

**ROUTE 109 CORRIDOR COMMITTEE
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF INTERIM REPORT, MAY 2004**

INTRODUCTION

Route 109 travels from New Hampshire through Acton, Shapleigh, Sanford, and Wells and terminates at Route 1 in Wells. Between Sanford and Wells, the highway is heavily traveled by local residents, commuters, tourists, and trucks. Route 109 connects a service center to the interstate system, two industrial parks to an airport, a growing inland residential population to the southern Maine coast, and many travelers to the Downeaster Amtrak service. In November 2003, the Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission (SMRPC) convened a Route 109 Corridor Committee with representatives from the towns of Wells and Sanford, the York County Community Action Corporation, and the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) to assess whether or not the road is able to meet the mobility needs of the anticipated future economic and residential activity in the region.

The Committee asked two overarching questions to guide its examination of the corridor:

- How many cars and trucks can the road physically carry now; what is the maximum capacity; and what will it take to build the road to that maximum capacity?
- How will future land uses and economic development activities in the region affect the safety, mobility and functionality of the corridor?

The purpose of the Committee is to provide coordination between the many land use and transportation planning efforts related to Route 109 in an effort to build a long-term coalition between Corridor stakeholders, and to determine if the road will be able to meet the mobility needs of the anticipated future economic and residential activity in the region. Another objective of the committee is to assess the impact of MaineDOT's access management rules on existing and potential future curb cuts, and develop access management strategies to preserve road capacity and enhance safety along the corridor.

The Route 109 Corridor Committee produced an interim report to document the activities of the Committee as of May 2004. The report contains:

- A Purpose & Needs Statement*;
- An Overview of Concurrent Planning Efforts Related to the 109 Corridor;
- An Analysis of Existing Conditions of Highway Accesses; and
- Recommendations and Next Steps for the 109 Corridor.

*The entire Purpose & Needs Statement is available as a separate handout.

OVERVIEW OF CONCURRENT PLANNING EFFORTS

The Committee reviewed several concurrent planning efforts related to Route 109:

Design/Reconstruction of Route 109 in Wells

The Corridor Committee was regularly updated on the design of the reconstruction of just over 4 miles of Route 109 between the Maine Turnpike Exit 2 interchange and the High Pine area in Wells. In general, the design will include widening to two 12-foot lanes and 8-foot shoulders, minor adjustments to the horizontal and vertical alignments to improve driving sight distance and meet American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) safety standards, and extensive reconstruction of the road base. Construction is expected to begin in 2005 or 2006.

MaineDOT Traffic Study

MaineDOT began a Traffic Study for Route 109 covering a 10 ½-mile stretch of Route 109 from Old Mill Road in Sanford to the Maine Turnpike in Wells. Traffic data collected during the summer of 2003 included traffic volumes, turning-movement counts, vehicle crashes, and headway studies. As of May 2004, the traffic study's future projections were not complete. However, committee members were updated with the results of the summer 2003 existing conditions analysis. The following bullets highlight some of the results of that analysis:

- Average Annual Daily Traffic volumes ranged from almost 23,000 vehicles on Route 109 near its intersection with Old Mill Road and 8,070 between Meetinghouse Road and Bald Hill Road in Wells;
- Nine High Crash Locations (HCL) were identified in Maine DOT's Route 109 study area. Of the nine, six of the HCLs are located between Old Mill Road and Route 4 in Sanford.
- Level of Service (LOS) on the Maine DOT study area ranged from LOS B to LOS D. The study found that the entire stretch of roadway between Route 9 and Route 99 currently has a peak hour LOS of D. In addition, the segment of road between Route 4 and Old Mill Road has a peak hour LOS of D.

Community Planning Activities

Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission analyzed the land use ordinances and subdivision regulations currently in use by Wells and Sanford. This included an inventory and comparison of zoning lot size and setback requirements and land uses allowed in each zone.

The Committee also examined recent and future town planning issues. The Committee was briefed on Wells' plan to create a future town center between the Turnpike and Route 1, their plan to preserve the High Pine Area as a residential and limited business area, and their expectations that there will be an increase in commercial and industrial activity near the Turnpike interchange. In Sanford, major topics of discussion included the potential for "big box" development at the intersection of Route 109 and Route 99, and a possible street connection

plan for expanding economic development activity and improving access management on Route 109.

