

**FINKBEINER RD. AND CRANE RD. WITH NEW BRIDGE OVER THE
THORNAPPLE RIVER PROJECT
THORNAPPLE TOWNSHIP, BARRY COUNTY, MI**

**Environmental Assessment (EA)
Review Comment Response Summary
January 30, 2008**

As part of the public and agency decision making review process, the Barry County Road Commission (BCRC) made Public Notice in the Banner (local newspaper of record) on December 20 and 27, 2007 and January 3, 2008; announcing the availability of the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Finkbeiner Road and Crane Road with New Bridge Over the Thornapple River Project and the schedule of a Public Hearing on January 8, 2008. A copy of that announcement is included in Attachment 1. The BCRC also mailed to each landowner of record who owned property adjacent to the preferred alternative alignment for the project, a notice of the availability and location of the EA for review, and the scheduled date and location of the Public Hearing. A copy of this correspondence is included in Attachment 1. A review copy of the EA was also provided to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, the Michigan Department of Transportation and the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration. A copy of the Agenda and the Power Point presentation given at the January 8, 2008 Public Hearing is provided in Attachment 1. A complete transcript of the January 8, 2008 Public Hearing is provided in Attachment 2 of this summary document.

The Public Hearing provided a valuable exchange of information from the public. The hearing was well attended with 77 individuals signing the attendance sheet. A copy of the sign in sheet is provided in Attachment 1. In all, 17 interested citizens provided verbal input to the proceedings. In addition, the BCRC received one written letter from a local citizen and one written letter from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality with comments regarding the EA and the project in general, prior to the hearing date. Two local residents provided written letters with written comments regarding the project after the Public Hearing, but before the end of the comment period. Copies of these correspondences are provided in Attachment 3. Following the Public Hearing, the comment period on the EA was held open until close of business January 23, 2008. At that time the comment period on the EA for the Finkbeiner Road and Crane Road with New Bridge over the Thornapple River Project was closed.

The remainder of this document is a summary of responses to specific comments, questions and / or remarks provided to the BCRC as a result of the input at the Public Hearing and written correspondences received by the BCRC from the public or review agencies throughout the review period. The format of this summary will be to first identify the person or agency providing the comment, question or remark; followed by the comment, question or remark being made, then followed by a response, as appropriate. For the purposes of this summary; comments, questions or remarks are presented under the heading "Question".

PUBLIC HEARING – RESPONSES TO COMMENTS, QUESTIONS OR REMARKS

Fred Rock, 9410 Finkbeiner Road

Question: I would like to make a formal request that this document be placed in Adobe format and put on the Michigan State public websites. This is supposed to be a public hearing, most of us probably work, it's very difficult for us to go to one of these places during work hours and go through such a lengthy document. Whereas if we have it available at a website not only can we view it there but we can print it off and it would truly in today's world be made available to the public for public participation in this process.

Response: It was announced at the end of the Public hearing that Volume 1 (narrative) of the EA was to be posted on the BCRC Web Page for viewing at barrycrc.org. This posting occurred as announced and remained on the Web Page until after the public comment period on the EA closed on January 24, 2008.

Jim French, 171 Hunters Trail Court.

Question: Since moving here in 1969, working through local government and county government, one of the things I have heard greatly is that Middleville needs a second bridge. After the fire downtown and a few other occasions a lot of people have mentioned, boy, we really need a second bridge. I'm hoping that we can work through some of the environmental issues and I sincerely hope that this bridge project continues to the end.

Response: Agreed.

Veronica Scofield Representing Doris Squier, 9225 Finkbeiner Road. (Multiple Questions / Responses)

Question: I am here representing my mother. And the bridge is coming through right on our property. Mr. French, I agree with you. Yeah, Middleville needs -- they have needed another bridge. They have needed another bridge for many years. But to impact -- to do such damage and to impact so many people, their property with disregard to their feelings, their income, you chose the wrong placement for the bridge. It seems to be a big deal that this is for White's. Then put it at Washington Street. The Village owns part of the property there. From what I possibly understand there is only one property owner that they would have to deal with.

Response: The selection of the Preferred Alternative was based upon careful evaluation of many social, economic, environmental and engineering factors. Each of the route and bridge alternatives evaluated have a varying mix of minor to moderate, positive to negative short-term and long-term impacts associated with them. Each alternative has a direct or indirect effect upon different individual properties and property owners. The proposed Preferred Alternative's Thornapple River floodplain crossing alternative (Alternative E), if approved and constructed, will likely affect the commenter and her mother; the Rugers, and the Herweyers more directly than others within the Finkbeiner Road Extension segment of the project.

The Washington Street Bridge (Alternative B) meets the project need to provide a second bridge over the Thornapple River in the vicinity of Middleville. In that sense, Alternative B would assist in meeting the needs of providing a redundant crossing of the river for EMS access and to offer an opportunity for diverting heavy truck traffic destined for Bradford White away from Main Street. However, because of the close proximity of Alternative B to the central business and residential center of Middleville, the location is not optimal to shift enough traffic from Main Street to be effective. Likewise, excessive truck traffic on Main Street is not all destined for Bradford White but other business entities in or near the business district within Middleville. Additionally, the selection of Alternative B would require a “T” intersection in the already congested Main Street – M-37 area which would exacerbate the traffic situation in the area, not make it better. This alternative also does not afford a component of a cross-Township all-weather connector route between M-37 on the east and Patterson Road on the west; which would further provide a direct link to a direct route to US-131 and I-196 via 142th Ave. in Allegan County. The selection of Alternative B would involve less land disturbance, although crossing of the Thornapple River floodplain would have similar impacts to that of the Preferred Alternative; including the need to permanently acquire right of way from the public, that being several private landowners.

Question: Our neighbors across the street, Herwyers (phonetic), I talked with her before she left on vacation. You put the bridge in their property is going to be under water because it will flood. This isn't fair to them either. It's not fair to other people. What are you going to do when it does flood? We just got the certified letter from Barry County Road Commission about the hundred-year flood plain. Come take a walk with me, I can show you water right now and it's just rained.

Response: As for the potential for additional flooding of the Doris Squire Trust property as a result of the proposed road and bridge construction project, the use of the Hydraulic Engineering Center – River Analysis System (HEC-RAS) model suggests the proposed project has the potential to rise the 100-year flood elevation on the Squire property by 0.17 foot (2.04 inches) or from a 100-year flood surface water elevation of 711.54 feet to 711.71 feet. This additional flooding caused by the construction of the proposed road and bridge, which is modeled to occur on the Squire property, is not seen as being of such a magnitude in and of itself, to significantly impact the property. This is particularly true because that area of the Squire property where it is predicted to be additionally flooded by the increase over the base flood elevation does not contain any structures. All of the affected property owners have been contacted and informed of the potential impacts to their property. Any harmful interferences have been determined and we are in the process of resolving them. The Herweyer property in question will continue to flood similar to way it has in the past. However since the large Herweyer parcel is downstream of the proposed structure along with all Herweyer buildings, some of the water that historically flooded close to the Herweyer buildings will now be held back by the new structure. I.e. the new structure does create a small (0.17 foot) increase immediately south and upstream of the proposed bridge (by holding back a small percentage of the water that historically was free flowing onto the Herweyer property), thereby decreasing the amount of water that has historically been available to flood the Herweyers buildings, immediately north or downstream of the proposed bridge.

Question: As far as the village they can't even take care of the water that we get dumped on from the Marketplace, so they are of very little help there. We all have the construction on 37, the flow of water has changed tremendously and I'm going to tell you

that it's been over the last ten years that it's really made a decisive alteration. Joyce Domire and Terry VanderHoff (phonetic) next door will tell you that they see it on their property and they are south of us. It's going to make an impact. What about the Mill Pond? Is it ever prepared for when it does flood and we get water backed up and it's not a hundred-year flood? What about those brand new condos down there?

Response: Drainage and run-off concerns associated with the "Market Place" and M-37 expressed by the commenter are not associated with the proposed project, nor will they be exacerbated by the proposed project. The proposed project will not have an impact upon the impoundment (Mill Pond) above the Main Street dam.

Question: There is more to this. You still chose the wrong place to place the bridge. I'm not saying that we don't need one but your assessments are wrong. The impact it's having on the community, the environmental, the wildlife. And yes, we have found bats in our barn in the middle of winter. And my son who is 45 and my grandchildren found them and have taken them to school. I wish we had one now to show everybody. Yeah, they are there.

Response: The commenter identifies the presence of bats in her barn in the winter time. That observation is not contended. It is possible, if not probable in this location. The species of bat observed in the barn is not provided. However, because the Indiana bat, almost exclusively, hibernates in caves in Indiana; the observed bats in their barn are most likely not Indiana bats.

Question: This location of the bridge is not the correct one. And I don't think it's fair personally and a lot of other people will tell you that doing what you're going to do to Finkbeiner Road is just -- there is no need for it. It's a lot of money for something that's so destructive.

Response: The commenter asserts that the wrong alternative for the bridge was selected; the assessment was wrong; and, there is no need for it. The EA presents the purpose and need for the project, the process of alternatives review, the selection criteria for the Preferred Alternative, and provides an in-depth evaluation of the potential impacts of the Preferred Alternative. As the result of a comprehensive analysis of potential roadway alignments and optional crossings of the Thornapple River, the Preferred Alternative (composed of project specific Alternatives E and F) represents the most efficient and practical option available to the Barry County Road Commission. Moreover, the proposed project is being designed to incorporate a high degree of environmental integrity. The project is not anticipated to have any major impacts upon the environment. The project will generate both positive and negative and minor to moderate long-term impacts to the environment, however, although the Preferred Alternative does not represent the action with the least environmental impact, those impacts that will occur can be mitigated to an acceptable level.

Julie Ackerson, 12081 Gackler Road. (Multiple Questions / Responses)

Question: I'm against the bridge project. I never did see a need for a second bridge across the Thornapple River. There was a slide shown this evening I guess of some reasons why a second bridge is needed. I guess I would just like to respond to some of those reasons that were listed on the screen. I just don't see a need for a bridge or the road project.

Response: The EA provides the purpose and need for the proposed project. Forecasted growth, anticipated significant commercial truck and automobile traffic increases, a lack of a redundant second route across the Thornapple River in close proximity to the existing Main Street bridge and a lack of a near by direct east - west all season cross county corridor for commercial traffic has raised traffic, pedestrian safety and emergency services issues within the Village of Middleville, Thornapple Township and northwestern Barry County that need to be improved. These include the need to:

- Develop a means to improve emergency access with redundant / second route crossing the Thornapple River
- Develop a means to relieve congestion and improve traffic flow for the Village of Middleville.
- Improve pedestrian safety by reducing vehicle – pedestrian conflicts.
- Develop a means to improve the east – west corridor for commercial traffic.

The selection of the Preferred Alternative achieves the purpose and needs of the BCRC, the Village of Middleville, Thornapple Township, and the Region in general for a new all season road and new bridge in this area, which will improve commercial truck traffic routing, cross county traffic flow and reliable emergency services access.

Question: The road extension or the road will stop at Patterson. It will not go through Allegan County. Someone already mentioned this evening, I guess the person just ahead of me, about getting the right of way through Allegan County. It's just not going to happen because the people that own that property have mineral rights. They're mining gravel on that property and probably will be doing it for a hundred years. On the east end of the road extension the road stops at Whitneyville. Doesn't go through. So saying that the road project will give thoroughfare, it's a thoroughfare to nowhere. It just ends at both the east end and west end of the road.

Response: The Preferred Alternative will provide a cross-county all-weather connector between Whitneyville Road on the east and Patterson Road on the west and contribute a critical component needed for an all-season county road across Thornapple Township providing residents of Barry County with a direct route to US-131 and I-196 in Allegan County. The BCRC and The Allegan County Road Commission (ACRC) have worked diligently to cooperate to meet the objectives of a cross-county road connection between 142nd Street in Allegan County on the west and Finkbeiner Road on the east. That cooperation is documented in an August 20, 2007 letter written by the ACRC to the BCRC that commits to build the last section of road needed to connect 142nd Street in Allegan County to Patterson Avenue and Finkbeiner Road in Barry County. The ACRC is confident that this ROW will be acquired. A copy of that letter is provided in Attachment 4.

