



Save Monroe Ave, LLC
c/o Daniel A. Spitzer
Hodgson Russ LLP
140 Pearl Street, Suite 100
Buffalo, NY 14202

July 18, 2016

Clover/Allens Creek Neighborhood Association
c/o Robert W. Burgdorf
Nixon Peabody LLP
1300 Clinton Square
Rochester, NY 14604-1792

Brighton Community of Concerned Citizens
c/o Robert L. Galbraith, Jr.
Davidson Fink LLP
28 East Main Street, Suite 1700
Rochester, New York 14614

RE: • Proposed Monroe Avenue Plaza
 • Analysis of Traffic Impact Study – Revised DEIS
 • 2740/2750 Monroe Avenue, Brighton, NY

Dear Mr. Spitzer, Mr. Burgdorf and Mr. Galbraith:

I. Introduction

On behalf of Save Monroe Ave LLC, the Clover/Allens Creek Neighborhood Association, and the Brighton Community of Concerned Citizens, McFarland Johnson has reviewed the Traffic Impact Study (TIS) for the proposed Whole Foods Plaza prepared by SRF Associates dated March 2015, revised January 2016, revised again April 2016, and submitted to the Town of Brighton as Appendix 3 of the Revised DEIS dated May 2, 2016.

The primary focus of our review was to determine if there were any material deficiencies which would significantly alter the accuracy or reliability of the analysis and conclusions in the TIS.

Evident from our review is that the current TIS has a number of material deficiencies which make it unacceptable to be used for the purposes for which it was prepared. Additionally, in a number of material aspects it either failed to supply certain information specifically required under the Scope, or failed to supply appropriate mitigation which is the industry standard for a private development TIS.

As a fundamental threshold matter, the TIS does not accurately represent the existing traffic operating levels and existing safety levels. This is critically necessary for an appropriate review of the impacts associated with the proposed development. Without this information, which forms the basis for all the analysis and conclusions that follow, the TIS provides little value.

It should be noted that the material deficiencies in the TIS necessarily forced us to limit our review in a number of material respects. For instance:

- (i) a more detailed review of the TIS appendices, particularly the line by line input data/parameters for Synchro model analysis, was not included in our review because that information was not supported with accurate data on existing conditions;
- (ii) our technical comments are provided on a general basis only, and not with the level of review we would ordinarily provide, because of the lack of fundamental data on existing conditions; and
- (iii) only the Preferred Alternative 1 along the Monroe Avenue corridor was analyzed because the lack of the base data would render further analysis unreliable and inaccurate.

A full and proper review cannot be done until the material deficiencies set forth in this letter are remedied. All analysis and conclusions will be materially different after the deficiencies are corrected. At that time, we would be pleased to review the new TIS. We understand, however, that the SEQR public hearing is now closed, and public comment period will also be closed before the TIS is corrected. Nevertheless, we would be pleased to do a full, proper review after the deficiencies are corrected, should the Town permit us to do so under either an SEIS process or otherwise.

II. Summary of Critical Material Deficiencies

Below is a summary of some of the key items from our analysis (which are discussed in detail in Section III of this letter). At a minimum, these items need to be remedied in order for the TIS to be reliable and substantially complete:

1. **Existing Conditions.** The “existing conditions” model traffic operations do not accurately portray current field observed traffic. This is a critical first step when performing a traffic impact study as all the results are based on manipulations to that existing model. The existing model needs to be properly calibrated before any results and recommendations can be determined. The NYSDOT specifically expressed this same concern as the actual traffic backups (queue lengths) which occur on a daily basis were significantly understated in the TIS. A meaningful review of the TIS cannot be conducted until the TIS utilizes an accurate base traffic model.
2. **Development Alternatives.** Although there were 11 proposed alternatives listed, only six proposed alternatives were analyzed in the TIS, and all six exceed the Town Zoning Code density requirements and/or land use restrictions. There is no baseline alternative that fully complies with the Town Zoning Code using only those uses/sizes permitted as of right under the Code. Determining the amount and appropriateness of incentives is not possible when a baseline alternative is not established. Indeed, the DEIS Scope required “*The Analysis shall include development scenarios that are in conformance with the existing zoning;*” however, the DEIS did not fulfill this requirement.