Alternative Modes

The Committee identified alternative modes as having a key role in the future development of the Route 109 corridor. The following resources were identified as playing an important role in the mobility, safety and economic development of the corridor:

- Wheels to Access Vocation and Education (WAVE);
- Passenger and Freight Rail Facilities;
- Wells Intermodal Center;
- Sanford Airport;
- Eastern Trail;
- Coastal Explorer; and
- Existing and Potential Park and Ride Lots.

HIGHWAY ACCESS ANALYSIS

As part of the Route 109 Corridor Study, the Committee examined the existing conditions of driveways and entrances on the corridor, as well as the existing access management tools used by the Maine DOT, Sanford and Wells. The purpose was to determine if accesses were sufficiently regulated so that the highway would continue to have optimum highway mobility and safety. A smaller segment of the corridor, between Bald Hill Road in Sanford and Lindsay Road in Wells, was chosen as a target study area for a detailed highway access analysis. For the highway access study, the Committee used the Maine DOT's Access Management Rules (Highway Driveway and Entrance Rules) as the performance standard for this segment of highway, because Maine DOT has statutory authority to permit all state and state-aid highways in Maine. Since Maine DOT's rules do not apply to urban compact zones, the urban compact zone in this study area was not a priority of the study.

The Committee found that of the 75 driveways and entrances examined in the study area, nearly 60% are nonconforming to the Maine DOT's sight distance standards, and over 90% are nonconforming to the Maine DOT minimum spacing and corner clearance standards unless those accesses were granted a waiver. Based on existing parcel and conservation land information, the study identified at least 9 sizeable segments of the corridor that have potential to be future mobility disruption points because they are in areas where there is undeveloped or subdividable land (refer to the Interim Report for location information).

Analyses of access management ordinance and regulatory language in the Wells and Sanford zoning ordinances and subdivision regulations revealed that Sanford's access management rules are similar to the Maine DOT provisions and Wells rules are in need of improvement.

RECOMMENDATIONS/NEXT STEPS

Based on the initial information and discussions from the study, the Committee developed the following recommendations and next steps:

- Continue the highway access analysis to incorporate the High Pine Urban Compact Zone in order to substantiate the perceived need for stronger access management within that zone;
- Determine how many existing structures and lots, if any, would be affected (possibly by becoming non-conforming) with the enactment of a requirement for larger setbacks to preserve right-of-way;
- Investigate the potential for a corridor-based impact fee system and or Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district;
- Stay current with changes to the Downeaster service and with future plans for expanded transit services along the Route 109 Corridor;
- Further involve the Maine Turnpike Authority to follow-up with Wells' requests and to present and discuss the traffic simulation model developed by MaineDOT; and
- Coordinate with and provide information to the Regional Needs Assessment effort; and
- **Coordinate a joint meeting with the Wells Board of Selectmen, the Sanford Town Council, and local and regional economic development planners to discuss the potential for a Mobility Plan;**

Based on the information gathered from the highway access study, there are a few considerations that the Committee should further examine in developing a stronger access management program such as a Mobility Plan:

- The towns should evaluate whether mobility sight distance for this portion of the corridor is a goal for the study area. If it is, the towns will have to make mobility sight distance "non-waiverable" in their local regulations. Evaluate other waiverable Maine DOT regulations in order to decide if permitting requirements should be stronger and less flexible.
- The towns should re-examine high traffic generating land uses that are allowable on this portion of the corridor and the time of day that the land uses are likely to impact highway mobility and safety. The towns may want to enforce a higher standard of access management regulations (including minimum spacing and sight distance) for land uses with larger or ongoing traffic impacts.
- The towns will need to further study how the High Pine Area affects the greater function of Route 109 as a Mobility Arterial and work with Maine DOT and abutting land owners to develop strategies to increase mobility in that area if it is needed.
- Consider adopting Maine DOT's "Change of Use" access management permitting definition as a strategy to increase mobility and safety on portions of the highway that have nonconforming existing accesses.
- Consider the costs and benefits of horizontal and vertical realignments to the study area between the High Pine Area and Sam Allen Road, and how they might affect mobility and safety or the adoption of access management regulations.