early on—compromise reached moving it to new location—travels sometimes twice a day between Hancock and Ellsworth to get to business—amount of traffic from Downeast and to Washington junction and gets stuck here and all they want to go to Reny's and Hannaford—wetland back there but extending development—access road over to Washington junction—benefit local traffic to get people to the part of high street they want to go to. Concerned about communication—city considering suicide lane—city itself could have better communicated the theme—can be more effective—city can be in charge of the story. Takes a long time to get to/through Ellsworth—we sat in traffic for so long—so on the way out they just want to leave—Ellsworth has this bad rap.

Charlie Pearce— *how do we set the table—MDOT—did not want to consider any traffic flow—MDOT changed their mind and said yes let's consider it—police station went quickly without community input. St. Andrew's—none of the Canadians are coming here—they came to Ellsworth all the time for Reny's Mardens etc.—at some point Canadian will be coming back—used to be major business on weekends. VPI is another aspect and focus on Main st. Signaling could work but timing may not be off—AI and Realtime could be helpful in the future.*

Jason Clay—from Governor's on High Street: A lot in this plan very interesting and problem could be addressed and concerns from a business perspective—tough market—if you don't make your money in the summer, hard to survive—more like Bar Harbor in that way. Traffic issues concerning. Trees—do not want to obscure view of business. Conceptual stage and appreciate opportunities.

Charlie Pearce: *No sidewalk up at Governors—Merrill interstate upgrades—like frogger trying to cross the street—proper sidewalk (Jason Clay agreed a good improvement). Arbor commission good about working with businesses.*

John Gee: Beals Ave. -- not in the same aisle as many neighbors. I think it should be closed. Outsider lived here since 2020—south of the bridge in the UP. 5 years I have lived there—needed police presence once. Retired. This time of year courteous. Walk dogs—people not nice and had altercations in the summer—40-50 mph—stop or flip me off but I have to live here and something—I am 70 and my dogs are old—we do not move quickly—major problem. Maintenance street—worse and worse—not better—talk about re-doing it—patch it once in a while. Reality is more bike traffic than pedestrians so widening sidewalks. Allow parking will create even more of a problem with ATVs—happens during day and early morning/night. Leave it open, deal with traffic, more PD during tourist season—if you keep it open—make it better and put in a sidewalk—a lot of people walk there. Will this road get re-done. City water/sewer runs down that street—tests on pressure for new apartments—will there be issues. Did car counting one year—person at one end and the other—is that effective—put a box out and count—might have done it last year. Taxes not getting cheaper.

John Linnehan: 77 year resident. Cutting down high street from 4 lanes to three is crazy—4 to 6 lanes or overpass or something. Where did this idea come from? Seems like a waste of time and money---cutting down lanes is a non starter.

Sarah Buck explained background on where it came from.

Gordon Workman: When high street went to 4 lanes was great—when 2, got hit by a car on a bicycle. Tell the state a road diet is a no. Beautification: less is more. Beals Ave is junk—needs a sidewalk and needs to be taken care of—even ambulances use it. Turning lane is a

bad set up and dangerous. You think you have back up now—Waltham ave. was backed up all the way down the road. Not going to work. Card Brook—have to wall off commercial properties for that to even work (*Sarah clarified reason*). Population increase has been major. 150 years—grown by 6,000—High St. always going to be commercial and is going to grow. May be putting the cart before the horse and going to quickly—some things should just be left alone.

Charlie Pearce: Roads are terrible—only a small piece of road maintenance for the city—condition assessment and new capital improvement planning process—condition assessed—on list, year by year follow capital improvement planning process—this is when it is on the list—analyzing these things with data. Might be this year might not. Beale's is a tough one. MPI-MDOT and City shared cost match—increase to build status and then state will help take care of it in the future (*Beals may not qualify*).

Beals—pressure issues and storm drains—need to look at water, ww, stormwater infrastructure. Maximum capacity at water capacity with population growth and all the big businesses like JAX and hospital. Grant for new water treatment will fix this just in time. May have to add water towers. Needed to ask Jax to reduce use to help with water pressure. Clay pipes 100s of years old—underground.

John Seavey: 63-year resident. Dead against it. Driving safety is a huge problem. Aggressive drivers with reduced lanes will make it worse—bypassing on Beal's going 60—so angry because of the backup. Suicide lane is rightfully named.

Deborah Porter: 46-year resident and realtor. Printed study--\$3.2M to do full design and study—what? Pedestrian problem—instead of crosswalk—pedestrian bridges. Bad way to spend money. Why don't we do those other studies?

Twila Fisher/Charlie Pearce: BUILD federal grant can be used for that—those are multimillion dollar projects. Future consideration. Ped bridges only address ped safety but not crashes. Stantec asked to put in some cost estimates. Without numbers, we do not know what we are looking at. \$15,000 threshold for city council vote—any taxpayer money—there would be a notification, discussion, and vote.

Pedestrian refuge island—"suicide" becomes for pedestrians—Beale's ave crosswalk. Other planning initiatives like VPI—river walk—connection and make city more walkable.

Lynn O'Kane: 20 years—family has been here since 1834. No GIS—someone's drawing. Put in islands—plowing—we have winter not fun for plowing. Money aspect—not just initial project but long-term maintenance. Things are in such disrepair as they are. Does not get done until there is a school bus issue.

Charlie—detailed. First scoping—did a fair amount of research and use of data. Highway foreman is here as well and manages the team and plowing etc. and does all the planning. So much overtime—thanksgiving, Christmas and new years. Break down silos and work together across departments.

Jim Pentergist: Arrived in 1966 in military in Winter Harbor and worked at high st. Sunoco. Summer traffic on high street—backed up all the way to the light on Main st. and we got a break because no one could get in and out. Just because money is available does not mean we have to spend it. Bypass—3 businessman and it will affect us—stand down on Main street sometime—how many of those cars are shopping at the retail places—getting the heck off the road. Shot ourselves in the foot with the bypass—look what happened in Belfast. Main street was so beautiful, not high st.—high street used to be, too 1940's before commercial development. Where does the corridor start and end? Study should go further than that.

Twila Fisher: Main to Myrick

Keith Smith: Resident. Quick comments—agree with what John said—taxpayer—curious how this got started. Calculation—safety impact—number of accidents—360 something accidents—1.4 accidents per week. How to determine safety issue? Council, city planner and manager etc. upset about current property taxes—how can reduce financial impact of property taxes and is getting very expensive to live here and lots of people feel the same way. Comp plan and planning board historic experience. MDOT has final say. Doubt they will allow that to occur. Has MDOT said it has merit? Moved the police department from here all the way out to top of the hill beyond Myrick st. Get into suicide lane and beat feet? Go down water street? Clogged up.

Due to another meeting in Council Chambers scheduled for 6:00 p.m., the meeting ended at approximately 5:50. City Manager Charlie Pearce noted that the City would follow up with another stakeholder meeting if needed.

Notes were submitted to the City by Sarah Buck of RCAP and reviewed by City Staff. They will be included in feedback submitted to Stantec by May 4, 2026.