3. **Traffic Generation by the Development.** The amount of new traffic projected for proposed Alternative #1 is underestimated. The trip generation rate was based on a typical grocery store with no comparison to other existing Whole Foods stores' traffic generation. This could have a major impact on the analysis and the conclusions on impacts. Also, the proposed Whole Food Store is 53,900 SF, but was only analyzed as a 50,000 square foot store.
4. **Trip Distribution.** The project's traffic patterns entering the site have more vehicles placed on the secondary access than the main signalized entrance, in some instances passing the main entrance in order to enter the secondary entrance. This distribution of traffic is not what is typically observed for retail plazas where customers habitually enter the site's first drive regardless of internal designation. Modification or additional explanation is needed.
5. **Access Modification Plan (South Side).** There are several issues with the proposed Access Modification Plan:
 - a. The existing driveway curb cuts on the south side of Monroe Avenue are not proposed to be modified or removed; therefore it does not physically restrict vehicles to right-in and right-out movements for the existing driveways as the Developer originally proposed. This access restriction is critical to properly manage the vehicles entering/exiting the Monroe Avenue Corridor and require utilization of the proposed signal to safely provide left turn movements.
 - b. Significant safety and congestion concerns are presented with the close proximity of the existing driveways to the proposed signal. Additionally, the internal circulation has parking along the main exit queue lane.
 - c. Despite the Scope requirements, no binding agreements were presented in the DEIS with the property owners of the south side parcels to ensure that the Access Modification Plan will be constructed.
6. **Capacity Analysis.** The capacity analysis performed shows significant failing operations for various movements and signal approaches. Average delays of 3 minutes and 8 minutes are not acceptable anywhere, let alone in our region where the maintaining agencies pride themselves on efficient traffic operations. The proposed operating conditions, as modeled in the applicant's traffic analysis, will create significant gridlock conditions on Monroe Avenue in front of the proposed plaza on a daily basis, especially during the evening and Saturday peak hours.
7. **Accident Analysis.** No highway safety analysis was completed for this project, despite the fact that the corridor has seen 384 accidents in the past 3 years. This represents almost 3 times the statewide average for similar roadways. The study area is classified as a Priority Investigation Location and a High Accident Location, and industry standards would typically require a highway safety analysis, especially for a project of this magnitude.

III. Further Review of Material Deficiencies

The below sections elaborate on each of the above items:

1. Existing Conditions:

The base (existing) traffic models were not calibrated to reflect actual traffic conditions that exist on a daily basis along the Monroe Avenue corridor. The NYSDOT also recognized this material deficiency in its April 4, 2016 letter in which it pointed out that the actual queue lengths are significantly longer than those shown in the Synchro model for existing conditions. We have the same concerns recognized by the NYSDOT as it has been observed that the daily queue from Monroe Avenue eastbound extends back from the Clover Street intersection to roughly the I-590 interchange intersection, which is roughly 1300'. It should be noted that our November 3, 2015 comment letter to the scoping documents specifically stated:

“Existing queue lengths along Monroe Avenue should be documented in the field as part of the field observations when establishing existing conditions. This will also be vital to ensure the required queuing analysis has an accuracy base point that represents actual conditions in the field”.

Even though this is an essential element of a properly prepared TIS, it was not done. The base file submitted in the TIS incorrectly shows a maximum queue length of 915' and an average queue length of 676' during the evening peak hours; while the Saturday existing queue lengths were not even provided in the model printouts set forth in Appendix A4 of the TIS. Calibration of the base file to accurately show the existing conditions is necessary for the TIS to have any value. These corrections will impact all of the subsequent proposed model runs and alternatives due to the fact that the existing model is used as the basis upon which to add the traffic generated by the proposed development and any alternative considered.