Question: Secondly, Middleville right now is practically a ghost town. There is just very little traffic. I've worked in Hastings and I've work at worked at my current job. I'm in my 30th year. I travel through Middleville on the way to Hastings during rush hour in the morning and also rush hour in the afternoon. I'm lucky to have three or four cars at the light on Main Street. Just don't pass anybody on Main Street. I don't say that -- ghost town, I don't mean to be negative about that because I have lived in Middleville all of my life and I'm 53 years old and I really love Middleville. But the businesses that are in

Middleville, there's not that many. They certainly need our support and to bypass Middleville with another road and bridge I think is just criminal for those businesses.

Response: A primary goal of the proposed project is to provide a second crossing of the Thornapple River in the vicinity of the Village of Middleville that will remove a significant amount of heavy commercial truck traffic from passing through the Business District on Main Street in the Village. Less commercial truck traffic will address many of the needs outlined in the EA. The Preferred Alternative will allow that goal to be achieved. It is not the intent of the project to limit, restrict or divert vehicles carrying customers to the businesses in the Central Business District of the Village. Some customers may choose to use the new road and bridge route to access the village but that will just be another way to get into town to visit their destination. Destination customers will continue to have full access to the businesses of the Village of Middleville.

Question: Third, I heard it mentioned that if the bridge, current bridge, had to be closed for any kind of repair it would probably add minutes to any response time for ambulance and fire engines. Fire engines would have to go through to that bridge area and you know, that is nothing to thumb your nose at. I think it's important to minimize response time in emergencies. I also think there is common sense that you can use to maybe locate a fire engine on the other side of the bridge or locate an ambulance. You know, just off the top of my head there is the old Baby Bliss building (phonetic). You know, if you had to have emergency vehicles on the other side of the bridge while you're fixing a bridge I think that you can take care of that a lot easier than building a whole new bridge across the river.

Response: The provision of additional emergency service vehicles and the associated need for additional trained personnel to provide EMS services stationed on both sides of the river is expensive, requires extra coordination and is a challenge to maintain in the long run as an alternative to a permanent second crossing of the Thornapple River close to the Village of Middleville. Although it can be accomplished, it would provide a whole different set of challenges that would have to be evaluated by the community before such an approach could or would be able to be implemented.

Question: As far as I also heard that building that bridge will provide jobs during the construction of the bridge, construction of the road. In an economy like now of course it's always good to have more jobs but I don't think that's the reason why you build a bridge. What happens when the bridge and the road is finished? What do you build next to provide people with those jobs? I don't think it's the job of the road commission or -- to make jobs in the community. I think business demand creates jobs.

Response: That is correct. The employment generated by the construction of the Preferred Alternative is not the primary goal of the project. But it is a short-term positive secondary benefit. In fact, as part of the Governor's Jobs Today Program, some of the funding for the proposed project will be provided by the State of Michigan because it will generate much needed income to people in and around the community as a direct result from jobs associated with the construction of the proposed road and bridge project.

Question: I also heard that it's not going to cost anything because of getting grants for the project. But grants aren't really pennies from heaven; grants come from our taxes. And I think there is a lot of other ways that we can spend our tax money. I know the

existing roads that we have right now there is so many gravel roads, roads with potholes. Schools are in decline as far as buildings and things like that. I think there is so many other ways that we can spend that taxpayer money. Don't think of grant money as free money. It's money that is coming out of your pocket. Grants are not pennies from heaven. Just because it's a grant doesn't mean that you go out and spend that money unnecessarily.

Response: A preliminary opinion of construction cost for the road and new bridge over the Thornapple River associated with the Preferred Alternative excluding ROW acquisition costs and engineering fees is estimated to be approximately \$6,520,000. The BCRC has budgeted \$200,000 for ROW acquisition. This project will be funded with Federal High Priority (HPP) Funds, Federal STP Funds, Federal and State Category D Funds, State Jobs Today Funds (providing the match to the Federal Funds) and Local Funds. The Local Funds are from the Village of Middleville (\$600,000), Thornapple Township (\$200,000), and the Barry CRC (\$150,000) as well as from the sale of Act 51 Bonds through the County of Barry (\$1,450,000).

Question: From an environmental impact I guess I don't know a lot about wetland. I don't know a lot about that Indiana bat that has been mentioned. But I do know that having good farmland, covering it over with asphalt is not good for the environment. I really hate to see that beautiful area around Finkbeiner Road being spoiled with more asphalt being poured over it.

Response: Soil investigations confirmed soil types as having prime farmland soil qualities or designations. The Area Resources Soil Scientist for Area 3 – Southwest Lower Michigan, stated that there will be no impact to prime or unique farmland soils along the existing Finkbeiner Road and Crane Road sections (of the Preferred Alternative) that are to be re-constructed. The new ROW segment that goes from Finkbeiner to Crane including the proposed Thornapple River bridge crossing location contain no prime farmlands, thus no impact to prime farmlands on this section. The only area to incur impact to prime soils will be the location between Shad Road down the existing two track location and over to the resumption of Finkbeiner Road to Patterson Road. This segment involves approximately 0.5 acres of Prime Farmland of the Brady and Matherton types. The impact of placing road fill over this small amount of prime farmland soils is considered a minor impact and no mitigation is required other than equitably compensating individual landowners for the impacts/takings.

As for the question of land use, construction of the Preferred Alternative will commit the utilization of existing, as well as, require the acquisition of new right-of-way and/or temporary grading easements. The new ROW within the Finkbeiner Road Reconstruction and the Crane Road Reconstruction segments will accommodate additional ROW width at intersections to provide for turning lanes and where the road centerline has been re-aligned to accommodate horizontal and vertical alignment modifications. The new right-of-way in the Finkbeiner Road Extension segment of the project will include land to accommodate the roadway and the crossing of Spring Creek and the Thornapple River. It is also anticipated that the project will require numerous temporary grading easements along the route.

The proposed construction of the Finkbeiner Road Reconstruction, the Finkbeiner Road Extension and the Crane Road Reconstruction segments of the proposed project will

require the use of approximately 10.0 acres of new ROW. The Finkbeiner Road Reconstruction segment of the project will require the permanent acquisition of portions of approximately 29 parcels of land with a total of approximately 3.2 acres of acquired ROW. The Finkbeiner Road Extension will require the permanent acquisition of portions of approximately 3 parcels of land with a total of approximately 5.0 acres of acquired ROW. The Crane Road Reconstruction will require the permanent acquisition of portions of approximately 12 parcels of land with a total of approximately 1.9 acres of acquired ROW. However, the proposed project will not require the taking or demolition of any residential or business structures, or the need to relocate any families or businesses.

Question: And I guess lastly from a personal interest, you know, how does it effect me personally? Well, I think if anything from a financial standpoint it would probably help me, be a positive thing for me because our farm borders on Finkbeiner Road and I think if we ever wanted to, as a family, put lots or something through there I think it would probably help us to have a paved road there. So I'm not up here to say it's hurting me personally. Probably the project would actually help me. That doesn't mean that Mr. Dykstra can knock at my door tomorrow and say, hey, we need to develop your farm because we're really not interested in doing that. Not paving that over either.

But for all of those reasons I guess I just want to say I'm against that bridge and there is just a lot of other ways you can spend that money and get around the fact that getting through that area of the bridge.

Response: The EA presents the purpose and need for the project, the process of alternatives review, the selection criteria for the Preferred Alternative, and provides and in-depth evaluation of the potential impacts of the Preferred Alternative. As the result of a comprehensive analysis of potential roadway alignments and optional crossings of the Thornapple River, the Preferred Alternative (composed of project specific Alternatives E and F) represents the most efficient and practical option available to the Barry County Road Commission. Moreover, the proposed project is being designed to incorporate a high degree of environmental integrity.

Robert Kenyan, 407 Johnson Street, Middleville.

Question: I've lived in Middleville all of my life except for the time that I spent with Uncle Sam. And I have lived -- always lived one block of where I was born. I'm glad to see somebody brought up about the fire department. I don't know how many hours I was a member of the fire department from '54 to '94. I worked my way from the bottom up to the top. I had a lot of good years there. There was a few stinky years that we had and one involved two bridges, not only this bridge down here but the one on Parmalee. And I have not heard of a reevaluation of those bridges. The bridge down here when the water washing up over the bottom of the bridge we did just what you said we would do. We placed trucks on the other side of the river. But do you know the added cost that that made? We had to have people on this side of the river, we had to have people on the -- response time going around through Irving. Parmalee Bridge is not a good bridge. I'm sure that the county knows that that's been reevaluated several times and it's not in the best shape.

As far as a fire department and ambulance service, you know, it takes a lot of dedicated people to run that service. And you can't do it when your guts are up here. You're

worried about can I get there, can I do this, can I do that. Yeah, it can be done. Expensive way but you have to have more dedicated people to run it that way.

Response: Agreed. The provision of additional emergency service vehicles and the associated need for additional trained personnel to provide EMS services stationed on both sides of the river is expensive, requires extra coordination and is a challenge to maintain in the long run as an alternative to a permanent second crossing of the Thornapple River close to the Village of Middleville. Although it can be accomplished, it would provide a whole different set of challenges that would have to be evaluated by the community before such an approach could or would be able to be implemented.

Terri VanderKooi, 1000 Arlington Court, Middleville. (A response in two parts)

Question: I, along with Mr. Hillman, would also like to say that I did go down to the township last week to read the documentation and their final results and a little mind boggling in order to do that in one day. I'm a slow reader. There is absolutely no way I could. I think whether you are for the bridge or against the bridge I think everybody has to be informed and part of it lays right there. So along with Mr. Hillman and the other gentleman I think that I would like to also request that it be perhaps a little bit easier to access.

Response: In regard to the added availability of the EA for Public Review: On Wednesday January 9, 2008, Volume 1 (narrative) of the EA was posted on the BCRC Web Page for viewing at barrycrc.org. This posting remained on the Web Page until after the public comment period on the EA closed on January 24, 2008.

Question: The other question I would like to ask is -- and I'm not sure, unfortunately I was not able to be at all of the meetings -- but has there been any type of survey or anything as far as the impact of the bridge going through on the downtown businesses? Are we aware of that? Do we know? I guess what I'm asking is probably again, I know it's not the time or place tonight but hopefully you will take into consideration that with the bridge going in also I'm just wondering what the impact as far as the access for Cider Mill and the other places would probably take the faster route and not come through the downtown area any longer.

Response: No additional impact specific study was conducted regarding the potential affect upon the businesses in the Central Business District of the Village of Middleville as a result of the construction of the proposed project. However, a primary goal of the proposed project is to provide a second crossing of the Thornapple River in the vicinity of the Village of Middleville that will remove a significant amount of heavy commercial truck traffic from passing through the Business District up and down Main Street in the Village. It is not the intent of the project to limit, restrict or divert vehicles carrying customers to the businesses in the central Business District of the Village. Some customers may choose to use the new road and bridge route to access the village but that will just be another way to get into town to visit their destination. Destination customers will continue to have full access to the businesses of the Village of Middleville.

Jennifer Kruisenga, 10698 Finkbeiner. (Multiple Questions and Responses)

Question: I have a question about the grant. My question is this something that is free and clear or do we have to pay it back?

Response: This project will be funded with Federal High Priority (HPP) Funds, Federal STP Funds, Federal and State Category D Funds, State Jobs Today Funds (providing the match to the Federal Funds) and Local Funds. The Local Funds are from the Village of Middleville (\$600,000), Thornapple Township (\$200,000), and the Barry CRC (\$150,000) as well as from the sale of Act 51 Bonds through the County of Barry (\$1,450,000).

