

Bayfront Parkway Central Corridor Improvement Project Newsletter

Creating a Stronger Connection between Downtown Erie and the Waterfront



September 2020

Bayfront is more than just a PennDOT Project

By PennDOT District 1 Executive Brian McNulty, P.E.

The Bayfront Parkway Central Corridor Project is more than a PennDOT project; it is a collective venture to deliver improvements with community and regional significance. The proposed improvements were generated through a thorough and collaborative process spanning the six years. Consistent with the Erie Refocused Comprehensive Plan, the heart of the project seeks to better connect travelers of all kinds from the city to the Bayfront, while still allowing convenient movement of goods in and out of the area. It is a piece of a much larger plan to fulfill the city's great vision for the Bayfront. This piece is critically important and addresses multimodal transportation and the evolving land use of the Bayfront.

In 2014, a conversation among Erie area transportation planners and stakeholders led to some great questions.

- How will the plans for business expansions in the city and proposed developments along the Bayfront impact the parkway?
- Is the corridor, originally built with a focus on vehicular mobility and industry, due for a makeover?
- What can be done to enhance the connections to the water for pedestrians and bicyclists?
- Are there ways the road can be improved to help support the ongoing and future growth by the city and county?

These discussions led to a feasibility study completed in 2017 and ultimately to the project being designed today. The study and the design process included many opportunities for public input and stakeholder collaboration. To date, there have been four public meetings, over 60 stakeholder meetings, 10 Coordinating Committee meetings, 10 Project Advisory Committee meetings and three Technical Advisory Committee meetings. PennDOT also attended four community events. Input gathered helped inform and refine the design concepts for the roadway and bicycle/pedestrian improvements.

The overall proposed project includes three pedestrian bridges over the parkway; connecting walking and biking paths where missing links exist; and aesthetic improvements such as landscaping, trees, decorative lighting, and spaces for public artwork. It also includes roundabouts at the intersections with

Sassafras Street Extension and Holland Street.

The parkway would be lowered under State Street, where a currently under-utilized railroad tunnel exists. This will transform the intersection, cutting the north-south pedestrian crosswalk distances almost in half and significantly decreasing traffic volumes in the intersection. The plan includes high-visibility crosswalks with pedestrian-activated push-buttons and count-down pedestrian timer signals. Once complete, the pedestrian walking experience will feel similar to other intersections along State Street - a much calmer city-grid style crossing with a view of the bay. Bike lanes with a boulevard feel along State Street from Second to Front streets are also part of the proposal.

We are not adding any through-traffic lanes. We are not increasing traffic. We are proposing a more efficient series of intersections to serve existing volumes and accommodate anticipated future growth. Ancillary projects such as the improvement to traffic signal efficiencies along 12th Street next year are part of the solution to provide additional options to drivers during construction and after.

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Important Project Dates

- Federal BUILD grant funding announcement: By September 15, 2020
- Bayfront Parkway Central Corridor Virtual Public Meeting: Fall 2020
- 12th Street Traffic Signal Project (Supplemental Project): Construction in 2021
- East Bayfront Project: Construction in 2021
- Access Improvements at Soldiers' and Sailors' Home: Construction in 2021
- Bayfront Parkway Central Corridor Project Phase 1: Anticipated start of construction in 2022



The Purpose of the project is to improve the pedestrian, bicycle, transit, and passenger vehicle connection of the Erie Central Business District and adjacent neighborhoods to the waterfront property north of the Bayfront Parkway, reduce crashes as much as practical on the Bayfront Parkway, improve future congestion to an acceptable level of service or delay, and improve traffic operations and efficiency.



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PennDOT is committed to completing all required engineering, traffic and environmental studies required by state and federal law. These ongoing initiatives have been shared at the numerous meetings and on our project websites (www.BayfrontParkwayProject.com and www.PennDOT.gov/District1).

We recently obtained environmental approval from the Federal Highway Administration. We will maintain our public involvement efforts to make this project the best it can be. We are committed to continuing outreach to stakeholders and the community and anticipate holding another public meeting later this year.

The hard news is available funding levels may force tough decisions about the sequence of the planned improvements. We are committed to seeking additional funding opportunities to ensure the entire vision is eventually realized.

The best news is we are only just beginning! Understanding that no public investment project will ever have 100 percent approval, what we have in this project is a consensus achieved through a lengthy and collaborative process and a proposal where all the identified needs are met. You might say we have a floorplan for a house with a great layout and room for everyone.

What existing themes in the region should be included, and what new looks should be considered? We hope to facilitate community conversations that will eventually paint this picture.

As I previously stated, this is not just a PennDOT project. This is an opportunity to come together to make refinements and modifications to the Bayfront Parkway that will enhance multimodal transportation, safety and efficiency, make stronger connections between downtown and the waterfront, and advance the vision of Erie's future.

We look forward to continuing positive conversations, cooperation and compromise as we collectively shepherd this exciting and transformational project.

— Brian A. McNulty, P.E.,
PennDOT Engineering District 1 Executive
Crawford, Erie, Forest, Mercer, Venango and Warren counties.

Project Highlights

The Bayfront Parkway Project is currently in the preliminary design phase.

Sassafra Street Extension

- Multi-lane Roundabout
- Pedestrian Bridge



State Street

- Grade Separated Intersection
- Signalized at Street Level
- Shorter Pedestrian Crossings
- Bike Lanes
- Reduced Traffic at Intersection
- Pedestrian Bridge

Holland Street

- Multi-lane Roundabout
- Pedestrian Bridge

Additional Enhancements

- Connecting Missing Trail Links
- Multi-use Bridge at Soldiers' and Sailors' Home
- Landscape Improvements
- Upgraded lighting
- Public Art Spaces



Tell us what you like about the project or about concerns you may have by going online to www.BayfrontParkwayProject.com or www.PennDOT.gov/District1 or contacting PennDOT Project Manager Tom McClelland, P.E., at 814-678-7081 or thmcclella@pa.gov.

