

## Focus Group Summaries

### Introduction

A series of Focus Group meetings were held to reach a broader group of interested parties and individuals and provide an opportunity to gain additional feedback on the Resort Area Mobility Plan (RAMP). A live presentation was provided for in-person and online via Webex. The presentation included an overview of the RAMP, progress to date, and open discussion around three primary focus areas – Mobility Needs and Challenges by User Type, the Ideal Transportation Network, and Preliminary Atlantic Avenue Concepts. The Atlantic Avenue Concepts included two alternatives generally described as follows (see Presentation for visual depiction):

- Alternative 1 – East curb cycle/scooter track
- Alternative 3 – Buffered bike/scooter lanes with center pedestrian refuge islands

The focus groups included the Atlantic Avenue Association, Restaurant/Retail, Hotel/Motel, Public Safety (Police/Fire/EMS), Special Events/Traffic Operations, and Bikeways and Trails. The discussion varied per group with some having piqued interest in a topic and more time was spent on that topic. The following generally summarizes the discussion and information relevant to RAMP.

### Atlantic Avenue Association Focus Group

#### Resort Travel Patterns by Visitor Type

- Weekly Visitor
  - Emphasis on pedestrian access and safety
  - Would be nice to have options to get back to Town Center
  - If the trolleys run north/south, there should be an option for east/west.
    - Need to consider headways and timings
  - Similar patterns to sports visitors
  - Avoid having the trolley take up 2 lanes
- Resort Employees
  - Residential Parking Permit Program: is given a pass and has a place to park and will indicate who's been giving an issue in the neighborhoods.
    - Neighborhood parking is not a good long-term solution.
  - Need convenient, free parking spaces for employees that is safe & well lit.
  - Is there a way to use excess capacity in garages or lots? For example, designate the top level of the parking garages for employee parking.
  - Need more parking options north of 31<sup>st</sup> Street for employees.

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- Is there a place for employee parking off-site? Is this financially feasible?
- Can the \$10/month for employee parking continue?
- Can neighborhoods be better lit?
  - Some lighting is too bright, but an example of good lighting is on the 300 block of 16<sup>th</sup> Street.

## Vehicle Network Map

- General consensus on the RASAP identified street system designation
- Vehicle Flow
  - Atlantic Should be more pedestrian friendly with less vehicles.
  - Is Virginia Beach Boulevard/17<sup>th</sup> Street considering a key corridor?
    - Yes, but since they have active funding for improvements, it was not included.
  - Is 19<sup>th</sup> Street a key corridor?
    - Yes, but since it was recently reconstructed, it was not included.
    - Less vehicle access, but there are two destinations at the end of it and Atlantic Park coming.
    - Kimley-Horn to add this to network map for consistency.

## Pedestrian/Bicycle Network Map

- General consensus on the RASAP identified bicycle/pedestrian network.
  - Consider adding improvements on Oriole Drive
  - Is the space best dedicated to bicyclists?
    - Need to understand the type of bicyclist and who we're targeting for improvements. For example, the boardwalk bike path provides recreational routing but it doesn't function well for mobility due to conflicts. The shared bike/trolley lane may be too high of level of stress due to constant conflicts with the Trolley.

## Atlantic Avenue Concepts

- Based on modal periodization results, it was observed that room for cars was low, but the on-street parking was high. If no cars are on the street, then why do we need on-street parking?
- When considering the use of corner curb sidewalks for landscaping, like the slide of Delray Beach, it's important that the resort area decide the level of tourist and visitor engagement and the economic demographic we're trying to attract. The Delray Beach is an example that would attract a more affluent patron but requires detailed maintenance. Landscaping is great until it is not maintained.