Question: And also I guess in regards to the bridge and road, yes, we need a bridge. I don't know, I did go through and went and got signatures down the road and I never realized exactly how much impact it's going to have on the lady who came up and spoke, her property and all that. It is crazy when I went back there to see actually how much impact it's going to have. It's awful. Then I drove up and down right down from here, where Jukes (phonetic) is, that road, and I thought, why can't they put a bridge there. It seems like there is so many other opportunities where you could put a bridge. It's not going to impact me, the bridge, but obviously people moved to Middleville for a reason. We moved to Middleville because we loved the rural environment. Which gets me to the road. Do we really want a road that is going to be a throughway? And I guess also is it really going to be a throughway because it ends at Patterson.

Response: The selection of the Preferred Alternative was based upon careful evaluation of many social, economic, environmental and engineering factors. Each of the route and bridge alternatives evaluated have a varying mix of minor to moderate, positive to negative short-term and long-term impacts associated with them. Each alternative has a direct or indirect effect upon different individual properties and property owners.

Alternative B would cross the extreme southern portion of the Geukes property on the east side of the Thornapple River at the western end of Washington Street. The Washington Street Bridge (Alternative B) meets the project need to provide a second bridge over the Thornapple River in the vicinity of Middleville. In that sense, Alternative B would assist in meeting the needs of providing a redundant crossing of the river for EMS access and to offer an opportunity for diverting heavy truck traffic destined for Bradford White away from Main Street. However, because of the close proximity of Alternative B to the central business and residential center of Middleville, the location is not optimal to shift enough traffic from Main Street to be effective. Likewise, excessive truck traffic on Main Street is not all destined for Bradford White but other business entities in or near the business district within Middleville and other outlying destinations. Additionally, the selection of Alternative B would require a "T" intersection too close to the already congested Main Street – M-37 area which would exacerbate the traffic situation in the area, not make it better. This alternative also does not afford a component of a cross-Township all weather connector route between M-37 on the east and Patterson Road on the west; which would further provide a direct link to a direct route to US-131 and I-196 via 142th Ave. in Allegan County. The selection of Alternative B would involve less land disturbance, although crossing of the Thornapple River floodplain would have similar impacts to that of the Preferred Alternative; including the need to permanently acquire right of way from several private landowners.

Question: And I think, well, money wise if this is not a free and clear grant and we have to pay it back that is money out of our pocket that everyone living in Michigan knows people are hurting. My husband works at a job that he thankfully got to keep his job. He works at Bosch. A thousand-some people were let go, my husband got to keep his job but he took pay cuts for it. I'm sorry, I was not going to get up but I had to get up and say something. If we do have to pay that money back I guess I'm thinking it's kind of premature to do a bridge and a road when really the bridge might be necessary. I'm not saying it's not. I feel sorry for where it's going. But the road is absolutely unnecessary. Might be kind of fun to have a new road. I understand Main Street seems to be busy although it doesn't seem to be that busy. But that's a lot of money whether we pay it back or not. Schools, they're cutting the schools. We're always afraid every year, are they going to cut our schools? That's a shame.

You know, I guess my main question is what's the answer to do we have to pay it back and just think about can it be two separate projects. Can we have a bridge and when we have the money, I don't know Middleville's economic status but I know lots of people don't have the money to give extra taxes, certainly we are one of them and we pay enough taxes as it is.

Response: All State and Federal grant funds are just that, grant dollars provided to the BCRC for the project. These funds are from State and Federal funds that are ear marked for use on road and bridge projects only. As grant dollars, they do not need to be re-paid. As for separating the project into two component projects; a road project and a bridge project, yes that could be done. The funding approach to multiple projects would not be much different than the mixed funding approach being proposed for the proposed road and bridge project. A mixture of State and Federal grant funds and local match and/or contribution funding. However, it is important to note that much of the funding availability is time sensitive; and if not used in a specific time frame would be lost to the community for use.

Eric McWhinney, 9881 Finkbeiner Road.

Question: I don't think I really have anything new to add other than the fact I am against this project and I've been vocal at the other meetings. I think a lot of people have really expressed many of the things that I've been feeling. It just seems like a tremendous financial burden to the area. The dollars are tax dollars whether they come from grants or not. That money came from everyone who sits in this room and the rest of the people in Michigan. I think it's a shame to spend it on a project like this when there is many, many other more valuable places to spend it.

Response: Yes, grant funds are derived from various State and Federal tax sources. In the case of the funds being projected for use on the proposed project they are grant funds that do not require repayment. Also, these grant dollars are from State and Federal funds that are ear marked for use on transportation projects only. In fact, the Federal High priority Funds are ear marked for this specific transportation project. These monies cannot be used on any other type of project.

Lonn Beaver, 10069 Finkbeiner.

Question: I don't agree completely with the assessments of the safety issues concerning the rerouting of traffic off from Main Street. We were told in the previous meetings there will not be a specific speed limit set on this road if it's extended.

Response: The speed limit for the proposed road and bridge project will be determined by the responsible law enforcement agency (Michigan State Police) in cooperation with the local governmental jurisdiction. A safe and reasonable speed limit will be set consistent with road design specifications and speed limit determination criteria. The conceptual design speed for Finkbeiner Road west of M-37 is 60 mph; while the design speed east of M-37 is 50 mph.

Question: A thoroughfare besides the additional runoff of having that much more surface area being paved is going to create a bigger environmental issue not only for noise but I think that's going to be a very big issue. And a lot of people that don't appreciate the level of noises on the current road won't probably be able to comprehend the additional noises that they will receive from the thoroughfare.

Response: In accordance with federal Title 23 U.S.C., Highways - Part 772 – Procedures for Abatement of Highway Traffic Noise and Construction Noise, the Environmental Assessment for the Finkbeiner Road project (defined by Federal Highways Administration (FHWA) as a Type I project) performed a noise analysis to evaluate the current and future noise environment within the project area in relation to defining the existing environment, potential noise impacts and a determination for the need of abatement measures. This analysis was conducted following FHWA guidance and policies to review this subject. A portion of this evaluation involved the use of FHWA's Traffic Noise Modeling Software (TNM Version 2.5).

According to the results of the modeling, residents along the Preferred Alternative will not be significantly impacted by the noise from vehicular traffic during operation of the roadway and bridge. The existing A-weighted hourly equivalent sound level (Leq dB(A)) for peak traffic flow was estimated in the EA determined that the peak value increase is less than 10 dB(A) above the existing peak noise level of the evaluated receptors (houses). The 6 dB(A) peak value change is not above the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) noise abatement trigger criteria of a change of 10 decibels. (Note: The threshold of perception of the human ear is approximately 3 decibels, and a 5 decibel change is considered to be noticeable to the ear, and a 10 decibel would be perceived as twice as loud.) Because of this calculated value, it is predicted that the noise from the operation of the roadway under the proposed conditions on its nearest and furthest evaluated receptors (houses) will not cause an adverse impact as defined by FHWA and noise abatement will not be required and sound walls will not be implemented.

An increase in commercial truck traffic may also generate concerns about noise generated by the use of engine brakes (commonly referred to as Jake braking). These devices are typically found on large trucks and make use of exhaust gas pressure to slow the engine and reduce the demand on the mechanical brakes. The engine brake is generally used on steep declines to prevent the mechanical brakes from overheating. Based on the topography of the preferred alternative engine brake use will typically not

be required. The agencies involved in the project may also choose to implement signing or other measures to prevent the misuse of engine brakes along the project corridor.

Question: The biggest safety issue I think that we're going to really have impact us is the fact that with not a reasonable speed limit the quality of life is going to be shot for that area as far as a -- as far as the rural community goes. So if there was any notion of any of my neighbors walking on that road in the future they can probably forget because it's a little bit unsafe now and I will guarantee you when it gets to be like the section of roads that are in Allegan County it will be impossible to enjoy any of that. So I just want to vocalize I disagree with the environmental assessments and safety issues and I really think that this is bad idea. But I do agree we do need a bridge.

Response: Once again, the speed limit for the proposed road and bridge project will be determined by the responsible law enforcement agency (Michigan State Police) in cooperation with the local governmental jurisdiction. A safe and reasonable speed limit will be set consistent with road design specifications and speed limit determination criteria. The conceptual design speed for Finkbeiner Road west of M-37 is 60 mph; while the design speed east of M-37 is 50 mph. In addition to speed limit controls; the standard design cross section of the roadway will be in accordance with the requirements of American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) and Barry County Road Commission standards and is composed of two 12 foot wide asphalt drive lanes, 4 foot paved shoulders, 4 foot gravel shoulders with typically no concrete curb and gutter; resulting in a total width of 40 foot. This design cross section will accommodate pedestrian movements along the shoulders of the proposed roadway. In addition, the conceptual design has an 8 foot wide separated sidewalk on the proposed bridge over the Thornapple River.

Dave Steeby, 141st Avenue west of Patterson.

Question: We need a bridge. When they had the fire down there I was driving truck. I got shut down because I can't get beyond to the job unless you drive way around. That's the price of fuel. Thought about walking down the road. 142nd Avenue and 141st, walkers have increased because the road is wider and it's safer. You talk about noise, we hardly hear a truck now because we got rid of them rattly old potholes and the trucks is a lot safer to run. We get all of the gravel pit traffic. I know it's going to hurt some people. You cannot improve without stepping on some toes. But I think we need to get this bridge through. Eventually it will cross Allegan County; it's a matter of a few years. I'm not the Steeby that lived on the Steeby farm that caused the problem in the beginning. He's gone. So we do need the bridge and I think it will help the community. And as far as traffic and noise, just come out and drive 142nd and it looks a lot better than it did. We didn't like to see those big oaks go but the landscaping is a lot better.

Response: Agreed. The proposed project with its Preferred Alternative meets the purpose and needs stated in the EA. The proposed project will have minor to moderate short-term and long-term, positive and negative impacts. The project has been designed with a high degree of environmental integrity. The impacts associated with the proposed project can be mitigated to a level that results in negative affects being minimized to an acceptable level.

April Gross, 10726 Finkbeiner. (Multiple Questions and Responses)

Question: We sit very, very close to the road. If and when this road project does go through we're going to lose a lot of our front yard.

Response: Yes. A portion of the existing front yard will be included in the design cross section of the proposed road improvement. Preliminary Plans for the project are not yet complete. However, conceptual design indicates that the majority of the proposed road improvements will be within the existing County Road ROW. It is anticipated that a temporary 10 foot-wide grading permit which lies outside the existing road ROW will also be required. The proposed cross section has 12' lanes with 8' shoulders. The current paved portion of Finkbeiner Road in the section between Cherry Valley and Bender roads (the location of the Gross property) has 11' asphalt lanes with 2'-5' shoulders. The proposed road shoulder will be approximately 4 - 8 feet closer to the homes. Ditch lines would be moved proportionately closer as well.

Question: No disrespect to you truck drivers, no disrespect to the road commission, but every single summer I call the road commission because we have a driver who likes his jig brake and it is -- it literally rattles the pictures on my windows. I have a third shifter, who by the way works for Cummins and he is startled out of his sleep.

Response: An increase in commercial truck traffic may also generate concerns about noise generated by the use of engine brakes (commonly referred to as jake braking). These devices are typically found on large trucks and make use of exhaust gas pressure to slow the engine and reduce the demand on the mechanical brakes. The engine brake is generally used on steep declines to prevent the mechanical brakes from overheating. Based on the topography of the preferred alternative, engine brake use will not typically be required. The agencies involved in the project may also choose to implement signing or other measures to prevent the misuse of engine brakes along the project corridor.

Question: There needs to be -- we have several young families with young children that live just on that part of the road. There needs to be a speed limit. There has to be a speed limit just for our children's safety.

Response: The speed limit for the proposed road and bridge project will be determined by the responsible law enforcement agency (Michigan State Police) in cooperation with the local governmental jurisdiction. A safe and reasonable speed limit will be set consistent with road design specifications and speed limit determination criteria. The conceptual design speed for Finkbeiner Road west of M-37 is 60 mph; while the design speed east of M-37 is 50 mph.