2. Development Alternatives:

There are still no alternatives that show how the site/traffic would operate with a development utilizing a layout density and land uses permitted “as of right” under the current town zoning code. All the alternatives analyzed to date have either increased density, land uses that would require conditional use permits and/or use variances and/or area variances from the zoning/planning boards. Therefore, all the alternatives result in similar very poor levels of operations with significant adverse impacts to traffic, when in fact the baseline alternative may not.

When reviewing alternatives, a baseline traffic analysis should be prepared showing what can be developed in accordance with existing zoning, which would involve only the 7.3 acres currently in the BF-2 zone, and would include only those uses permitted as of right. The current proposed grocery store, restaurants, drive thru, are all not permitted by current code without a conditional use permit and a number of other discretionary permits/approvals/variances. We also note that this analysis was required in the Scope, but the TIS did not address it.

The suggested baseline analysis required in the Scope is especially useful here, where the applicant is requesting incentive zoning. Without being able to compare to an established baseline, one cannot accurately quantify the extent of the incentives being requested. The intent of having multiple alternatives is to determine the appropriate amount of development on the site and associated mitigation that can maintain acceptable levels of traffic operations and have negligible impacts to the off-site traffic. A baseline alternative is critical and necessary as a starting point for this task. We note that this contributes to the fact that no alternative has been proposed that adequately mitigates the proposed traffic generated by the site.

3. **Trip Generation:**

Trip generation volumes for the proposed development were calculated using trip generation rates from the ITE Trip Generation Manual 9th Edition, which is generally considered an industry wide accepted practice. The TIS notes that the ITE trip generation rates used are greater than a typical Tops store but less than a typical Wegmans store. However, this is not thorough enough. The last paragraph on page 11 states that this will be the only Whole Foods store in the Rochester area, meaning not only will there be more traffic at the initial opening, but also customers who want to shop at Whole Foods need to come to this particular store regardless of their location in the Rochester area. This will have increased impact on the trips generated by the store for the long term, as there are Wegmans/Tops scattered within the suburbs around the city, which will not be the case for Whole Foods. Because of this, the trips generated by a current Whole Foods store in a unique market area should be reviewed and used when determining the trip generation rate for the proposed project store.

The TIS also uses a 50,000 square foot grocery store when in fact a 53,900 square foot store is being proposed. We realize that the 53,900 square feet includes office/employee space. However, the statistical analysis provided by the ITE trip generation manual is calculated using overall gross square footage which includes the office/employee areas when developing their trip generation rates. The 3,900 square feet should not be omitted from the trip generation calculations.

4. **Trip Distribution:**

The site-generated peak hour traffic distributions for Alternative 1 (Proposed Action) are listed as being included on Figure 5B. However, this critical information is, in fact, not correctly shown for this alternative as we were unable to find a correct distribution figure for Alternative 1 showing no access points onto Clover Street and Allens Creek Road.

There are other trip distribution discrepancies as well. Figure 6C correctly shows the trips distributed on the two proposed Monroe Avenue driveways; however, distribution between the two driveways does not seem appropriate because:

- a. Northbound traffic on Monroe Avenue during the evening and Saturday peaks are shown with more cars going through the proposed signalized entrance in order to enter at the unsignalized entrance further downstream. Based on experience with retail plazas, a larger number of customers will enter at the first driveway as opposed to waiting for

the second driveway, especially if the first driveway is signalized. This alters the actual proposed traffic impacts.

- b. Southbound traffic on Monroe Avenue during the evening and Saturday peaks are shown with more cars making left turns at the unsignalized entrance as opposed to making a left turn at the signalized entrance. Given the amount of traffic on Monroe Avenue during the evening and Saturday peak hours, we do not feel more vehicles will not be able to make a left turn at the unsignalized intersection safely in comparison to the signalized intersection. This alters the actual proposed traffic impacts.

