

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Route 236 Implementation Committee and Interested Parties

**From:** Josh Mack, Transportation Planner

**Date:** November 17, 2005

**RE:** Meeting Notes from 236 Meeting on November 17, 2005

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This was a meeting organized by the Route 236 Corridor Implementation Committee and Kittery Area Comprehensive Transportation Study MPO (KACTS Metropolitan Planning Organization) to familiarize town council members and selectmen from Route 236 communities with the Route 236 Action Plan effort, request support from the towns and address any additional town concerns or issues.

Those in attendance included Dan Blanchette, Eliot Town Manager; Diane Brandon, Community Wellness Coalition; David Burke, South Berwick Planning Board; Jon Carter, Kittery Town Manager; Sally Lewin, State Representative (Eliot and South Berwick); Josh Mack, Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission (SMRPC)/KACTS; Terry Oliver, South Berwick Public Works; Kate Pelletier, Town of Eliot/Route 236 Committee; Todd Pendleton, HNTB/MTA; Tom Reinauer, SMRPC/KACTS; Rick Rossiter, Kittery Public Works; Duane Scott, Maine DOT; Ted Short, Eliot Police; Steve Workman, Eastern Trail Management District.

The meeting began with a presentation by Tom Reinauer on the Route 236 planning effort:

### **Route 236 Action Plan Presentation**

Major points of the presentation are broken down as follows:

### Why are we here?

- There are obvious mobility and safety needs on the corridor (Examples: traffic volumes have doubled over last twenty years, there are 9 Maine DOT designated High Crash Locations within 10 miles of study area;
- Mobility and safety issues are a regional problem affecting all towns on the corridor;
- Problem is not only a transportation problem, it affects and is affected by each town's economic development, environment and quality of life;
- Town support is instrumental not only for local support, but also for collaboration on land use and economic development decisions.

### How is this planning effort different?

- Many studies in past relating to Route 236, some things accomplished, but mostly plans have collected dust on shelf;
- This planning effort is managed by paid professional staff from the Kittery Area Comprehensive Transportation Study Metropolitan Planning Organization, with "seed" funding to carry out the planning effort;
- Implementation committee has diverse representation;
- Planning effort involved comprehensive review of data, plans, recommendations and regulatory environment affecting corridor;
- Primary focus of effort is on "action" and implementation of good ideas that have already been studied and recommended.

### How was the action plan developed?

- Comprehensive inventory of previous efforts (plans, ordinances, traffic changes over time);
- Committee sifted through recommendations, updating, revising, dropping no longer relevant and adding new recommendations or "actions";
- Developed time-lined action-oriented plan broken down into short, medium and long-term actions.

### Short-term actions addressing today

- Committee has already got the ball rolling on several short term actions that they have identified;
- Example: Addressing overweight and overdimension vehicles passing through the Route 236 Corridor. Committee has met with key stakeholders (Maine Turnpike Authority, Bureau of Motor Vehicles Overlimit Permitting Office, Maine State Police and local police forces) to address policy and infrastructure issues.
- Example: Assisting in development of coordination between state and local police. Maine State Police have agreed to provide notice to local police forces about weigh station openings on US 1 and I-95, (which diverts significant traffic on Route 236). Committee is working with local and state police to identify ways that local police can receive training to enforce Federal Motor Carrier regulations on trucks.
- Example: Committee has secured financing to have Maine DOT conduct first in-depth engineering analysis of the performance and engineering needs of the corridor. The

Route 236 Corridor Committee will serve as a steering committee for this process and will recommend regional priorities to Maine DOT.

- Example: Committee is launching a public outreach effort to gain broad based support for the Route 236 Action Plan. This includes tonight's meeting with town leaders, the development of a website with comprehensive information about the planning effort, and a brochure educating the general public and others about the effort.

### Upcoming Activities

- Committee will be talking to transit agencies about feasibility of commuter bus service in the area;
- Developing bicycle/pedestrian group that will provide recommendations to the KACTS MPO and towns;
- Look into feasibility of developing park and ride system for area (possibly for Sanford to alleviate congestion pressure on Route 236 as well as Route 4 and Route 109).
- Committee staff plan to contact town planning boards for educational presentation and offering of technical services to improve each town's access management standards;
- Committee staff is working with South Berwick and Kittery to develop streetscape design ideas for gateway parts of each town. Consultants have already been hired for this process and the planning effort is underway.
- Committee plans to offer transportation impact fee educational workshops to towns.

The remainder of the meeting was reserved for town officials and other attendees to provide feedback and ask questions about the Route 236 planning effort. Their comments are broken down into the themes below:

### **Planning Process**

- Upon Steve Workman's request, SMRPC staff gave an overview of how Maine DOT's larger long-range planning initiative, called "Connecting Maine," fits into the Route 236 Corridor planning effort. Staff explained that both the state and Route 236 planning efforts are interconnected. Both planning efforts examine transportation issues as regional "corridor" issues, and both planning efforts examine how economic development and land use policies and decision-making affect the transportation system. The Route 236 Corridor is part of a larger corridor system identified in the Maine DOT planning effort that provides north-south travel opportunities for interior York County residents and businesses. The Route 236 Corridor Committee provided a great deal of insight and information Maine DOT has used to inform its long-range planning process for York County. For more information about the Maine DOT long-range planning effort go to the following websites:

<http://www.smrpc.org/transportation/rna/rna.htm>

- Michelle Kareckas asked what the "vision" for the Route 236 Action Plan is? John Rudolph explained that he believes the action plan itself is very good at exhibiting the "vision", but perhaps the committee should develop an opening statement summarizing that vision. Josh Mack explained that the short, medium and long term actions are linked

to each other to develop that vision. Duane Scott added that the vision needs to come from the towns and not from Maine DOT.