Question: There has to be a light at M37 and Finkbeiner.

Response: Preliminary design for the proposed project has not been completed. However, as for a signal at the intersection of Finkbeiner Road and M-37, this is a decision that is controlled by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT). Currently, according to MDOT, this intersection does not meet warrants for a signal. At such time as the intersection meets warrants for signalization, then MDOT will make the appropriate decision on that matter. In that Preliminary Design has not been completed, the need for and the inclusion of left turn lanes on any of the legs of the Finkbeiner Road

and M-37 intersection are still under consideration. The inclusion of these left turn lanes will be decided between the BCRC and MDOT as appropriate.

Question: We're going to have a lot of high school kids darting across that road to get to school. This is a huge safety issue especially for us with young children.

Response: See the responses to the previous several questions.

Question: And the noise factor will be huge. There are two gravel pits just on that road alone. If it's a thoroughfare the truck traffic will increase tremendously. And for those of us who do live close to the road the noise will be deafening and it will be the majority of the daytime when most people are at work. Unfortunately my family does not have that luxury. We sleep -- he sleeps during the day, so he can go to work on those semi trucks at night.

Response: According to the results of the modeling, residents along the Preferred Alternative will not be significantly impacted by the noise from vehicular traffic during operation of the roadway and bridge. The existing A-weighted hourly equivalent sound level (Leq dB(A)) for peak traffic flow was estimated in the EA determined that the peak value increase is less than 10 dB(A) above the existing peak noise level of the evaluated receptors (houses). The 6 dB(A) peak value change is not above the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) noise abatement trigger criteria of a change of 10 decibels. (Note: The threshold of perception of the human ear is approximately 3 decibels, and a 5 decibel change is considered to be noticeable to the ear, and a 10 decibel would be perceived as twice as loud.) Because of this calculated value, it is predicted that the noise from the operation of the roadway under the proposed conditions on its nearest and furthest evaluated receptors (houses) will not cause an adverse impact as defined by FHWA and noise abatement will not be required and sound walls will not be implemented.

Also see the previous response regarding control of "Jake braking".

Question: So those are my feelings. Yes, we need a bridge. Is that the ideal spot? No. We all that live on the road say not in our backyard. I totally understand that. However, the impact down by that river will be huge and the safety factor is huge especially for our teenage kids and our young children. That road you cannot walk now let alone when it is wider.

Response: A safe and reasonable speed limit will be set consistent with road design specifications and speed limit determination criteria. In addition to speed limit controls; the standard design cross section of the roadway will be in accordance with the requirements of American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) and Barry County Road Commission standards and is composed of two 12 foot wide asphalt drive lanes, 4 foot paved shoulders, 4 foot gravel shoulders with typically no concrete curb and gutter; resulting in a total width of 40 foot. This design cross section will accommodate pedestrian movements along the shoulders of the proposed roadway. In addition, the conceptual design has an 8 foot wide separated sidewalk on the proposed bridge over the Thornapple River.

Joyce Domire, 1000 Arlington Court. (Multiple Questions and Responses)

Question: I live right behind the Marketplace in Middleville. I certainly agree we need a bridge. I taught school here for years and if you're ever up at that school corner in the morning I'm surprised we haven't had more accidents.

Response: One of the needs for the proposed project is to reduce the traffic volume on Main Street in Middleville in order to improve pedestrian safety. The proposed project, as planned, would achieve this goal.

Question: However, I just think that whenever you do a project you try to affect the least amount of people. If it goes by Jukes I have to tell you in my backyard I look over the river and I see Jukes' (sp. Geukes) building. It will be my home if it came through there. But I think when you do a project of this magnitude you would look at what is the least amount of people that you would effect. I think that people would agree to that quicker. I do think that you would get away with some of the heavy traffic.

Response: The selection of the Preferred Alternative was based upon careful evaluation of many social, economic, environmental and engineering factors. Each of the route and bridge alternatives evaluated have a varying mix of minor to moderate, positive to negative short-term and long-term impacts associated with them. Each alternative has a direct or indirect effect upon different individual properties and property owners.

Alternative B would cross the extreme southern portion of the Geukes property on the east side of the Thornapple River at the western end of Washington Street. The Washington Street Bridge (Alternative B) meets the project need to provide a second bridge over the Thornapple River in the vicinity of Middleville. In that sense, Alternative B would assist in meeting the needs of providing a redundant crossing of the river for EMS access and to offer an opportunity for diverting heavy truck traffic destined for Bradford White away from Main Street. However, because of the close proximity of Alternative B to the central business and residential center of Middleville, the location is not optimal to shift enough traffic from Main Street to be effective. Likewise, excessive truck traffic on Main Street is not all destined for Bradford White but other business entities in or near the business district within Middleville. Additionally, the selection of Alternative B would require a "T" intersection in the already congested Main Street – M-37 area which would exacerbate the traffic situation in the area, not make it better. This alternative also does not afford a component of a cross-Township all weather connector route between M-37 on the east and Patterson Road on the west; which would further provide a direct link to a direct route to US-131 and I-196 via 142th Ave. in Allegan County. The selection of Alternative B would involve less land disturbance, although crossing of the Thornapple River floodplain would have similar impacts to that of the Preferred Alternative; including the need to permanently acquire right of way from several private landowners.

Question: I don't like the idea that it's just a dead end now at both ends and maybe 25 years from now it might go to Allegan County.

Response: The Preferred Alternative will provide a cross-county all weather connector between Whitneyville Road on the east and Patterson Road on the west and contribute a critical component needed for an all season county road across Thornapple Township

providing all residents of Barry County with a direct route to US-131 and I-196 in Allegan County. The BCRC and The Allegan County Road Commission (ACRC) have worked diligently to cooperate to meet the objectives of a cross-county road connection between 142nd Street in Allegan County on the west and Finkbeiner Road on the east. That cooperation has been documented in an August 20, 2007 letter written by the ACRC to the BCRC that commits to make the connection a reality by obtaining the last section of ROW need to connect 142nd Street in Allegan County to Patterson Avenue and Finkbeiner Road in Barry County. The ACRC is confident that this ROW will be acquired as planned. A copy of that letter is provided in Attachment 4.

Question: The other part is we all moved to Middleville for a reason. I love driving -- I came home from Grand Rapids tonight and I have to tell you I must be getting pretty small town, I couldn't believe all of the traffic. I like to get into Middleville, you drove slow. If you don't want to do that, folks, go on 131, go on 96. People who travel through our town like to come through downtown. I'm also a business owner downtown. I'm here to tell you if the bridge goes through I can close my doors.

Response: A primary goal of the proposed project is to provide a second crossing of the Thornapple River in the vicinity of the Village of Middleville that will remove a significant amount of heavy commercial truck traffic from passing through the Business District Main Street in the Village. It is not the intent of the project to limit, restrict or divert vehicles carrying customers to the businesses in the central Business District of the Village. Some customers may choose to use the new road and bridge route to access the village but that will just be another way to get into town to visit their destination. Destination customers will continue to have full access to the businesses of the Village of Middleville.

Josh Veenstra, 345 Edgewood Drive.

Question: I live right next to Crane, Whitneyville. My specific comment, I was wondering has there been a given yes or no of a light at M37 and Whitneyville or M37 right there at Finkbeiner?

(UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: The comment last time was no.)
That's what I thought was no, it was a not sure. So I'm just wondering is there any more news on that since now that the environmental study is -- we're there?

(MS. SMITH: We'll address your questions after the comment period.)
Okay. So we'll get into that next time.

Response: Preliminary design for the proposed project has not been completed. However, as for a signal at the intersection of Finkbeiner Road and M-37, this is a decision that is controlled by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT). Currently, according to MDOT, this intersection does not meet warrants for a signal. At such time as the intersection meets warrants for signalization, then MDOT will make the appropriate decision on that matter. In that Preliminary Design has not been completed, conceptual design includes left turn lanes at the Finkbeiner Road / M-37 intersection. The inclusion of these left turn lanes will be decided between the BCRC and MDOT as appropriate.

Question: You know, we moved out here, my family. We have a two-year old daughter. I understand where we need a new bridge. I don't deny anybody that respect. But I'm just wondering, you know, it does dead end right there on Whitneyville, seems to me it's just going to be nothing more than traffic for Bradford White. I understand it goes right down there to start with but with the study done I've heard nothing, I've not been able to get my hands on that thing and I also agree that it should be a little bit easier and accessible for everybody to look at. But I'm wondering how much further are we going to go along on this until people start to understand that no one really knows what that says. I don't actually know what that thing says. I don't think many people know. Because I'm sitting here wondering what the heck we're talking about because I have not had a chance to read it. We're too far away to get a chance to read it. So my comment is I agree with everybody that we need to have some sort of copy accessible because I think this meeting would make more sense that way.

Response: On Wednesday January 9, 2008, Volume 1 (narrative) of the EA was posted on the BCRC Web Page for viewing at barrycrc.org. This posting remained on the Web Page until after the public comment period on the EA closed on January 24, 2008. Likewise as of Thursday January 10, 2008, additional hard copies were made available at the County Library and at the Thornapple-Kelloggs District School.

Anton Winguier (phonetic), 8124 Crane Road.

Question: Okay. Moved here 54 years ago. Taught at the local high school for 30 years, so I know a few people in the community. And I appreciate the community. They have been very kind to us. We lost our oldest daughter when she was 17 and -- but the other five were well treated by the community. So it is a good community.

I have read and heard of so many older bridges plummeting into the water below in the last two years that it is scary. So before something happens here I would like to see an alternate bridge. Now, I know I have also been told when this first came up that Crane Road, oh, sure, I live east of Whitneyville almost to the woods and I was told that the road would go through in front of my house which I didn't really think too much about in the way of being good. But you know, as you get older, and I am 80, you don't hear quite so well, so I doubt that the traffic on the road would bother me too much. Little kids? No. Grandchildren? Well, 14 so far but they don't live with us. And they do visit though occasionally. So we would want to take care and we do watch when they come to visit and keep them out of the road.

You know that we have a ball park and we have traffic like you would think you were in well, maybe Downtown Grand Rapids during the summer during the ball playing season. And this is fine. This is fine because the traffic is not terribly fast. Well, sometimes it is. But anyway, it's quite thick sometimes. You know, maybe 25 cars in a row. I don't have time to stand out there and count all of the time, you understand that. I have other things to do like sleep. But it's -- we do need a bridge. That really concerns me because our bridge in Middleville is old, that I know. I don't know how old but -- and when I see these television pictures of the bridges going down with cars on them I think, oh, boy, what a wonderful fast drive. Well, I think I just about used my time up, so....

Response: The implementation of the proposed project will allow for much of the heavy commercial truck traffic to be diverted away from Main Street and the bridge structure. This diversion will lessen the amount of traffic on the bridge and thus slow down the

existing deterioration of the Main Street bridge. Likewise, the implementation of the proposed project will provide a second bridge crossing of the Thornapple River and also, when appropriate, the repair the Main Street bridge; while still providing a crossing of the River for traffic to get to Bradford White and for customers to get to local businesses in the Central Business District of Middleville.

Eric Lannes, from Bradford White Corporation.

Question: I hear the comments and completely sympathize with the situation and challenges that the road commission's dealing with. I've been involved in reading through the environmental assessment as I think some of us all have. It is a challenge to and I agree. I did focus on the areas of trying to look at the alternatives because from Bradford White's perspective we are concerned about the condition of the bridge downtown. It has a life span that is concerning to all of us. Safety is a very important thing to not only pedestrians that are walking across the bridge but obviously individuals driving across the bridge. We have a challenge when we have our trucks coming back and forth across that bridge.

