

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

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; Todd Pendleton, HNTB/MTA; Tom Reinauer, SMRPC/KACTS; Rick Rossiter, Kittery Public Works; Duane Scott, Maine DOT; Ted Short, Eliot Police and Steve Workman, Eastern Trail Management District.

The meeting began with a briefing on staff activities since the last meeting on overlimit vehicle issues, the municipal forum with selectboards/councils of Kittery, Eliot and South Berwick, public outreach efforts to date, and other action plan items:

Overlimit Vehicle Permitting:

Josh Mack gave an update on these activities:

- The Manufactured Housing Association of Maine sent staff an electronic copy of *A Review of Issues Related to Harmonizing Dimensional Transport Requirements in the Northeast*. This document was a report created for the Northeast Manufactured Housing Association (NMHA) by Maine Tomorrow that discusses discrepancies in regulations among states and turnpike authorities in the northeast. The NMHA is striving for a harmonization of dimensional requirements in the northeast. Basically the group would like to see states and turnpikes to eliminate any regulations they currently have restricting loads with envelop dimensions equal or less than 14'6" high, 16' high. The group also would like no restrictions on length. In addition to eliminating maximum dimensional restrictions, the group is advocating that no police escorts would be required for the dimensions referred above. The report recognizes that Maine already allows these dimensions on the road, however the Maine Turnpike Authority does not currently meet the report's height and width standards (the height as a matter of infrastructure limitations and the width as a matter of policy). The main body of this report is available from SMRPC if anyone is interested.
- At the last Overlimit Commercial Vehicle meeting, there was a request as to how the public could comment on the NMHA report. Karen Brown-Mohr of the Manufactured Housing Association of Maine (MHAM) has agreed to forward comments on to the MHAM board if anyone has any comments. You can e-mail your comments to kbrownmohr@att.net
- The Maine Bureau of Motor Vehicles has sent all of its 2005 permitting data for the state of Maine to staff. Information includes load weights, dimensional limits of loads, origin

and destinations of loads, etc.,. An analysis of this information will be presented in more detail at the special Commercial Vehicle meeting scheduled for 11/30/05 in South Berwick Town Hall at 10 AM later this month.

- Maine DOT has sent staff truck-related crash data, which staff is presently analyzing. This data will be presented at the 11/30/05 meeting.
- Josh Mack has been working with Eliot Police Chief Ted Short on researching the feasibility of acquiring Level 1 Federal Motor Carrier Services training for local police.

There was some discussion that followed this update:

-Dave Burke asked for some more background on this action item. Ted Short explained that staff and the Eliot Police are investigating as to whether local officers can receive Level 1 Commercial Vehicle Enforcement training to enforce Federal Motor Carrier Enforcement Laws. A basic Level 1 training would give officers the ability to do a rudimentary inspection of the vehicle, check the log book, etc.,. Based on his staff's research it sounds like it is a free 2-week course, and that Massachusetts already has a program that offers the federal training. Ted explained that currently, local police can only stop vehicles for very obvious problems or traffic violations, similar to what they can do to regular passenger vehicles. A discussion followed about why commercial vehicle enforcement is important to Route 236's safety because commercial vehicles have a greater potential danger to the corridor when compared to a typical passenger vehicle (ie. safety implications of heavier vehicle involved in crash, longer driver hour demands, greater number of miles causing wear and tear on commercial vehicles.)

-Josh Mack explained that State Police Lieutenant Chris Grotton has already offered a half-to-one day training to local police, but local police have expressed concern that this wouldn't allow enough time to have a meaningful training.

-Dave Burke asked if annual commercial vehicle inspections are sufficiently addressing our safety needs. Do we need semi-annual inspections for these vehicles? Ted Short answered that the trucking industry would respond that they are already over-regulated. Spot inspections are a helpful way to not overburden the trucking industry, while taking enforcement action against the really dangerous vehicles witnessed by police. However, the reality now is that the Maine State Police Commercial Vehicle Unit does not have a great deal of manpower, and local police are either required to wait several hours to have the state police follow up on an infraction or let truckers go on their way.

-Rick Rossiter explained that Kittery Public Works experience with commercial vehicle inspections has been very difficult and it requires a relatively high degree of sophistication that sometimes State Police don't even have. Rick also stated that local enforcement agencies need to be careful—that police forces continue to grow even though populations or crime rates haven't necessarily grown. Ted Short responded that he is only interested in seeking basic Level 1 training, and wouldn't see this being a top priority for local enforcement agencies.

-Tom Reinauer noted that Maine State Police have already agreed to notify the local agencies when weigh stations on Interstate 95 and Route 1 are open. Potentially an officer could be assigned beforehand to exercise these enforcement actions and it would only be a few times a year.

-Josh Mack noted that trends suggest commercial vehicle truck traffic is expected to increase significantly over the next twenty years—the problem is not expected to go away.

-Sally Lewin mentioned that a landowner on Route 236 approached her a couple of years ago offering some land that could be used to carry out truck enforcement activities. Josh Mack noted at a previous meeting, that the lack of land for truckers to safely pull over was a major issue identified by truckers at a previous commercial vehicles meeting.