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- Several people would feel more comfortable having separation from vehicles & the curbside zones (particularly for eating)
- Is there too much space being used for bikes and scooters?
- Some would rather dedicate trolley space, not bikes
- Consider looking at how the tram moves people north/south to replace or supplement trolley
- Trolley should stop at every other stop, but data suggests otherwise.
- Trolley drivers could be under a lot of stress trying to mix between various modes of traffic
- People need some sort of transportation when down here but does not necessarily have to be the trolley

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### Restaurant/Retail Focus Group

#### Resort Travel Patterns by Visitor Type

There was limited discussion about the distinctions between resort visitor type and their mobility needs. It was noted that the Convention Visitor may need temporary solutions because trolley routes might not function well to access the VBCC and Sports Center. We may need something permanent when the numbers are significantly higher for convention or other events.

#### Vehicle Network Map

- General consensus on the RASAP identified street system designation

#### Pedestrian/Bicycle Network Map

- General consensus on the RASAP identified bicycle/pedestrian network.
- Why isn't the pedestrian emphasis shown on Norfolk Avenue?
  - Norfolk Avenue has an existing multiuse path

#### Atlantic Avenue Concepts

- Alternative 1 received mixed feedback
  - Prefer the multimodal space adjacent to the retail.
  - The bike lanes on the east side puts them in the pathway of all the cars coming in/out of the businesses/hotels
  - This could be difficult for vehicles leaving the hotels because of the bikes
- Alternative 3 was the most balanced and most traditional.
- Bikes should be on the west side and all better access for vehicular traffic to the hotels.
- Why isn't Alternative 2 being shared?
  - Removed due to feedback received from the RAMP Committee and potential conflicts.

#### General Discussion

- Want to consider moving the curb to provide more space for the pedestrians and less space for the drivers.
- Do not let the trolleys be a defining element of what needs to be done on Atlantic Avenue.
- Parklets could become problematic for loitering.
- Consider a boardwalk tram for north/south mobility (i.e., Ocean City, MD).
  - Can we put the tram on the boardwalk side?
  - Can we put the tram & bikes on the same path?

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- o Could tram be one way on boardwalk and one way on Atlantic?

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### Hotel/Motel Focus Group

#### Resort Travel Patterns by Visitor Type

There was limited discussion about the distinctions between resort visitor type and their mobility needs.

#### Vehicle Network Map

- General consensus on the RASAP identified street system designation
  - Agreed that Mediterranean Ave & Cypress Ave should not be considered a focus street – remain residential

#### Pedestrian/Bicycle Network Map

- General consensus on the RASAP identified bicycle/pedestrian network.
- How are scooters represented?

#### Atlantic Avenue Concepts

- How are the deliveries (food, laundry, pick-up, etc) affected by these alternatives?
  - Deliveries already have a restricted timeframe except for the linen surface. If they were asked to park on the side streets it wouldn't happen and should be factored into the concepts.
- Can an alternative be considered where the bike lane meanders down Atlantic Avenue and can vary between being adjacent to the curb, or adjacent to the curbside zones to allow for flexibility with the space.
- Hotels do not support on-street parking during the summer season.
  - Once on-street parking is allowed, drivers will continue to circle until they find a convenient spot
  - Drivers will also wait for a parked vehicle to move, thus holding up all traffic behind them
  - If a business cannot survive on Atlantic Avenue without on-street parking in front of their store during the peak season, then their business model is better suited for another place. There are thousands of weekly guests walking and biking and their experience should be enhanced.
- When new hotels are built, is there a way to allow for short-term parking intended to serve Atlantic Avenue businesses?
- The hotels had very few guests ask about the trolley service this summer. They do not see it as a major generator or need for mobility.
- Can Kimley-Horn or the City contact other hotels/cities where there is on-street parking for their resort areas and see what the impact is?

## Focus Group Summaries

### Public Safety (Police/Fire/EMS) Focus Group

#### Resort Travel Patterns by Visitor Type

There was limited discussion about the distinctions between resort visitor type and their mobility needs.

#### Vehicle Network Map

- General consensus on the RASAP identified street system designation
- Emergency services typically uses 18<sup>th</sup> Street for access to Atlantic Avenue but varies depending on call location
- Emergency services typically uses 20<sup>th</sup> Street for access to the boardwalk/beach

#### Pedestrian/Bicycle Network Map

- General consensus on the RASAP identified bicycle/pedestrian network.