5. **Access Modification Plan (South Side):**

The Access Modification Plan for the south side of Monroe Avenue continues to be incomplete, and continues to have design flaws. The TIS assumes “*that all nine south side properties may connect to the signal at the time of full development of the Whole Foods site and that right-in, right-out are permitted at most existing driveways with left-turns entering and exiting allowed only at the new signal*”.

We concur that this would improve the safety and efficiency of the corridor. However, as shown in Figure 2.3.1E of the DEIS, no modifications are proposed/accepted by the existing properties to restrict the left turn movements into/out of their existing driveways. This is a concern, as the figure depicts there will be full access commercial driveways as close as 50’ and 100’ to the north and south of the proposed signalized intersection and three full access commercial driveways within 250’ to the north and three full access driveways within 300’ to the south. These six existing full access driveways so close to the new signal present a safety concern with additional conflict points for a corridor that is already has an exceedingly high number of conflict points and an accident rate 2.7 times the statewide average. This is a dangerous situation that would need to be addressed in the corrected TIS.

Additionally, the queue for the light has been placed in a parking lane, which unnecessarily poses accident risks, as well as risk of “trapping” parked cars from exiting.

Additionally, despite the Scope requirements, the DEIS fails to provide any legal proof of consent by landowners on the south side of Monroe Avenue to agree to this plan.

6. **Capacity Analysis:**

The capacity analysis performed within the study used Synchro 8.0 traffic modeling software. This was reviewed and completed in accordance with the Transportation Research Board’s 2010 Highway Capacity Manual and industry standards. MJ has not performed a detailed review of the traffic data that was inputted into the various alternatives models for reasons explained in the Section I. However, we offer the following observations and comments associated with the traffic capacity analysis results provided within the body of the study for the Proposed Alternative:

Congestion within the Monroe Avenue Corridor Between I-590 and Clover Street:

- a. Regardless of the modifications from the calibration of the base model, the Synchro results show proposed conditions have failing and near failing levels of operations on multiple intersection movements at multiple intersections. When the volume of traffic ('V') is greater than the capacity of the infrastructure ('C') then that operation is considered failing to the degree that is not typically acceptable by municipalities in upstate New York, commonly referred to as the v/c ratio. Under significantly failing operations ($v/c > 1.0$) Synchro calculates the queue/delay based on two signal cycles and then states the delay/queue is unknown with the following footnotes:
- i. *"Volume exceeds capacity, queue length is theoretically infinite. Queue shown is maximum after two cycle lengths"*
 - ii. *"95th Percentile volume exceeds capacity, queue may be longer. Queue shown is maximum after two cycles."*
 - iii. *"Volume for 95th percentile queue is metered by upstream signal"*

This is the case for several movement operations associated with the proposed alternative traffic operations per the un-calibrated traffic model analysis listed below, where the queue lengths are unknown and **average** delays are shown but it is unknown if they last longer than two cycle lengths:

- Monroe Avenue @ Clover Street
 - Eastbound Through (PM – 96 Sec. Delay)
 - Westbound Left Turns (PM – 81 Sec. Delay)
- Monroe Avenue @ Proposed Driveway
 - Eastbound Left Turns (PM – 2:55 minutes & Sat – 2:07 minutes)
 - Westbound Left Turns (PM – 2:45 minutes)
 - Southbound Left Turns (PM – 2:42 minutes & Sat – 7:45 minutes)

As a result of this inability for Synchro to correctly analyze the proposed traffic conditions, it is recommended that an alternative modeling software be used which can accurately project the proposed conditions utilizing traffic simulation. There are a number of software programs available to analyze failing operation; however the SimTraffic application within Synchro, for proposed conditions at a 60 minute duration, may be the most practical option for this project if it can be calibrated to reflect the field observations. This will provide results in both numerical and visual/video form that the public and Town Board can review allowing them to fully understand the extent of the proposed impacts to the traveling public from this project.