Bradford White worked with the village to try to put a weight limit on that bridge in an effort to try and extend the life of bridge until such time as we could get that bridge rebuilt. And the problem we have with that is the alternative route that the trucks must go on. When we bring steel in it weighs in excess of 65 tons, which means we would have to look at alternative routes. And unfortunately the alternate routes are not in the best interest of Bradford White nor the Village of Middleville because it does put challenges into the other areas of the community. We are in favor of an alternative; we are in favor of this bridge project. We do understand some of the challenges that are out there again, but when you sit down and take a look at the safety things that are associated with the ongoing community as well as the businesses that are in this area it is a challenge. And trying to develop a solution is tough for all of us. It's tough for the road commission. I think they've put a tremendous effort into trying to find an alternative. This may not be the best alternative for everybody but it is a challenge to try and find a solution. I know from Bradford White's perspective it's been a very big challenge for us to find alternative routes for the truck traffic to be able to avoid any safety issues relative to the village itself in going through downtown but also relative to the outlining areas. So from our perspective we are in favor of this project. We would like to see it continue forward and Bradford White is in full support of it.

Response: The selection of the Preferred Alternative was based upon careful evaluation of many social, economic, environmental and engineering factors. Each of the route and bridge alternatives evaluated have a varying mix of minor to moderate, positive to negative short-term and long-term impacts associated with them. Each alternative has a direct or indirect effect upon different natural resources, individual properties and property owners. The selection of the Preferred Alternative achieves the purpose and needs of the BCRC, the Village of Middleville, Thornapple Township, and the Region in general for a new all-season road and new bridge in this area, which will improve commercial truck traffic routing, cross county traffic flow and reliable emergency services access. The Preferred Alternative (composed of project specific Alternatives E and F) represents the most efficient and practical option available to the Barry County Road Commission.

Jeff Moffit (phonetic), 11600 Trail Court. (Multiple Questions and Responses)

Question: Most people don't like change in their neighborhood. Every month our two planning commissions, the village and township, hear concerns expressed about a private development or a public works project. Certainly every one of those activities has impact, positive and negative. And the job of the public agency like the road commission or either one of your planning commissions is to evaluate how those impacts weigh out for the general good or are they too serious in terms of their consequences.

Our community, the focus has been on the Bradford White Corporation. But most people fail to understand that in the last four years we have added about 230 new manufacturing jobs in our community and it isn't all Bradford White, although they are obviously our major employer. It is Metaldyne, it is Production Solutions, it is Alliance Sheet Metal and several other smaller manufacturers that most of us probably don't know about. Our commerce and our industry rely on all of those manufacturers on motor freight.

Response: Concur.

Question: And I can tell you with a great deal of certainty that the Main Street bridge built in 1929 is on the state's critical bridge list. It is going to have to be replaced. And it is, as of 2008, subject to annual structural inspections. When that happens MDOT says -- what that means is that MDOT says, this bridge is getting more critical. As Mr. (inaudible) said, it is going to have to be replaced in the not-too-distant future. That's a six- to eight-month process and it's twice as expensive. People have said, well, leave half the bridge open. Well, it's twice as expensive to build half a bridge, open it for traffic and then build the other half. Resources are limited.

Response: Concur.

Question: This project that we're talking about is largely funded by state and federal grants. To answer your question, ma'am, it is not a loan; it's a grant. And these are special purpose funds. We don't have the discretion to say, oh, we're not going to do this project, let's build a couple schools because these are highway dollars. They come from a categorical appropriation from Congress. We don't have those discretions.

Response: That is correct.

Questions:

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Are you being truthful about that, sir?

MR. MOFFIT: Yes, sir, I am.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: What is the full amount compared to what's funded already?

MR. MOFFIT: I'm not sure what the total project cost is because --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No one is.

MR. MOFFIT: -- because there is a big category in there that the land acquisition, no one is quite sure on that. So I don't speak --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Where do those monies come from?

MR. MOFFIT: I don't speak for the road commission --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Those monies are going to --

MR. MOFFIT: Please, we're not in a debate here. I'm giving you my --

MR. FIALA: At this point, please, I would like to allow the people to speak and we will address what we can hear. This is one stage. If we get approval of this impact study then there is another complete hearing about whether we proceed with the project, whether we go another whole level of public hearings, that kind of thing. So if I may, please, I would like to keep order here.

Response: A preliminary opinion of construction cost for the road and new bridge over the Thornapple River associated with the Preferred Alternative excluding ROW acquisition costs and engineering fees is estimated to be approximately \$6,520,000. The BCRC has budgeted \$200,000 for ROW acquisition. This project will be funded with Federal High Priority (HPP) Funds, Federal STP Funds, Federal and State Category D Funds, State Jobs Today Funds (providing the match to the Federal Funds) and Local Funds. The Local Funds are from the Village of Middleville (\$600,000), Thornapple Township (\$200,000), and the Barry CRC (\$150,000) as well as from the sale of Act 51 Bonds through the County of Barry (\$1,450,000).

Question: I did read the environmental assessment. I got a copy of it. I agree it should be on the website from where it was read because that's where most of us get our information these days. But in summary it was very thorough, very good analysis and well-supported conclusions. The flood plain will rise as a result of bridge construction 7/100ths of an inch (inaudible). None of us would even notice that. Two or three roosting trees for the Indiana bat which you all heard about would be removed. The entire Thornapple River Valley, most of it Grand River Valley, is habitat for the Indiana bat. And it seems to me these impacts with regard to the natural environment are also quite minimal.

Response: As for availability on a Web site - Wednesday January 9, 2008, Volume 1 (narrative) of the EA was posted on the BCRC Web Page for viewing at barrycrc.org. This posting remained on the Web Page until after the public comment period on the EA closed on January 24, 2008.

Regarding environmental impacts - the proposed project is being designed to incorporate a high degree of environmental integrity. The project is not anticipated to have any major impacts upon the environment. The project will however, generate both positive and negative and minor to moderate long-term impacts to the environment. Although the Preferred Alternative does not represent the action with the least environmental impact, those impacts that will occur can be mitigated to an acceptable level.

Theron Carter, 4105 West Crane Road. (Multiple Questions and Responses)

Question: I live on the road from Middleville to Freeport. To me that's still a very busy road compared to the roller coaster road which is Parmalee Road. There is some safety issues on both of those roads but my concern with the old bridge because I've had the opportunity to go across the bridge at Middleville and Main Street and whereby a double bottom gravel train, I believe that is what they're called, when you go across it you can feel it. It's a little strange feeling. It's about like the one that was out in Minneapolis, St. Paul. I have been over that one many times before it fell in and I know the feeling of sitting on that with a semi tractor. I also know the feeling of other bridges and I feel that

if we have got a 65-ton weight limit on it right now and if it comes up to less than that this year that means that that project in Middleville is going to be a priority it looks like before a new bridge is put in.

Response: Yes, there is currently a 65 ton weight limitation posted on the Main Street bridge.

Question: You're looking at some penny wise and some pound foolishness of trying to create emergency personnel on both sides of the river. It's very expensive to man and it also takes a lot of coordination of dedicated people.

Response: Concur. The provision of additional emergency service vehicles and the associated need for additional trained personnel to provide EMS services stationed on both sides of the river is expensive, requires extra coordination and is a challenge to maintain in the long run as an alternative to a permanent second crossing of the Thornapple River close to the Village of Middleville. Although it can be accomplished, it would provide a whole different set of challenges that would have to be evaluated by the community before such an approach could or would be able to be implemented.

Question: But I feel that the bridge down on 108th Street that was an issue years ago. The Whitneyville Bridge, I remember what happened there and I remember when the truck went into the river. So I think it's something that really needs to be considered. Get the priorities in order.

Response: The implementation of the proposed project will allow for much of the heavy commercial truck traffic to be diverted away from Main Street and the bridge structure. This diversion will lessen the amount of traffic on the bridge and thus slow down the existing deterioration of the Main Street bridge. Likewise, the implementation of the proposed project will provide a second bridge crossing of the Thornapple River and also, when appropriate, the repair the Main Street bridge; while still providing a crossing of the River for traffic to get to Bradford White and for customers to get to local businesses in the Central Business District of Middleville.

Question: Most of the employees I'm going to say that work at Bradford White I believe live within the area and if we lose Bradford White -- I used to work there myself, that's I believe the next to the largest employer that there is here in Middleville other than my understanding the Thornapple-Kelloggs School system.

Response: Bradford White is the County's single largest employer. The Thornapple-Kelloggs School system is also a major employer in Barry County.

WRITTEN RESPONSES, COMMENTS OR REMARKS TO BCRC

Citizen Submittals

John and Cindy Herweyer, 9050 W. Crane Road - Received January 4, 2008.

Question: The noise level talked about is misleading. It is compared to noise of chain saws, agricultural equipment and other high decibel equipment. Chainsaws, etc. do not run all day, seven days a week. So how can noise they make be compared to constant traffic noise?

Response: Chainsaw and agricultural equipment noise references were presented to provide a basis of comparison for high level impact noise generation sources as compared to lower level noise generated by traffic. These sources were not intended to be directly comparable but used to provide examples of different types of noise in the environment, their levels of noise generation and possible impacts to receptors. Chainsaws, chippers and other high impact high noise generating equipment will be used during construction and will contribute to the short term noise palate during the construction phase of the project. The FHWA Traffic Noise Model (TNM Version 2.5) information is used to compare pre project noise to post construction noise along the new road. The projected noise information from the model suggests that the FHWA Noise threshold for mitigation will not be met and the projected noise level does not trigger a harmful impact (i.e. no sound reduction items such as a sound wall are required) at any of the receptors along the preferred alternative.

Question: It is often stated that the one of the main purposes of the new bridge is for EMS services and Bradford White. Washington Street is the best location for them, with less acreage taken from public property and less of an impact on the natural surroundings of the Thornapple River.

Response: The Washington Street Bridge (Alternative B) meets the project need to provide a second bridge over the Thornapple River in the vicinity of Middleville. In that sense, Alternative B would assist in meeting the needs of providing a redundant crossing of the river for EMS access and to offer an opportunity for diverting heavy truck traffic destined for Bradford White away from Main Street. However, because of the close proximity of Alternative B to the central business and residential center of Middleville, the location is not optimal to shift enough traffic from Main Street to be effective. Likewise, excessive truck traffic on Main Street is not all destined for Bradford White but other business entities in or near the business district within Middleville. Additionally, the selection of Alternative B would require a "T" intersection in the already congested Main Street – M-37 area which would exacerbate the traffic situation in the area, not make it better. This alternative also does not afford a component of a cross-Township all weather connector route between M-37 on the east and Patterson Road on the west; which would further provide a direct link to a direct route to US-131 and I-196 via 142th Ave. in Allegan County. The selection of Alternative B would involve less land disturbance, although crossing of the Thornapple River floodplain would have similar impacts to that of the Preferred Alternative; including the need to permanently acquire right of way from several private landowners.

Question: If there is considerable concern over the present bridge in Middleville being in need of repair, wouldn't it be better for Village, Township and County monies to be spent on the repair before the extreme cost of a new bridge?

Response: The conclusion of the stakeholders in the Village, Township and County is that both actions will be necessary. The current Main Street bridge is deteriorating and in need of repair. Part of the need for repair is the high volume of heavy truck traffic that uses the bridge on a daily basis as documented in the EA. The construction of the proposed second bridge will lessen the immediate need for the repair activities by delaying the actual repair cost outlay as a result of removing one of the causes of the continuing deterioration – excessive truck traffic. The proposed project is predicated on the use of federal and state grants funds for road and bridge construction. A local match is also necessary. Repair of the existing Main Street bridge would be a project that would be funded by additional grant funds specifically for this purpose. The Main Street bridge is currently on the Critical Bridge list and the Village of Middleville has been and will continue to pursue funding through the Critical Bridge Program.

Question: What about the need for a left turn lane at Whitneyville and Crane Rd. I don't believe I read anything about that being put in the cost of widening Whitneyville for that purpose. Also the reoccurring statement that no traffic signal will be installed at the proposed intersection of Finkbeiner and M-37 or widening or left turn lanes for North/South bound traffic or East/West traffic.