Municipal Forum

Tom Reinauer gave an update on the municipal forum and associated follow-up activities:

- Tom stated that there was a good turnout at the meeting and people were generally supportive of the work the Committee has done.
- The selectboard/councils would like to have a quarterly update on Committee progress and would like to explore the idea of another meeting after the holidays.
- Staff have set up its first planning board meeting to discuss access management strategies with the Town of South Berwick. That workshop is scheduled for December 20. Other follow-up meetings are planned for the other two towns.

Public Outreach

Tom Reinauer noted that a brochure and website have been created based on the Committee's request. The committee offered some reaction to the brochure:

- Diane Brandon thought the cover photo is not effectively conveying the committee's message about Route 236's safety and traffic concerns. Diane also suggested that the brochure try to take photos of the commercial development and curb cuts occurring on the corridor. She suggested adding "Kittery, Eliot and South Berwick, ME" on the front cover. Diane also suggested that there could be more data showing safety and traffic issues. She encouraged staff to make a map that showed more of York including Route 1 and Route 16 in New Hampshire.
- Steve Workman and Sally Lewin both advocated for more data to demonstrate the safety and traffic problems experienced by the corridor.
- Duane Scott made the offer to print brochures in-house at Maine DOT, when the final product is developed.
- ***The group agreed that staff should make some edits based on comments today and then send a copy of a new draft to the committee prior to printing the document.***

Other Action Items (Eliot traffic issues)

- There was a great deal of discussion about the Bolt Hill Road yellow blinking light project, which is part of Maine DOT's latest Work Plan. Sally Lewin stated that there should be a full light at the intersection instead of a flashing yellow light. Ted Short corroborated that the Eliot Police's experience with the intersection is that it is very dangerous. Kate Pelletier noted that a very large senior housing project is going in the area and that it will have a further impact on the intersection. Dan Blanchette noted that KACTS had addressed this with an earlier Maine DOT administration and that Jane Lincoln, current chief of staff to Governor Baldacci was familiar about the project, because Eliot Selectmen had tried to push for the project a few years ago.

- Tom offered writing a letter on behalf of the committee if they are interested in revisiting the plans Maine DOT has for the Bolt Hill intersection. Duane suggested that the Regional Office be included as a recipient.
- Josh noted that the committee has an opportunity to look at these areas more closely through next spring's engineering study. Josh noted that the committee, as a regional entity, should also consider the needs of the other stakeholders using the corridor, such as their need for mobility.
- Ted Short stated that transportation policy needs to focus more on safety—that mobility goals of Maine DOT should not supplant safety needs.
- Steve Workman stated that he would like the Committee to not focus too much on individual projects, and also keep a regional focus realizing all stakeholder needs of the corridor—including mobility needs.
- Tom Reinauer and Terry Oliver discussed how there is traffic light timing technology available that can reasonably accommodate safety while allowing vehicles to continue on their path by treating the traffic lights as a system.
- Ted Short also discussed his recommendations to the Maine DOT Regional Engineer, Randy Dunton, about realigning and slowing the speed limit from 45 to 35 in the area near the Irving, Dunkin Donuts. Randy Dunton agreed that the speed limit should be lowered, although giving the figure of 40 mph. He did not agree with the realignment suggestions.
- ***It was agreed that Tom would draft a letter indicating the communities' concern of a blinking yellow light at Bolt Hill Road as not being an adequate safety improvement at Route 236 and Bolt Hill Road.***

Next Steps

- Tom Reinauer told the group that other than the action items already discussed, staff would like to set up a public meeting soon. Would January be a good month to have this meeting? Tom explained that he thought breakout groups might be the best way to get public input, similar to the Scarborough Regional Forum recently held (see notes below).
- Diane Brandon suggested that a daytime meeting on Saturday or Sunday would probably be most effective.
- Steve Workman suggested that sooner is better than later and agreed with having a more “hands-on” type of workshop with writing, drawing, discussion in breakout groups.
- Sally Lewin suggested that committee members could also reach out to the public in June at town meetings, by having a table set up with materials to disseminate.

Other Business

- Josh Mack gave an update on Maine DOT's recent regional transportation forum on October 27 in Scarborough. Diane noted that a major issue relating to the 236 area was a focus on tolling inequity for people traveling from the Kittery area to Wells. Tom noted that he has a copy of a recent toll study that is available if anyone is interested. Josh noted that much of the conversation talked about how better coordinated local, regional, and state system management was a major theme at the meeting. Another major theme was that current funding is not keeping up with Maine's needs. Maine DOT is expecting a twenty billion dollar shortfall over the next twenty years to maintain the existing system (one billion dollar shortfall each year for the next twenty years).

- Tom Reinauer noted that SMRPC will soon be holding Service Center meetings (a requirement of a Maine DOT contract), where staff will be asking Kittery Council members what they perceive their needs to be in the next twenty years.
- Tom Reinauer announced that KACTS has begun recruiting committee members and performing research for a Route 1 Regional Corridor Committee. Diane Brandon asked that staff try to schedule 236 and 1 meetings back to back for those people that have interest in both corridors.

Next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 26th at Eliot Town Hall.