Simulation software such as VISSIM or SimTraffic create an actual simulation of the traffic operations and multiple runs can be performed to create an average results scenario which can be fine tuned to match existing conditions. Synchro is utilizing iterations of formulas and does not produce a simulation model; therefore it may not be possible to mimic the current and proposed conditions for the Monroe Avenue corridor during the peak timeframes when significant operational failures occur.

In summary, when proposing such failing levels of operation, a higher power software is needed to analyze the corridor accurately to determine accurate results.

Synchro results are consistent, typically very accurate, and generally the standard for most municipalities in western New York for non-failing corridor conditions; however for this project, simulation software will allow both a visual and more accurate model results for both the existing and proposed conditions. Therefore, we strongly recommend if the study area contains major movements with V/C ratios greater than 1.0 in the revised TIS, then as previously stated a high power traffic software model is required.

- b. Impacts resulting from the development will degrade the traffic operations within the study area. The following operations will see significantly longer delays/queues under the full build conditions, serious enough to drop a level of service, which typically requires mitigation to ensure that the proposed development will not adversely affect the traveling public.
 - i. Monroe Avenue at Existing/Proposed Site Access (Un-signalized)
 - a. Eastbound Left (AM, PM , SAT)
 - b. Southbound Right (AM, PM, SAT)
 - ii. Monroe Avenue at Clover Street
 - a. Eastbound Through (PM)
 - b. Eastbound Right (PM)
 - c. Westbound Left (PM)
 - d. Overall Intersection (PM)
 - iii. Monroe Avenue at Proposed Main Site Entrance*
 - a. Eastbound Left (PM, SAT)
 - b. Westbound Left (PM, SAT)
 - c. Northbound Left (AM, SAT)
 - d. Southbound Left (PM, SAT)

* Note, this is a new intersection; however LOS 'E' and 'F' are not typically acceptable by municipalities for any intersection, let alone a new proposed intersection
 - iv. Monroe Avenue at Westfall/Allen's Creek
 - a. Eastbound Through/Right (AM)
 - b. Westbound Through/Right (AM, PM)
 - c. Northbound (AM)
 - v. Clover Street at Allen's Creek
 - a. Eastbound Thru/Right (PM)
 - b. Westbound Left (PM)
 - c. Northbound Through/Right (SAT)
 - d. Southbound Through/Right (SAT)
 - e. Overall Intersection (SAT)

No mitigation is being proposed in the traffic impact study to address impacts to these 16 individual movements and 2 overall intersection operations. This is a critical oversight that should be addressed in the next TIS.

- c. In several areas, the TIS notes that there will be long queue/delays and failing operations during weekday evening peaks for roughly a 45 minute period; however it should be noted that these conditions currently occur on a daily basis during the afternoon peak on weekdays and will also occur on Saturday afternoon peak as well. The TIS inaccurately represents the length and extent of the backups that currently occur on a daily basis and subsequently the conditions that are projected as a result of the proposed project are inaccurate.

Capacity Restrictions of the Proposed Development Access:

- a. The proposed analysis shows traffic exiting the plaza will experience an average delay of around a two and a half minutes waiting at the signal during the weekday evening peak times and around 8 minutes during the Saturday peak. These types of average delays are not acceptable or even practical as the plaza parking lot will become gridlocked with customers being unable to leave for unreasonably extended lengths of time. This raises serious concerns that drivers will become frustrated with this lengthy delay and perform unsafe maneuvers and/or traffic will utilize alternate routes to avoid waiting extended lengths of time.
- b. The NYSDOT has stated that no protected left turn phase (a green arrow) will be allowed at the proposed intersection as this would significantly affect Monroe Avenue corridor through traffic. With a development of this magnitude, and the current through traffic volumes on Monroe Avenue, there are major concerns that this will cause significant backup for left turn vehicles and drivers will shoot gaps that are not sufficient to complete the turn movement creating an unsafe condition at the intersection.
- c. Regular patrons may also attempt to enter the site at the first unsignalized driveway as it is perceived to be “easier” to enter the site than at the signalized intersection if there is no protected phase, resulting in an extended left turn queue and potentially queuing into the through lanes. The traffic study acknowledges this as previously discussed in the trip distributions comments. Due to the significantly failing levels of operation at the signalized main entrance, the study is assuming more customers from the north will be forced to make unsafe left turn maneuvers while waiting in the left turn queue from the signal than will actually perform safe movements at the signal.

