



Meeting Minutes

Date: March 10, 2009
Project: 08316
Subject: South Berwick Transportation Study
Town Officials Briefing, South Berwick Town Hall
By: Steve Sawyer

Attendees:

Tom Reinauer, SMRPC
Steve Sawyer, STI
John Adams, STI
Lynne Seeley, STI
Carol Morris, Morris Communications
Julia Dawson, SMRPC
Dennis Emidy, MDOT

Roberta Orsini, Assistant to Town Manager
John Schempf, Town Manager
Planning Board Members
Town Council Members
Advisory Committee Members
Other Interested Parties
(See Attached Sign-In Sheet)

CC: Tom Reinauer, SMRPC
Jason Schreiber, Nelson/Nygaard
Marcia Bowen, Normandeau Associates
Carol Morris, Morris Communications
Lynne Seeley

This was the first formal meeting with the Town Official Boards (Council and Planning Board), and the third with the Advisory Committee. The purpose of this meeting was to brief the two Town groups on the Study's objectives and progress to date. Town officials were presented with some background information prior to the meeting in preparation of this discussion. Large scale colored graphics were on display prior to the start of the meeting to give the attendees a visual sense of the alternatives under consideration. These were left with the Town after the meeting for additional review and comment opportunities.

The following notations were made during the meeting:

- Tom began by giving an introduction of the Project, Project Purpose, and the Project Team. He then let Steve present a PowerPoint presentation dealing with the Project objectives and alternatives under consideration.
- Steve began by reviewing the Project's 20+ year history, and the concerns we had heard from the members of the community. These being:

- improve vehicular and pedestrian safety
 - reduce congestion during peak hours
 - address impacts of the schools
 - reduce vehicular speeds
 - encourage walking and biking
 - preserve the Historic Village character
- Current traffic volumes on Main Street are 20,000 vehicles/day and projected to reach 30,000 vehicles/day by MaineDOT by 2026, if nothing is done to alter past travel patterns
 - Sebago has taken the approach that we can successfully manage travel demand in this corridor and thus is proposing alternatives that address current traffic volumes – not increased future volumes. Since one travel lane in an urban setting can accommodate about 1,200 vehicles per hour, only one travel lane in each direction is needed to accommodate present traffic flows. Most all of the options being presented are based on this premise.
 - Main Street is subject to heavy commuter volumes - SB in the AM and NB in the PM. Peak one-way flows are about 1,200 vehicles per hour.

The Portland Street/Main Street intersection – two signalized options were presented (1 with 1 SB lane on 236 and the other with 2 SB lanes on 236). Protected pedestrian phases would be provided under both scenarios. The 2-lane option provided less vehicle delay, but not by a great deal. Each alternative had different on-street parking impacts – one removed 8 spaces and the other 20 spaces.

- Main Street between the 2 intersections – 2 2-lane options were presented along with 2 3-lane options and 1 4-lane option. Some alternatives had on-street parking and others did not. Some had formal bike lanes and others did not. None of the alternatives required widening the roadway and several proposed narrowing it.
- Route 4/Route 236 Intersection – two options were presented, 1 with a traffic signal and 1 with a roundabout. The roundabout option involves acquiring land from abutters, and may require being partially 2-lanes in order to accommodate the PM traffic volumes. For these reasons this alternative should be dropped in the opinion of Sebago. The signalized option has two driveways that will need to be relocated if this alternative is adopted – they would be located within the signalized intersection.
- Proposed Off-Street parking. A plan for developing Central School access off Young Street was presented that included the development of over 100 additional off-street parking spaces on land owned by the Town (former Catholic Church property) and a couple of interested abutters. This plan had been shown to both Main Street business owners and to the Central School officials. The School was fine with the idea and even agreed to close one of their entrances off Main Street. Sebago is still trying to see if there was a way to completely close the School's access off Main Street – there are some logistical issues that need to be worked out. A concern was expressed as to whether busses could negotiate Young Street and the response was that Young Street would need to be upgraded from Main Street to the former church.

