



**USA Niagara
Development
Corporation**

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ROBERT MOSES PARKWAY NORTH DETAILS DISCUSSED

Possible design options for Niagara Gorge Corridor Project presented, next steps reviewed

A public informational meeting was held today to share details regarding the proposed next step in the Niagara Gorge Corridor Project, which involves an initial phase to remove the Robert Moses Parkway and reconstruct Whirlpool Street between Main Street and Findlay Drive in Niagara Falls. USA Niagara Development Corporation (USAN); the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (State Parks); the New York State Department of Transportation (DOT); New York Power Authority (NYPA) and the City of Niagara Falls conducted the meeting at the Conference Center Niagara Falls. After the meeting, potential plan views, cross-section drawings, and other illustrations of the proposal will be found [here](#) under “Robert Moses Parkway - North Segment.”

“At this point in the process, we’re looking to get a sense of what the public thinks will work best,” said USA Niagara Development Corporation President Christopher Schoepflin. “Although there will be additional opportunities to weigh in as we move forward, the concepts presented today already illustrate that a truly unique and beautiful setting is possible along this section of the Gorge – which should create vast public space and new recreational activity here.”

“As someone who entered into public service to eliminate the barrier created by the Parkway, it is gratifying to see this effort progressing,” said City of Niagara Falls Mayor Paul Dyster. “I think the concepts provide valuable initial insight into the incredible value of making the Gorge rim a true front door to the City.”

The meeting is part of a Design Report/Environmental Assessment process, required under federal and state laws, to publicly evaluate the potential social, economic, and environmental effects of the project. The preliminary design and environmental review tasks are being done by a consultant team led by the Western New York office of the Parsons Corporation (Parsons), one of the world’s most prominent transportation engineering firms. The budget for the effort is \$1.5 million and is being funded by the NYPA through agreements with USAN and State Parks. Land survey and preliminary

design work began in August 2014 and that process is anticipated to be completed with formal federal/state design approval in early 2016. Formal design approval would permit the project to move forward into a final design process, and ultimately, go out to bid for construction.

One overarching design alternative—or what is referred to as a “Build Alternative”—is being evaluated in this process. It would involve demolition of the Robert Moses Parkway and its associated expressway components between downtown Niagara Falls and Findlay Drive (near DeVeaux Woods State Park); reconstruction of Whirlpool Street as a conventional street to provide all vehicular access in this area (with the addition of pedestrian, bicycle and landscaping enhancements); natural restoration of reclaimed former Parkway lands along Niagara Gorge, and creation of trail network along the Gorge and connecting to adjoining neighborhoods. In the draft Design Report/Environmental Assessment, this Build Alternative will be compared to the “No Build Alternative” (e.g., the current arrangement of roads and the Parkway) as a baseline to evaluate potential impacts to the built and natural environment, including effects to neighborhoods, historic/archaeological resources, air quality, noise, water bodies, plant/animal habitats, etc.

At the public meeting, Parsons presented a number of options regarding more localized components of the project, including how Whirlpool Street might tie into existing roads at either end of the project area, how trail networks could possibly be aligned, and how “gateways” into the Gorge area may be enhanced. These were organized into three concepts; however, the components of each concept would be largely interchangeable.

New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Commissioner Rose Harvey said, “I am very pleased that this process is moving along and we are looking forward to this phase of public input. I am grateful to all of our partners who are stewarding this transformational project.”

New York State Department of Transportation Commissioner Joan McDonald said, “We look forward to working with our partners at the Empire State Development Corporation and the State Parks Department to ensure that this parkway is removed in a way that serves local transportation needs while meeting state and federal standards. Public input is integral to deciding how to reconfigure the area transportation network in a way that enhances the community.”

NYPA president and CEO Gil Quiniones said, “It’s not often that there is an opportunity to rethink infrastructure of this magnitude. There are a lot of great ideas in place for how to transform this portion of the Robert Moses Parkway and we’re excited to be part of the process.”

Senator Robert Ortting said, “This project has been a long time coming, and as a new state Senator, I’m proud to be a part of it. Removing the northern section of the Robert Moses is a small, but vital part in moving the city forward. Expanding waterfront access

should stimulate the economy and draw more tourists. It's exciting to see this project take another step in the right direction."

Assemblyman John Ceretto said, "I'm proud that we are moving forward on this important project to reconfigure the Robert Moses Parkway North as it feeds into the City of Niagara Falls. With construction already underway and progressing well on the south section, I am confident that as the public weighs in on the north section's design we will find that it complements the tremendous work already occurring in Niagara Falls and will lead to additional cultural, recreational and economic benefits for both residents and visitors to our city."

Following today's public meeting, comments and suggestions on the project may be submitted until March 31, 2015 to be considered in time for the next round of public review. Comments may be mailed to:

**Niagara Gorge Corridor Project
c/o Parsons Transportation Group
40 La Riviere Drive, Suite 350
Buffalo, NY 14203**

Or emailed to: Thomas.Donohue@parsons.com

It is anticipated that the next public information meeting will be held in mid-summer of 2015 to present all components of the design and estimated costs for the Build Alternative—which would serve as the basis for assessing environmental impacts—and to receive public input on how these assessments should be conducted. This would be followed by the issuance of a draft Design Report/Environmental Assessment and a public design hearing, currently targeted for mid-fall 2015, to accept comments on it.

The Main Street to Findlay Road concept arose out of a Public Scoping Process that concluded in 2013, achieving broad consensus among various stakeholders and the public. For the remainder of the Niagara Gorge Corridor to Lewiston, the Scoping Process narrowed the number of possible alternatives to three feasible road network alignments. The Public Scoping Report recommended that these possible design concepts should be further developed and evaluated in a future environmental impact statement process.

The process is being conducted in accordance with Federal Highway Administration regulations for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act, Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, applicable Federal Energy Regulatory Commission regulations (the Robert Moses Parkway sits, in part, on lands owned by New York Power Authority as part of the Niagara Power Project), and other associated federal requirements. This process is also intended to meet state agency review requirements under the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act.

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