These three above situations are typically considered unacceptable and are denied/avoided in any final plan.

7. **Highway Safety/Accident History Analysis:**

To our knowledge, no highway safety analysis was performed for the project as part of the DEIS. Based on 3-years of accident data obtained from the NYSDOT for the period extending from January 2013 to December 2015, 384 accidents occurred on Monroe Avenue from Clover Street to Westfall Road. This results in an accident rate of 14.1 accidents per million vehicle miles (ACC/MVM) which is approximately 2.7 times the statewide average for similar corridors across the state. Monroe Avenue in this area is a HAL (High Accident Location) and a PIL (Priority Investigation Location), which typically requires a highway safety analysis be conducted and included in any traffic studies of the area. We recommend a detailed

safety/accident history analysis be performed as part of the TIS given the magnitude of the development and the nature/accident statistics of the Monroe Avenue corridor.

IV. Summary of Recommendations

Based on the above analysis and the review of the TIS, MJ offers the following recommendations:

1. The TIS needs to be accurately calibrated such that the base traffic model mimics the actual existing conditions observed in the field. This will affect all the other results and findings of the TIS, as well as some findings of this review letter, and any proper analysis of what mitigation measures may be helpful, and to what extent.
2. Reductions in the size/density of use of the proposed development should be considered in order to allow efficient ingress/egress to the site without impacting Monroe Avenue traffic. A baseline alternative should be performed as the starting point to determine the optimal development size.
3. The trip generation should reflect the actual gross square footage proposed and consideration to traffic data from existing Whole Foods Stores should be incorporated into the trip generation calculations.
4. Further alternative analysis should include options with the Allens Creek/Clover access points not opened.
5. Both Trip Distribution and Capacity Analysis comments/concerns set forth above should be addressed.
6. The Access Modification Plan comments/concerns set forth above should be addressed.
7. A highway safety analysis is warranted based on the accident history within the study area and the nature of the proposed development.
8. It is requested that, upon re-submission of the TIS, traffic software model files be provided which will allow us to perform a more detailed review.

V. Conclusion

MJ performed a revised Synchro traffic model analysis for the traffic conditions for the full proposed size of the Development. The addition of right turn lanes on the Monroe Ave. approaches, along with adding permissive/protected left turn signal phases for the plaza drive approaches, allows this specific intersection to operate more efficiently than currently proposed. However, this is still woefully inadequate mitigation for the proposed traffic impacts associated with a development of this magnitude. The proposed levels of operation for the preferred alternative results in significant impacts to the traveling public which have not been properly mitigated. Based on the model results, customers will not be able to efficiently and safely enter/exit the new development with the proposed driveway configuration and roadway improvements, and significant safety and congestion impacts will occur on Monroe Avenue. Furthermore, the NYSDOT will not allow Permissive/Protected left turn phases at the proposed intersection due to the greater impacts to the Monroe Avenue corridor per their April 4, 2016 comment letter.

The only way to adequately mitigate the traffic impacts would be a reduction in the development size and a potential combination of additional improvements to the Monroe Avenue corridor. The extent of reduced development and the amount of additional improvements required to mitigate traffic impacts is still unknown; primarily because there is no accurate existing conditions model from which to establish a base analysis, and because of the other missing information/material deficiencies set forth above.

Please do not hesitate to call should you require additional information or have any questions.

Sincerely yours,

McFARLAND-JOHNSON, INC.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adam J. Frosino', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Adam J. Frosino, PE
Project Manager