Response: Preliminary design for the proposed project has not been completed. However, the current conceptual design includes left turn lanes on both Whitneyville and west Crane Roads at this intersection. As for a signal at the intersection of Finkbeiner Road and M-37, this is a decision that is controlled by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT). Currently, according to MDOT, this intersection does not meet warrants for a signal. At such time as the intersection meets warrants for signalization, then MDOT will make the appropriate decision on that matter. In that Preliminary Design has not been completed, conceptual design includes left turn lanes at the Finkbeiner Road and M-37 intersection. The inclusion of these left turn lanes will be decided between the BCRC and MDOT as appropriate.

Question: We are also concerned with the removal of the high banks on our property that has prevented flooding in the past and would cause increased erosion to our property if this topography would be altered as well as extensive flooding which would destroy our woodlot. As the material to be read was overwhelming I did not see anything pertaining to the proposed plans for our property and the actual excavation of the land for the proposed bridge.

Response: Preliminary Plans for the project have not been completed. However, the conceptual design does not anticipate significant bank cutting on the Herweyer property. Most of the conceptual design thoughts for the bridge approaches in this location and the bridge abutments envision more of a fill requirement than any significant cutting or removal. As for the potential for additional flooding of the Herweyer property as a result of the proposed road and bridge construction project, the use of the Hydraulic Engineering Center – River Analysis System (HEC-RAS) model suggests that the proposed project has the potential to rise the 100 year flood elevation on the Herweyer property by 0.17 foot (2.04 inches) or from a 100 year flood surface water elevation of 711.54 feet to 711.71 feet. This increase will occur on the Herweyer property upstream

of the new road alignment, south of the proposed bridge. Furthermore, the river bank is steep along the Herweyer property and increases will not significantly widen the flooding footprint. This additional flooding caused by the construction of the proposed road and bridge, which is modeled to occur on the Herweyer property, is not seen as being of such a magnitude in and of itself to significantly impact the afore mentioned woodlot.

Question: The Herweyer letter of January 4, 2008 also had attached three copies of the same Petition of Objection to the BCRC but each had different signature entries.

Response: This petition was directed to the BCRC as a general objection to the project and requested that the BCRC reconsider the need for the second bridge, and if such a bridge is necessary that it be located at the Washington Street location. In that this petition does not directly comment upon the EA being reviewed, no additional response to this petition will be made here. The petition has been received by the BCRC and will be used in their future consideration of the project.

Frances B. Maichele, 500 Lincoln Street, Middleville.

Question: I've been in favor of the new bridge and road from the beginning. It is needed – and everyone would benefit from it. As for a light at M-37 and Finkbeiner Rd. that would be a blessing and no doubt it is in the plans. There have been several accidents at that corner. Heres hoping this project plan gets the go ahead.

Response: Preliminary design for the proposed project has not been completed. However, as for a signal at the intersection of Finkbeiner Road and M-37, this is a decision that is controlled by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT). Currently, according to MDOT, this intersection does not meet warrants for a signal. At such time as the intersection meets warrants for signalization, then MDOT will make the appropriate decision on that matter.

Frederick Rock, 10118 Finkbeiner Road - Received January 23, 2008.

Question: The premise of NEED for this project is FALSE. The assessment that this project will accommodate the projected population growth in Middleville area, while providing for the continuation of our rural life style is contradictory double talk. The continued assertion that the project as proposed is in the best interest of the community represents a bureaucratic imposition on the people of this village.

Response: The construction of the Preferred Alternative compliments the Village/Township Master Plan objectives for a second river crossing for the Village and reduction of traffic through the downtown corridor, as well as creation of a westward connecting all season route between Whitneyville Road to M-37 and then on westward to Patterson Road, with eventual direct access to US-131 and I-196.

Due to the anticipated urban growth of the southeast portion of Grand Rapids, Thornapple Township has focused on developing a Master Plan in collaboration with the Village of Middleville to manage growth. The joint plan will place emphasis on protecting the rural character and natural environment, while also fostering residential and commercial growth centered on the Village of Middleville. All such changes within the Village and the Township, will be controlled through current Thornapple Township and or Village of Middleville zoning ordinances and their in-place master plans.

Question: The proposed changes to Finkbeiner Road will, however – enable and encourage sprawl development.

Response: The change in land use through the new ROW acquisition area and the road improvement through existing ROW could generate indirect or secondary land use impacts. These changes could include encouragement to expand residential and commercial development along the preferred alignment. The demand for development may also encourage a higher density use than is current and result in the loss of farmland to developers. These changes within the Preferred Alternative may be seen as either positive or negative, but are considered minor long term in nature, as they will be controlled through current Thornapple Township and/or Village of Middleville zoning ordinances and the in-place master plans.

Question: The proposed changes to Finkbeiner Road will, however – increase traffic volume and speeds on this main artery to the schools.

Response: Yes, the Preferred Alternative will increase the traffic volume on Finkbeiner Road. It is projected to increase from 1,400 vehicles per day to approximately 6,500 to 7,500 vehicles per day upon completion of construction. A safe and reasonable speed limit will be set consistent with road design specifications and speed limit determination criteria. The traffic volumes and projected speed limits for the Preferred Alternative are comparable to other similar county roads within the area that are used as main arteries to schools.

The conceptual design does anticipate vast improvements to the Finkbeiner Road/Bender Road intersection which will enhance traffic safety for vehicles going to the schools.

Question: The proposed changes to Finkbeiner Road will, however – decrease driving safety for parents, young drivers and pedestrians.

Response: The speed limit for the proposed road and bridge project will be determined by the responsible law enforcement agency (Michigan State Police) in cooperation with the local governmental jurisdiction. A safe and reasonable speed limit will be set consistent with road design specifications and speed limit determination criteria. In addition to speed limit controls; the standard design cross section of the roadway will be in accordance with the requirements of American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) and Barry County Road Commission standards and is composed of two 12 foot wide asphalt drive lanes, 4 foot paved shoulders, 4 foot gravel shoulders with typically no concrete curb and gutter; resulting in a total width of 40 foot. This design cross section will accommodate pedestrian movements along the shoulders of the proposed roadway. In addition, the conceptual design has an 8 foot wide separated sidewalk on the proposed bridge over the Thornapple River.

Question: The proposed changes to Finkbeiner Road will, however – accelerate the influx of urban lifestyle and impose it on the rural citizenry and eco system.

Response: The selection of the Preferred Alternative was based upon careful evaluation of many social, economic, environmental and engineering factors. Each of the route and bridge alternatives evaluated have a varying mix of minor to moderate,

positive to negative short-term and long-term impacts associated with them. Each alternative has a direct or indirect effect upon different individual properties and property owners. However, in regards to a land use change from rural to urban and possibly a lifestyle change as a result of the construction of the Preferred Alternative, there maybe pressure to expand residential and commercial development along the preferred alignment. The demand for development may also encourage a higher density use than is current and result in the loss of farmland to developers. Land use change many times fosters a change in the lifestyle of the residents living there. Land use changes and to a degree lifestyle changes within the Preferred Alternative may be seen as either positive or negative, but are considered minor long term in nature, as they will be controlled through current Thornapple Township and or Village of Middleville zoning ordinances and the in-place master plans for both entities.

Question: The proposed changes to Finkbeiner Road will, however – waste tax dollars on an unnecessary “East West Corridor” when M-6, just ten minutes north, already serves that purpose.

Response: The Preferred Alternative will provide an all-weather connector between Whitneyville Road on the east and Patterson Road on the west; and contribute a critical component needed for an all-season county road across Thornapple Township providing residents of Barry County with a direct route to US-131 and I-196 in Allegan County. The BCRC and The Allegan County Road Commission (ACRC) have worked diligently to cooperate to meet the objectives of a cross-county road connector between 142nd Street in Allegan County on the west and Finkbeiner Road on the east. Although M-6, which is approximately 10 miles north of Finkbeiner Road, provides a by-pass function of the 28th Street corridor bottleneck area in Cascade, Kentwood, Grand Rapids, Wyoming and Grandville; the proposed cross county connector in Barry and Allegan Counties has a different objective and focuses upon the needs of local commerce and members of the traveling public to move efficiently and effectively within the project area and not require unnecessary travel out of the county to reach and utilize M-6 as an east and west connector between I-96 and I-196.

Question: While Bradford White and the Thornapple EMS might benefit from a second (new) bridge, locating it way north on Finkbeiner will cause Old Downtown Middleville to suffer. The Main Street Bridge will likely not be subsequently upgraded in the VERY BEST interests of Middleville. The Old Downtown will be greatly marginalized as traffic, businesses and investments grow north toward Finkbeiner Road.

Response: The implementation of the proposed project will allow for much of the heavy commercial truck traffic to be diverted away from Main Street and the bridge structure by the proposal of a “No Through Trucks” route down Main Street as well as the connectivity provided by the alignment with Finkbeiner Road. This diversion will lessen the amount of traffic on the bridge and thus slow down the existing deterioration of the Main Street bridge. Likewise, the implementation of the proposed project will provide a second bridge crossing of the Thornapple River and when appropriate, allow the repair the Main Street bridge, while still providing a crossing of the river for traffic to get to Bradford White and for customers to get to local businesses in the Central Business District of Middleville.

The current Main Street bridge is deteriorating and in need of repair. Part of the need for repair is the high volume of heavy truck traffic that uses the bridge on a daily basis as

documented in the EA. The construction of the proposed second bridge will lessen the immediate need for the repair activities by delaying the actual repair cost outlay as a result of removing one of the causes of the continuing deterioration – excessive truck traffic. The proposed project is predicated on the use of federal and state grants funds for road and bridge construction. A local match is also necessary. Repair of the existing Main Street bridge would likely be funded by additional grant funds specifically for this purpose. Whatever proposal and funding package put together to repair the Main Street bridge, the stakeholders would put forth a proposal that would repair the Main Street bridge to assure compliance with current bridge design standards to meet necessary load requirements.

A primary goal of the proposed project is to provide a second crossing of the Thornapple River in the vicinity of the Village of Middleville that will remove a significant amount of heavy commercial truck traffic from passing through the Business District on Main Street in the Village. It is not the intent of the project to limit, restrict or divert vehicles carrying customers to the businesses in the Central Business District of the Village. Some customers may choose to use the new road and bridge route to access the village, but that will just be another way to get into town to visit their destination. Destination customers will continue to have full access to the businesses of the Village of Middleville.

Question: If the second bridge has significant merit it should stand on its own as a project. Washington Street is more centrally located for a bridge, closer to Whites and EMS and could be a complement to the Old Downtown.

Response: The Washington Street Bridge (Alternative B) meets the project need to provide a second bridge over the Thornapple River in the vicinity of Middleville. In that sense, Alternative B would assist in meeting the needs of providing a redundant crossing of the river for EMS access and to offer an opportunity for diverting heavy truck traffic destined for Bradford White away from Main Street. However, because of the close proximity to the current crossing and non connectivity of Alternative B., the location is not optimal in effectively shifting enough through and commercial traffic from Main Street to provide a safer and more pleasant atmosphere for residents and guests visiting downtown Middleville (it is the intent of the proposed project to provide an efficient alternative route for traffic (particularly commercial) that does not have the intent to patronize the business district). The Village of Middleville currently has a new streetscape project underway. This project incorporates some traffic calming measures (i.e. decreasing of capacity and/or speed). The intent of this project is to make the downtown area more attractive and a destination of its own. The peaceful, quaint, pedestrian friendly atmosphere will benefit from a new crossing, particularly one provides some east-west connectivity. It is recognized that some “passerby” stops could be lost, however most of businesses on Main Street are not the type of businesses for the “quick stop as you go by” usage. It is further believed that eliminating the unwanted traffic will provide the benefits stated above and mitigate some or all (perhaps even supply new customers) of the loss of passerby customers. Likewise, excessive truck traffic on Main Street is not all destined for Bradford White but other business entities in or near the business district within Middleville. Additionally, the selection of Alternative B would require a “T” intersection in the already congested Main Street – M-37 area which would exacerbate the traffic situation in the area, not make it better. This alternative also does not afford a component of a cross-Township all-weather connector route between M-37 on the east and Patterson Road on the west; which would further provide a direct

link to a direct route to US-131 and I-196 via 142th Ave. in Allegan County. The selection of Alternative B would involve less land disturbance, although crossing of the Thornapple River floodplain would have similar impacts to that of the Preferred Alternative, including the need to permanently acquire right of way from several private landowners.

