

## Sloatsburg embarks on redesign of Route 17

[Michael D'Onofrio](#), The Journal News Published 5:51 p.m. ET May 8, 2017 | Updated 8 hours ago

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Sloatsburg Mayor Carl Wright discusses the plans to revitalize the Route 17 corridor that runs through the village near the Municipal Plaza intersection May 8, 2017. Tania Savayan/lohud

*'It will help us define ourselves as a village.'*



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(Photo: Tania Savayan/The Journal News)

**SLOATSBURG** - The portion of Route 17 that doubles as a state highway and this village's main street is slated for a redesign.

The state Department of Transportation is investing \$4 million to develop a comprehensive plan to overhaul the half-mile stretch of Route 17 that runs

through the village.

The entirety of Sloatsburg's business district straddles the state-owned, four-lane highway where upwards of 20,000 vehicles travel every day. The road is notorious for speeding cars and tractor-trailers — along with police ready with radar detectors.

"It's a fast track. I would love to see them slow things down so people can appreciate Sloatsburg for what it is," said Lauren Hayward, owner of Hayward's Deli & Market on Route 17, as she stood behind the store's counter at the start of the workweek.

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Sloatsburg Mayor Carl Wright discusses the plans to revitalize the Route 17 corridor that runs through the village near the Municipal Plaza intersection May 8, 2017. (Photo: Tania Savayan/The Journal News)

Among the most significant changes could be reducing the four-lane highway to two lanes divided by a turning lane, said Mayor Carl Wright.

However, no plans have been officially proposed.

The redesign's top objectives will be to improve safety and the sidewalks, repave Route 17, and build local businesses, Wright said.

"It's hard to have a Main Street when you have cars zipping by at 50, 60 miles per hour," Wright said as he walked along Route 17 on Monday.

## 'Biggest bang for our buck'

The redesign of Route 17 was originally much less ambitious.

The state was intending to repave Route 17, but the agency decided to include the project in its Complete Streets initiative, which promotes safety, accessibility and mobility for motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians.

"Whenever we know we have a project like that coming up," said DOT spokesperson Gina DiSarro, referring to the repaving of Route 17, "we look to see if there can be other improvements made. We try to get the biggest bang for our buck and to address the needs that exist."



A man crosses the street near the Sloatsburg Library on Route 17 May 8, 2017. (Photo: Tania Savayan/The Journal News)

The Sloatsburg project is expected to redevelop the roadway, sidewalks, and crosswalks between Seven Lakes Drive and Colonial Avenue.

The agency has held two, well-attended workshops in Sloatsburg this year to get feedback from residents about the redesign, and is expected to hold more.

Speeding vehicles have been the most salient issue raised by residents thus far, said Sandra Jobson, the DOT's regional environmental unit supervisor.

"It is very challenging to cross the road," said Jobson, who is also the project manager for the Sloatsburg redesign.

Although the state has floated the idea of reducing the highway to two lanes, Wright said the state is also considering maintaining the current four lanes on Route 17.

Back at the deli, Hayward, who's been operating the market for 14 years, said she favored the two-lane design, but expressed doubts about whether the design was practical.

"It makes me a little nervous," Hayward said about reducing the number of lanes. "I'm not so sure it'll work for us."

Hayward added that her top concerns for any redesign were to slow down traffic, add more crosswalks and not increase the number of traffic lights.

The DOT is expected to unveil a proposal in late 2018, with work to begin soon after.



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Lauren Hayward, owner of

## Split personality

Route 17 suffers from a "conflicted vision," Wright said.

Whereas the highway, which is owned and maintained by the state, has the objective to move vehicles as quickly as possible through the community, Sloatsburg aims to slow traffic down for safety reasons and to support local businesses.

The redesign could unite the road's split personality.

**Route 17 in Sloatsburg.** (Photo: Mike D'Onofrio/The Journal News)

The speed limit outside the village is 45 mph, which drops to 35 mph inside Sloatsburg — although many drivers' speeds seem to come closer to those on

the Thruway.

Sidewalks border the road in the village, but they come uncomfortably close to the traffic driving by.

There are three traffic lights in the village, two of which have crosswalks. So it's not unusual to see people hustling across the road in between traffic.

Many residents have also favored putting in a crosswalk at the Sloatsburg Public Library, which Wright described as the anchor of the community.

## Changes underway

Local initiatives and business investment in the area are not waiting for a Route 17 ribbon cutting.

Entrepreneur Michael Bruno has already invested millions to transform the Sloatsburg-Tuxedo corridor.

On Monday morning, crews could be seen restoring four Victorian homes on Route 17 located across the street from the Sloatsburg library.



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A file photo of Michael Bruno, of Tuxedo Hudson Company. (Photo: John Meore/The Journal News)

The properties, bordered by a white farm fence, are expected to become a bed-and-breakfast, and part of Bruno's vision to transform the village center by adding a hotel, shops and restaurants.

Bruno is the founder of [1stdibs](#), an online marketplace for high-end art and antiques. He has purchased about a two dozen buildings in the area, including about 20 in Sloatsburg. He launched [Tuxedo Hudson Company](#) LLC last year in Tuxedo.

Bruno's longterm plans also include adding antique and art shops at the 12-acre Stewart Farm property, as well as a market, restaurant, and more in Tuxedo.

In addition, the trendy eyewear company Warby Parker began operating its new optical lab just outside

Sloatsburg this year.

The \$15 million facility on Route 17, located in unincorporated Ramapo, is the company's first expansion into the region and is expected to create 128 jobs over the next five years.



Warby Parker, the designer eyewear company, has opened its first fully-owned optical lab in Sloatsburg on Jan 11, 2016. (Photo: Submitted)

### **EARLY COVERAGE: Eyewear company Warby Parker to open lab, add 128 jobs in Sloatsburg**

Those commercial investments also coincided with a local revitalization effort.

Residents David Pereyra and Kathy Goldman revived the Sloatsburg Revitalization Committee last year, which focuses on improving public spaces and encouraging economic opportunities.

Pereyra said the committee has united residents, business owners, and local officials, who are reviewing roadway designs with the goal of making the village center a pedestrian-friendly corridor.

Pereyra characterized the DOT's decision to redesign Route 17 as a crucial piece of the puzzle to redeveloping the village, because the state controls the roadway.

"It will help us define ourselves as a village," Pereyra said. "Without the DOT's partnership and participation, we couldn't do anything to Route 17; we wouldn't have the opportunity to transform it."