- Roland Fernald asked if the Committee had consulted the 1999 Legislative Task Force Report that developed strategies to address traffic issues on Route 236 and Route 1. He explained that many of the problems addressed in that study still exist today. He warned that the Committee cannot depend on the legislature to implement ideas from our plan because of the frequency of legislative turnover. Tom Reinauer responded that right now, the Committee is keeping the legislature informed about the process, and when a good project is identified the legislature should be asked to become more involved. The day-to-day planning will be performed at the committee level.
- Michelle Karackas explained that she is frustrated that when things are done regionally, there is a tendency for people to perform study after study, not implementing anything. She wants to move beyond “politeness” and make decisions that will affect change. Duane Scott responded that he believes this effort has started off on a good foot, first in that it is being treated as an “action plan” instead of a “study”.
- Steve Workman asked the towns if they would like to have a quarterly update of Route 236 Corridor Committee activities? There was general consensus that updates would be a good idea. Quarterly reports and additional municipal forums were cited as ways to keep the selectboards and councils informed. There was a suggestion to have another update meeting after the holidays.
- Roland Fernald commented that he was encouraged to see that park and rides and commuter transit are being considered as part of the planning process.
- Diane Brandon asked if other input and feedback will be solicited for the Route 236 Plan or does it rest with the town selectmen and town councils. Tom Reinauer responded that the Route 236 Corridor Committee will definitely organize opportunities for the greater public to ask questions and provide feedback about the plan.

### **Stakeholder Involvement**

- John Rudolph asked what degree of coordination will be needed between the three towns at tonight’s meeting to support the Route 236 planning effort. Tom Reinauer explained that Committee and staff can handle the logistics of the day-to-day planning effort. However, sometimes the town officials may be called on to write letters of support for various planning efforts. Another way that towns can help is by working with the committee to balance town economic development policies and land use ordinances with the corridor’s highway mobility and safety needs. Finally, local officials can help by getting the word out to the public, and corresponding with state and federal representatives.
- Tom Harmon explained that he would like to see Berwick and North Berwick more involved in this process as they are important stakeholders in the corridor. Staff agreed and explained that Berwick and North Berwick have been informed about the process throughout the planning effort and were invited to this meeting. However, major outreach efforts have focused on Kittery, Eliot and South Berwick because that was the identified study area.
- John Rudolph explained that he feels that it is important that New Hampshire become more involved in the process and cited the recent reconstruction of the Spaulding Turnpike and the Great Bay Bridge and its anticipated impacts on Route 236. Tom Reinauer responded that at the next Route 236 Corridor meeting, Tim Roache from the Strafford Regional Planning Commission can show the initial traffic forecast modeling it

has done with regard to the improvements that will be made on the General Sullivan Bridge. Tom explained that staff have been invited and kept informed on their Spaulding Turnpike advisory committee.

- Paul Schumacher remarked that there are a number of tools that are available to towns to improve their situation on Route 236 right now. He cited impact fees, access management, and zoning as ways that the town, as stakeholders in this process, can help finance and improve mobility and safety on the corridor. Josh noted that KACTS has agreed to provide technical assistance for these activities in the current KACTS contract. Towns will need to determine what level of assistance they desire.

## **Funding**

- Duane Scott announced that Maine DOT is taking a serious look and in the process of developing strategies to address a one billion dollar shortfall (20 billion dollars by 2025) that it needs to just maintain the current system. He noted the recent federal transportation bill, SAFETEA-LU, suggests that transportation funding is going to be more of an earmark process. The Route 236 communities should be aware of this and use their power in numbers that they have as a regional and broadly-represented committee to “voice” their project needs to improve the corridor. Josh Mack noted that there was only one earmark in the last transportation bill that went to York County, even though the rest of the state did well with earmarking. Steve Workman stated that the one earmark involving York County was for Eastern Trail development, and he was told by legislators that the only reason the project was accepted and promoted by the Maine’s representatives was because it was supported by a 12 town regional coalition.
- Dan Blanchette remarked that the federal transportation earmarking trend, Maine DOT’s interest in enhanced regional planning, and Governor Baldacci’s interest in regional initiatives make it important for the Route 236 Committee
- Jon Carter noted that Kittery has had projects in the pipeline for eight years at important gateway points on important arterials and that there are limited resources to pay for these projects. Jon noted that he believes Route 236 is a very important road with real problems, but that he has mixed emotions about which projects or planning efforts to support because his town is faced with making tough decisions about where limited resources should be allocated.
- Bob Gagne asked if there were any transportation grants that could be used to make improvements to Route 236. Tom responded that there are a number of grant programs (he cited Safe Routes to School Program and Transportation Enhancement Program) that are available. He explained that he did a presentation on funding sources at a previous meeting to the Route 236 Committee and could make that presentation available to this group.
- Jon Carter explained that a mile of Route 236 was recently given back to Kittery. In upcoming years as Eliot and South Berwick continue to urbanize, they may take back more of the highway as well. The three towns may well own the entire road in the near future.
- Dave Burke asked what historical funding for KACTS has been? Tom stated that he could get that information to everyone.