Question: The project proposed will have enduring negative impacts on the Middleville area with no honest positives. It should be scrapped. As presented, this Environmental Assessment reads more like a justification to quickly misspend tax dollars than an objective evaluation of the proposed projects consequences.

Response: The EA presents the purpose and need for the project, the process of alternatives review and the selection criteria for the Preferred Alternative, and provides an in-depth evaluation of the potential impacts of the Preferred Alternative. As the result of a comprehensive analysis of potential roadway alignments and optional crossings of the Thornapple River, the Preferred Alternative (composed of project specific Alternatives E and F) represents the most efficient and practical option available to the Barry County Road Commission. The proposed project will have minor to moderate short-term and long-term, positive and negative impacts. The project is being designed with a high degree of environmental integrity. The impacts associated with the proposed project can be mitigated to a level that results in negative affects being minimized to an acceptable level.

Agency Submittals

Michigan Department of Environmental Quality – Received December 27, 2007.

Question:

There needs to be a better description of the traffic issues within the Village of Middleville. The EA indicates that the Average Daily Traffic Volume (ADT) is 8000 vehicles per day (VPD) in the Village of Middleville east of M-37 with 25% being commercial traffic. The estimated ADT in this same area is expected to be 10,000 in 2025 (an increase of 2,000 VPD). The EA then indicates that it is assumed that 2,500 to 5,000 VPD will be diverted from the existing Main Street crossing with a second crossing.

- a) How was this figure of 2,500 to 5,000 determined?
- b) What is the primary route of commercial traffic through Middleville? Does it head south and north or does it head west. How much of the commercial traffic would actually be diverted by a new east west bridge?
- c) Page 83 of the EA states that eastbound traffic along the proposed Finkbeiner/Crane Road connection will be directed primarily north and south along Whitneyville Road. How will this additional southbound traffic impact the Village of Middleville? What will be the destination of this traffic on Whitneyville Road?
- d) If a second crossing was built, would the Village force all commercial traffic to use the new crossing? If the Village does not prohibit truck traffic, it would appear that any trucks heading south would continue to use the Main Street Bridge.
- e) What are the pedestrian safety concerns associated with the Thornapple-Kellogg area schools and the central business district? Have there been safety related accidents? The EA does not show where these schools are located in relation to the alternatives? Were there any other pedestrian/traffic alternatives considered to address these issues?
- f) The EA does not state the amount of reduction in the peak hour traffic on Main Street resulting from each alternative considered. This is one of stated goals of the projected.

Response: The response to this question will be by the letter in the question.

- a) 2,500 to 5,000 Vehicles Per Day (VPD) was an estimate provided by experienced professionals in the Village of Middleville Planning Department and the office of the Managing Supervisor of the Barry County Road Commission based upon actual traffic counts and repeated visual observations of the traffic patterns and vehicle type composition for the Main Street and M-37 travel corridors.
- b) The primary commercial travel route into and out of the Business District in Middleville is East – West via Main Street, including travel northbound from Main

Street up Grand Rapids Street (Whitneyville Road) to Bradford White north of Washington Street. The majority of the commercial traffic enters and leaves Main Street from M-37. A small amount of commercial traffic enters the Middleville Business District from Whitneyville Road south to Main Street, West State Road north to Main Street, and M-37 south to Main Street.

- c) East bound traffic will proceed to the intersection of Finkbeiner Road and Whitneyville Road. At this intersection, a small component will travel north on Whitneyville Road, while a larger component will travel south on Whitneyville Road (Grand Rapids Street). The majority of the traffic moving north is estimated to be primarily privately owned vehicles (POV), while the southern component will be weighted toward commercial traffic. The northern bound traffic will be destined for points north such as; Caledonia Township, Cascade Township, Ada Township and possible access to I-96 at Alden Nash Road (M-50). Much of the commercial southern component will be destined for Bradford White at Washington Street. Other commercial vehicles will proceed down Whitneyville (Grand Rapids Street) to Main Street and on to the Middleville Business District providing primarily delivery services to many restaurants, and small businesses located on and just off of Main Street. The impact upon Middleville will be positive in that the composition and the traffic volume into and out of Middleville over the Main Street Dam and through the Business District will be as anticipated; a lower level of traffic volume and a resultant positive impact on congestion, traffic and pedestrian safety. Commercial traffic typically does not have the intent to patronize local businesses. Should an otherwise through commercial vehicle have the need to patronize a Main Street business, they will not be prevented in doing so. This would continue to be true even if the proposed “No through truck route” on Main Street is initiated.
- d) If the new bridge is constructed the Village / BCRC would establish a defined and posted truck route that would follow the new Finkbeiner Rd. and Crane Rd. connection route at Whitneyville Road. The type of truck restriction being proposed among the stakeholders is to post Main Street as a “No Thru Trucks” route continuing to allow full access to the commercial traffic with downtown Middleville as their destination. See answer above to 8th question proposed by Mr. Fred Rock for additional information regarding customer retainage. .
- e) Thornapple – Kellogg schools are located on the north and south side of W. Main Street (Green Lake Road) 2,500 feet west of the intersection of Main Street and M-37. The concern is pedestrian movements along an extremely congested Main Street (East and West) and M-37. Fortunately there have been no reported fatalities or serious injuries to pedestrians in this high traffic area, but a number of close calls as verbally reported by school crossing guards, parents and school bus drivers. The area surrounding the schools is dense residential and numerous students and pedestrians consistently walk along Main Street both east and west of M37. The reduction of commercial vehicles by providing an convenient alternative route with east-west connectivity from Whitneyville/Grand Rapids Street west to Cherry Valley, Patterson and even further west to US131 and US 196 will benefit school children and all pedestrians both east and west of M37.

As for other pedestrian / traffic alternatives considered, the current crossing safety procedures and devices are in place and/or being implemented consistent with Village, school and public safety organizations policies and procedures. The issue is the traffic volume due to large number of vehicles that use Main Street west of M-37 as a cut across to Patterson Road and on to Allegan County. Many commercial vehicles use this route when weight restrictions are off (47 weeks of the year) to access the many businesses located on and around Patterson Road (such as Aggregate Industries Pit operation and numerous dairy farms) and into Allegan County. The alternative being considered is part of the preferred Alternative that would reduce the commercial vehicle movements into and out of Middleville along Main Street from the M-37 and Main Street intersection and traffic traveling west through the Thornapple Kellogg school zone.

- f) The selection of the Preferred Alternative is anticipated to reduce the Peak Hour Traffic on from 750 to 800 vehicles presently on Main Street to 400 to 480 vehicles depending upon the amount of diverted commercial and privately owned vehicular (POV) traffic. It is anticipated that the same reduction would be true for Alternatives C and D. Alternatives A and B would result in a lower reduction because Alternative A is too far away from Middleville; while Alternative B is too close to Main Street with no through east west connectivity to achieve a more significant reduction. See answer above to 8th question proposed by Mr. Fred Rock for additional information regarding customer retainage.

Question:

Page 15, paragraph 2: Two sentences in the middle of the paragraph are repeated.

Response: That is correct. One of the duplicated sentences should be removed.

Question:

Page 16, Section 2.1 Purpose

The first bullet point states that the “currently existing upstream bridge is Parmalee Road”. This is actually the closest downstream bridge. Similarly the next sentence should read “... the closest upstream bridge is on Loop Road”. The fourth bullet has two misspellings; Patterson and Whitneyville.

Response: This is correct. The cardinal directions were improperly cited. The text should be revised to indicate that Parmalee Road is downstream and that the Loop Road is upstream. The misspelled words cited should be correctly changed to show “Patterson Road” and “Whitneyville Road”.

Question:

Page 17, the first bullet point "Develop a means to improve emergency access with redundant/second route crossing the Thornapple River" indicates that a second bridge crossing is needed to allow the reconstruction of the existing bridge on Main Street.

This is not a valid reason for constructing a second bridge. If needed, a temporary bridge could be constructed while the Main Street Bridge was being re-built. This has been done in other communities.

Response: The first bullet on page 17 consists of two parts. The first is to develop a means to improve access with redundant / second route crossing the Thornapple River which the Preferred Alternative does. The second point in the first bullet on page 17 is that with a second bridge in place it would allow the reconstruction of the Main Street Bridge while allowing emergency services coverage. The bullet was not intended to imply that the second bridge was justified by the need to reconstruct the Main Street Bridge. It is agreed that a temporary bridge could be built while the Main Street bridge was being re-built; but a temporary bridge does not provide the permanent redundant second crossing being sought by the Preferred Alternative. That is why a temporary bridge alternative was not discussed.

Question:

Page 18, Section 3.1: All of the alternatives indicate that a three span bridge over the Thornapple River will be built while the descriptions in Section 3.1.1-3.1.5 indicate that a proposed crossing would be a two span structure.

Response: The reference to a three span bridge in Section 3.1 as it relates to Alternatives A, B, C, D and E is a global error. After several bridge alternative evaluations it was determined that a two not a three span bridge would be the structure to be evaluated for all alternatives. The reference to a three span bridge in Section 3.1 should be revised to say a two span bridge for each of the bridge alternatives being considered.

Question:

Page 25, Section 3.1.6: States the estimated ADT is projected to be 6,500 to 7,500 VPD. On page 6 it stated that the ADT was 14,000 VPD.

Response: Page 6 Section 1.2.1 General Information, third paragraph cites 1,400 vehicles per day (VPD), not 14,000. The volume of 1,400 VPD is an estimate of the existing traffic on the existing Finkbeiner Road. The 6,500 to 7,500 VPD referenced on page 25 Section 3.1.5 is based upon an estimated daily traffic volume that will use Finkbeiner Road in 2008 upon project completion. This 6,500 to 7,500 VPD is composed of the existing 1,400 VPD plus the 2,500 to 5,000 VPD diverted from Main Street and an additional component of approximately 2,600 VPD from other road contributions. This additional component would be particularly true when 142nd Avenue in Allegan County is connected to Patterson Avenue.

Question:

Page 27, Section 3.2.1: The first bullet at the bottom of the page states that Alternative A "...is too far away" and Alternative B "...is too close.. "and only minimal amounts of traffic would be diverted. This seems to contradict with Sections 3.1.1 – 3.1.5 which state that all the bridge alternatives are expected to handle 6,500 to 7,500 VPD (15% commercial) and the estimated peak hourly traffic flow is 600 vehicles (20% commercial).

Response: The Page 27 assertion is correct as is the use of the cars per day numbers cited. During the evaluation process for the various bridge alternatives, the vehicles per day numbers were held the same for all of the alternatives in order to compare them to each other. Not wanting to screen out Alternatives A and B from the review from the beginning all alternatives were initially viewed as having sufficient volume in vehicles per day (5,500 to 7,500 VPD) to justify an alternative at that location. That allowed for "what if" evaluations and multiple alternative bridge locations to be presented in the many scoping sessions held with the public and the stakeholders group during the selection of the Preferred Alternative.

Question:

Page 31 Table 1: Indicates that Alternatives C and D do not meet all of the project objectives. It is not clear why they do not. One reason may be that they result in a T-intersection with M-37 and then a quick left turn on Finkbeiner. This would still appear to meet the purpose of providing a cross country all season road between Patterson and Whitneyville particularly since there will be stop signs along Finkbeiner Road. Also alternative G is shown as "possibly" meeting all of the project objectives. Based on previous statements in the EA that Alternative A is too far away, it would appear that Alternative G also would be too far away and not meet the project objectives.