#### Atlantic Avenue Concepts

- Considerations for safety barriers for outdoor dining or parklets
- Experience up to 50 fire/EMS calls per day on Atlantic Avenue
- Experience 100+ police calls per day on Atlantic Avenue
- Currently utilize trolley lanes for emergency access
  - Prefer to continue to have free flow emergency conditions but can adapt to revised plans
  - A minimum lane of 10-feet would be needed if a dedicated emergency access lane is provided
  - Cannot have physical barriers that do not allow for traffic flow
- Police/Fire/EMS do not support on-street parking during the peak season
- Bike/scooter lanes will be blocked when staged for an emergency
- Curb extensions need to accommodate emergency vehicle turning movements
- Public safety would support additional consolidation/pairing of connector streets if considered a viable alternative. Maintain consistency with the directions established with 21<sup>st</sup> Street/22<sup>nd</sup> Street

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### Special Events / Traffic Operations

#### Resort Travel Patterns by Visitor Type

There was limited discussion about the distinctions between resort visitor type and their mobility needs.

#### Vehicle Network Map

- General consensus on the RASAP identified street system designation
- Special events / operations constantly have to close connector streets between Atlantic Ave and Pacific Ave. Can there be reconfiguration considerations or other infrastructure to ease the amount of cones, barrels, and barricades deployed regularly?

#### Pedestrian/Bicycle Network Map

- General consensus on the RASAP identified bicycle/pedestrian network.

#### Atlantic Avenue Concepts

- Pedestrian refuges or anything raised in Atlantic Avenue could be problematic due to trip hazards during races, blockages for parade routes, and reduces the flexibility to manage special events (for example, they are providing three travel lanes for Holiday Lights)
- Consider closures of additional connector streets between Atlantic Avenue and Pacific Avenue (similar to 8<sup>th</sup> Street but cut off on the Atlantic Avenue side) – perhaps align them with the connector parks
- Special Events sees potential challenges associated with a boardwalk tram service and conflicts. For example, there were 45+ boardwalk events in 2019.
- Once concepts are refined, additional review and comment was requested by the safety team.

#### General Discussion

- The Resort Office is currently establishing performance measures for special events.
- Upcoming initiative for remote parking with Oceana and other installations – 3 – 5 years out at best

## Focus Group Summaries

### Bikeways and Trails Focus Group

#### Resort Travel Patterns by Visitor Type

- There was limited discussion about the distinctions between resort visitor type and their mobility needs.

#### Vehicle Network Map

- General consensus on the RASAP identified street system designation
- Although 19<sup>th</sup> Street was recently constructed, it was requested to be added to the network plan.
- A lot of locals use Cypress Ave for access to I-264

#### Pedestrian/Bicycle Network Map

- General consensus on the RASAP identified bicycle/pedestrian network. Network is being reviewed for consistency with the Active Transportation Plan.
- Has Kimley-Horn considered the pedestrian widths and how they people can walk around the resort area?
- Are bike lanes replacing the feeder lanes on Laskin Road east of Birdneck Road?
- Additional bike/ped initiatives by the Bikeways and Trails Commission were provided to KH via email after the meeting.

#### Atlantic Avenue Concepts

- How are commercial vehicles affected or considered by these alternatives?
- HRT data needs to be reviewed with the alternatives
  - The City has moved to vehicles that look like busses and ridership dropped because it doesn't have the same enjoyability and experience as the earlier version of the Trolley.
- The alternatives do not consider the boardwalk. The group is interested how potential changes and improvements can be made along the boardwalk bike path, particularly with the numerous conflicts.
- Having both bike lanes on the east side is more realistic because most bicyclists don't wait for the signals on Atlantic Avenue because there's no opposing traffic.
- Mass transit options into the resort should be considered to reduce reliance on single occupancy vehicles.
- How will existing infrastructure be considered (light poles, signs, etc.) to make more space for pedestrians?
- The project has a great opportunity to connect to Rudee Inlet Bridge and Winston-Salem.
- How will the transition of Atlantic Avenue at 25<sup>th</sup> Street be accommodated?
- How are connections east/west being considered?