- TDM Strategies. 88% of commuters in the region drive to work alone. Sebago wants to increase the percentage that rideshare, vanpool, or use transit to reduce the travel demand on Main Street and thus avoid the need for additional travel lanes. Steve showed a graphic illustrating Portsmouth/Kittery Shipyard workforce commuter shed, and how it would be possible to create additional park-and-ride lots to capture more of these regular commuters. It was also mentioned that having the regional communities reassess their current land use provisions to see if traffic patterns could be effected positively. Steve indicated that the Study Team would be meeting with the Shipyard on March 13 to discuss a proposal for a regional traffic reduction strategy for York County.
- Bypass Options. Steve showed a graphic that gave a history of various bypass alignments dating back to 1987. DOT did a Study in 1987 that looked at the RR bed corridor (5 miles in length). The Powderhill Transportation Land Use Study in 1987 looked at an alignment closer into Town that was 2.5 miles in length. The current corridor is still closer into Town (only 1 mile in length), and involved only limited number of property owners – Town, Berwick Academy, and Mr. Page. Sebago had met with Berwick Academy and they were not excited about having their property subdivided and impacted by the new roadway. Sebago also met with the South Berwick Water District and learned that they have two wells that would be impacted by the proposed bypass location (Agamenticus and Willow Drive). The bypass route would pass through the secondary recharge areas for these water supplies. The District would be willing to abandon these wells but at the cost of about \$11 million.
- At this point the PowerPoint show ended and the questions and answer period began – moderated by Carol Morris.
- What would be the road grade for the bypass on either end? Answer - 8%.
- The bypass corridor is too close to downtown – it should be further out like the 1987 MDOT location (RR bed)
- Carol indicated that if a Bypass were chosen as the preferred action it would probably be 15 years before it was constructed.
- Would a bypass be limited access? Answer – Yes
- Constructing a bypass would divert Route 4 traffic off Main Street, but would only encourage more folks from NH to use 236 to get to work. There is a latent demand that is not currently being met – these folks are currently using the Spaulding Tpke. Therefore building a bypass would not solve SB’s downtown traffic problem.
- A Bypass would negatively impact the Powderhouse Hill Ski Area.
- A Bypass would result in a difficult intersection with Route 4 that will need to be signalized.
- A Bypass would only encourage more traffic.
- *Carol took a poll and the consensus was to eliminate the Bypass from further consideration as a short term solution. The Town would prefer to pursue other options*

first (i.e. TDM strategies) and if these did not work, then reexamine a bypass corridor further out of Town in the future.

- A resident offered the following comments:
 - the traffic signals on Main Street have some merit
 - on-street parking is important
 - need more traffic calming features
 - pedestrian and bike features are important
 - need to create gateways further out of Town to indicate to drivers that they are approaching a Village
- A resident raised a concern for increased traffic on Young Street associated with the proposed off-street parking and school access plans. They liked moving some of the school activities to Young Street, but thought that full closure of Main Street access for the school was not a good idea.
- A Young Street resident liked the off-street parking concepts, but liked keeping some access to the school on Main Street.
- ***Steve indicated that a compromise position may be to leave the existing loop road off Main Street for busses only – no cars. This would limit traffic activities on Main Street to the 6 school busses.***
- Comment - There is a park and ride lot on Norton Street that could be used for ridesharing.
- Comment – minimize the loss of parking on Main Street
- Comment – What gets cars through an intersection better a signal or a traffic officer? Answer – a signal and it is cheaper and works all day long for pedestrians, not just during peak hours. Can other alternatives be evaluated that would reduce the loss of parking on Main Street? – even the 8 spaces seems too much.
- Comment - Is there any data on parking usage? Answer – not that the Study Team is aware of.
- Comment – Would diagonal parking be a viable option? Answer – there is not enough roadway width for angle parking and if there were it would increase the potential for increased safety issues.
- Comment – Are traffic signals warranted at both intersections? Answer – Yes
- Comment – What about making the southerly intersection a 3-way stop? Answer – this idea will be evaluated.
- Comment – What about signaling the crosswalks and shortening their length by moving the curbs? Answer – This will be investigated further.

- Comment – The General Manager of the COAST bus lines (Rad Nichols) asked the attendees if there was any interest in starting bus service to Dover. Members of the Council asked for his business card. Some attendees indicated that this would be great and that there had been COAST service some years back. Connections to other Dover routes would be important.
- Comment – the owner of the organic market indicated that he was not in favor of any parking loss on Main Street, but liked the ideas regarding improving safety and aesthetics in the village.
- Advisory Member Comment – he favored squeezing vehicular traffic, increasing pedestrian safety and amenities, retaining on-street parking, and making the proposed off-street parking concept not just parking but a real people space.
- Comment – Route 4 north of Town and Route 236 south of Town need some “gateway” cues to slow vehicles down prior to entering the built up area.
- Comment – the proposed off-street parking plan is a natural fit for a larger town master plan.
- *Carol led a review of the proposed ideas in an attempt to eliminate those that would not be acceptable to the Town.*

Northerly Intersection – eliminate Option B (2 lanes SB on Route 236 & loss of 20 spaces)

Look at other alternatives – possibly providing signals for peds only

Look at prohibiting left turns from Route 236

Main Street – 4 lane option eliminated – loss of parking and less pedestrian friendly

- 3 lane option with no on-street parking eliminated

- 3 lane options with parking retained

- 2 lane option with bike lanes and no parking eliminated

- 2 lane option with parking and bike lanes retained

- look at retaining center TWLTL and parking with bike lane on one side only

(There was no consensus on the merits of the bike lanes verses the center TWLTL)

These minutes represent the understanding of the author as to what transpired at this meeting. If there has been a misinterpretation of any aspect of the discussion, please let STI know so that these minutes can be updated. Thank you in advance for your cooperation in this regard.

Respectfully submitted,

Steve Sawyer
SEBAGO TECHNICS, INC.

SSS:sss/df