Response: The "T" intersection into M-37 is indeed a major drawback to bridge Alternatives C and D. These two options provide unfavorable geometrics and would create significant turning movement issues and decreased safety as a result of their "T" configuration. In addition, when looked at, bridge Alternatives C, D and E are all variations on a theme and with all things considered, Alternative E was considered to be a superior alignment selection to the other two alternatives with superior safety, geometry and connectivity to an existing through roadway. Further, Alternative D had a land use conflict with the Squire's Horse Farm building complex and if selected, would probably resulted in the need to remove structures from the ROW. For these reasons it was determined that Alternatives C and D were not as good of an option to Alternative E, the Preferred Alternative for the bridge section. Road route Alternative G was considered possibility for the road section because it was the only reasonably located, west to east, existing roadway that could be evaluated as a comparative option to Alternative F. In this instance, Alternative G was not too far away for an "alternatives evaluation" of the roadway sections because it was the only reasonable road route alternative available. The only way to provide an alternative to the roadway section was to use this section. The only other east west possibility within 1 mile is Main Street and that crossing already exists. As an overall combination of the two sections (bridge and roadway), alternative G is indeed too far away to meet the objectives. Additionally, Alternative G would require incomparable amounts of extra Right of Way and funding both for Right of Way acquisition but especially for project cost.

Question:

Page 38, Section 5.1.3: States that the Thornapple River is a major north south flowing river. This should be south to north. Similarly Duncan Creek flows west to east.

Response: The comment is correct. The text has a cardinal direction error and the correct direction of flow was always known to the preparers of the EA, but was incorrectly stated. The text should be revised to state that the Thornapple River is a major south to north flowing river. Likewise, the text should be revised to state that Duncan Creek flows west to east.

Question:

Page 47, Threatened and Endangered Species: The Indiana Bat consultation with the USFWS has not been completed and it is our understanding that the FONSI cannot be signed until that is done.

Response: That is correct. The forested habitat in and near Wetlands I and J within the Finkbeiner Road Extension Segment are potentially suitable due to the presence of roosting trees and a riparian travel and foraging corridor located along the Thornapple River. Based upon the initial habitat evaluation in January 2007, it appears that Wetland Area I and adjacent upland forested cover within the clearing limits of the ROW west of the Thornapple River contains approximately 2 to 3 potential trees that exhibit roost tree characteristics. The availability of these trees for use by the Indiana bat would be beneficial to this endangered species.

Tree clearing and construction of a new roadway through Wetland Area I and the adjoining forested floodplain along the Thornapple River, in particular the removal of the 2 or 3 potential roost trees, may affect the Indiana bat, if it is present. This finding, according to the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USF&WS), requires that FHWA initiate informal consultation on the potential adverse impact to a listed endangered species. Informal consultation between FHWA and USF&WS took place on October 3, 2007.

Based upon that informal consultation and current field indicators and time of year, the BCRC has made the decision to assume that the Indiana bat is present within and adjacent to the project ROW location that crosses Thornapple River and floodplain in the Finkbeiner Road Extension Segment. This decision allows the BCRC to move forward on its evaluation of this topic without necessitating the undertaking of an additional study to determine the actual presence or absence of the Indiana bat at this location. With this decision, FHWA through informal consultation from the USF&WS requested that the BCRC undertake an additional habitat evaluation study within and adjacent to the clearing limits within the ROW that crosses Thornapple River and floodplain, to determine the magnitude of the potential affect on the Indiana bat.

This additional study, conducted on November 8, 2007, gathered more detail on the roost trees proposed for removal within the clearing limits within Wetland Area I. The new study identified 6 roost trees within the Thornapple River floodplain that would need to be removed by the proposed project. The study also evaluated the availability and quality of Indiana bat habitat in the proposed project area, in particular, the location of specific roost trees present within the adjacent floodplain forest both upstream and downstream of the proposed project ROW. Analysis of aerial photography and a general

knowledge of the Thornapple River floodplain in this area suggest that suitable foraging and travel habitat, and in particular quality roost trees are present up to 3 miles north of the project area. The location of specific trees upstream was identified as being present and available for use by the Indiana bat in relationship to the roost trees being proposed for removal.

On December 21, 2007, the Michigan Department of Transportation submitted a letter to the Federal Highway Administration submitting the Applicant prepared Supplemental Indiana Bat Habitat Evaluation for the Finkbeiner Road and Crane Road Improvements Project (Dated November 14, 2007 – Revised December 11, 2007). MDOT in the transmittal letter requested that based upon the documentation provided in the supplemental report, that a finding be made that minimal or no impact to suitable Indiana bat habitat would result from the project. A copy of this letter is provided in Attachment 4. As part of the continuing evaluation process on the Indiana bat, FHWA forwarded this supplemental study to the USF&WS for their review and conclusion on the potential impact to the Indiana bat and/or its habitat as a result of the proposed project. A final conclusion on the issue is being awaited from USF&WS.

Question:

Page 69, Floodplains: The EA indicates that the proposed structure at the Finkbeiner Road crossing will cause an increase in upstream flood stages. The EA also indicates that there is a structure located within the existing 100-year floodplain that would likely be affected by these increases. The EA does not indicate what type of structure this is. If it is a residential, commercial, or industrial structure, the MDEQ is not likely to permit an increase that would cause additional flooding to that structure. In that case, a larger bridge opening may be needed to reduce the increase. If it is a non-occupied structure then it may be possible to allow an increase with consultation with the property owner. Any property owner impacted by a stage increase must be notified and given the opportunity to comment.

Response: The structure in question is owned by James Robertson whose property address is 114 River Road, Middleville, MI. The structure in question is a commercial (bait shop) building located on parcel #08-41-120-001-00 which is on the east side of the Thornapple River near the Middleville Dam. The HEC-RAS modeling suggests that the existing stone foundation for the building is within the 100-year floodplain. The pre-road/bridge flood elevation on this stone foundation is modeled to be 716.45 feet. The modeled increase in flood water is 0.03 feet. The flood elevation with the proposed road / bridge in place at the stone foundation is modeled to be 716.48 feet. A site visit and survey information gathered at the structure confirms that the existing structure does lie within the 100-year floodplain. The projected increase will raise the water level on the stone foundation, but it is not estimated to reach the elevation of the structure's first floor. The landowner has been provided a Damage Assessment letter as part of the Joint Permit Application process. The Damage Assessment letter requests the landowner to provide their assessment of the potential impact to the property and structures as a result of the estimated increase in the base flood condition.

Question:

Page 71, Wetlands: The second paragraph states that a conceptual mitigation plan for the proposed impacts is being prepared and that the plan will propose replacement from an existing wetland bank. It is unclear whether the intent is to purchase credits from an existing mitigation bank or if mitigation is to be constructed as part of the project.

Response: The use of a Wetland Bank is no longer a viable option. The Wetland Mitigation Plan will now propose the construction of wetland habitat to replace that wetland habitat being proposed for taking.

Question:

Wetland Impacts at Spring Creek

- a) Volume 2 of the EA, Appendix C, page 2 of 3 of the October 24, 2007, letter from Wilcox to the Barry County Road Commission: States that the proposed Finkbeiner bridge will cross Spring Creek and the adjacent wetlands at the narrowest location (approximately 180 to 190 feet wide). It is also indicated that the south portions of these wetlands are characterized by significant groundwater contributions. Later on, Wilcox states that the predominant source of water for this wetland is surface water flow through the stream. These appear to be conflicting statements.
- b) Volume 1 of the EA page 74: Indicates that the muck soils on either side of Spring Creek will be removed. How much of the muck soils will remain at the crossing and what impact will this excavation have on the existing hydrology of the remaining wetland
- c) Volume 1 of the EA, Section 5.2.5, Biological Resources, Flora, (page 72): This section alludes to the cumulative impacts of habitat loss and fragmentation as being a regional concern but minimal in the specific area of the proposed road alignment. What analysis has been done to support the statement that this fragmentation will have a minimal impact in the Thornapple River/Spring Creek Corridor?
- d) Section 5.2.5, Biological Resources, Wildlife and Fisheries, (page 73): This section states that the proposed crossing of the Thornapple River/Spring Creek corridor will have a long-term impact of minor adverse significance. What analysis has been done to support this statement?

Response: The response to this question will be by the letter in the question.

- a) These are not conflicting statements. Both are correct. While the groundwater flow is a significant source of water to the southern portion of Wetland I; surface water flow in Spring Creek is also a predominant source of water to the wetlands in this location. Both surface water and ground water contribute to the hydrology of the wetlands in this location.
- b) Preliminary Plans for the project are not yet complete. However, the conceptual plan would indicate that with the installation of the 42 foot concrete arch culvert at

this crossing of Spring Creek, approximately 15 linear feet of mucky soil on either side of the channel of Spring Creek will be undisturbed and left in place. The conceptual plan for the construction of the adjacent roadway where mucky soil occurs within the footprint of the roadway and arch culvert footings will have existing muck excavated to a depth of approximately 6.0 to 9.0 feet (a total of approximately 9,015 cubic yards). (The conceptual plan envisions the use of deep pilings (60.0 feet +/-) below the arch culvert footings to provide additional support for the structure). The excavated muck will be replaced with clean, assorted size sand as a foundation for the road and concrete footings for the arch structure. The sand foundation is highly permeable and designed to allow water to move through and away from the foundation of the roadway or footings of the arch culvert while providing a substrate that is stable enough for the proposed loads. The hydraulic conductivity of the sand foundation will be equal to or greater than that of the existing muck, which should maintain existing sub-surface hydrological patterns and will not inhibit the historic flow of groundwater through the wetland system. It will not result in draining any portion of the wetlands. It is not anticipated that this muck excavation and the sand backfill along with the permanent footings for the arch culvert will have a significant impact upon the remaining wetlands. In addition the remaining muck soils adjacent to the channel of Spring Creek and the surface water flow of Spring Creek itself will minimize the impact of construction of the new roadway and arch culvert to the local hydrology and the adjacent remaining wetlands.

- c) and d) No formal studies have been conducted at this location regarding this particular topic. However, professional opinion and biological experience of the consulting staff that prepared portions of this EA have concluded after evaluating this issue that construction of the Preferred Alternative will temporarily disturb or affect wildlife due to construction activities; however, this disturbance will be for the most part short-term. The long-term impact will result in loss of habitat and segmentation/fragmentation of the existing dry mesic southern forest type and wetland scrub-shrub communities in the area. The opening up of undeveloped lands by constructing a new roadway will cause some alteration of habitats and wildlife composition and diversity. This is, in and of itself, a long-term impact of minor adverse significance. Other alternatives had similar or different off setting habitat and wildlife diversity loss issues. The impact to wildlife in the area will, therefore, be minor long-term but will not be significant.

Another impact of the proposed construction across the previously undeveloped Thornapple River floodplain is the impact caused by placing a road across a previously unobstructed travel way and as a foraging corridor. The floodplain and wetland areas along the proposed Finkbeiner Road Extension segment are more intact and less disturbed than locations that have existing roadways. This area supports a variety of plant and wildlife species common to rural to urbanized disturbed areas of the region and provides a relatively unobstructed travel way and foraging corridor up and down the river between existing roadways; such as Main Street to the south and Parmalee Road to the north. The construction of the proposed roadway will impact this travel way by introducing an impediment to unrestricted travel of certain animals up and down the floodplain in this location. This segmentation will impinge upon unobstructed movement and foraging of some wildlife species, but for the most part the animals will adapt to the roadway and continue to use the area to move up and down stream and for foraging

purposes. This is particularly true for the movement of larger mammals, bat and bird species. The impact on movement of wildlife is considered minor, negative but of a long term nature. The impact of the proposed new road on foraging is considered insignificant.

This segmentation/fragmentation will, however, increase the potential for adverse interactions between wildlife and automobile traffic at the road level. The construction of the new road across the Thornapple River floodplain will result in periodic road kill accidents, i.e. deer, raccoon, rabbits, etc. These encounters expose drivers to potential injuries as a result of hitting wildlife on the road. This increase in collisions, potential increases in driver injuries and loss of individual animals is considered minor and of no greater magnitude or occurrence than is already experienced on the existing road infrastructure in this rural to urbanized area.