

**Route 110-113 Rotary Interchange Study**  
**Public Informational Meeting (PIM) Summary**  
**Thursday, November 9, 2006**

Searles Building  
3<sup>rd</sup> floor – Great Hall  
41 Pleasant Street, Methuen  
7:00 – 9:30 PM

Ethan Britland of the Office of Transportation Planning and Project Manager of the study welcomed attendees and introduced the members of the study team. Ethan said the purpose of the meeting was to introduce the study to the public, present a summary of existing conditions, review projections of future conditions, identify what the study team has identified as issues and constraints and outline how the public will be involved in the study to improve the Route 110/113 Rotary Interchange. Ethan said there would be no discussion of potential alternatives at this meeting but would occur at a public informational meeting in the spring of 2007.

**Public Involvement:** Study team member Jill Barrett said there will be an extensive effort to reach out to the affected community surrounding the Rte 110/113 rotary interchange. A Study Advisory Committee that includes residents has been formed and held two meetings, three public informational meetings are planned, flyers were mailed to households in the project area announcing this and future public meetings, and a website has been set up, [www.methuenrotarystudy.org](http://www.methuenrotarystudy.org) where people can track the progress of the study and submit comments

**Review of Existing Conditions:** George Gefrich, Project Manager of the study team reviewed existing conditions in the study area. He said traffic engineers have examined physical conditions including the geometry of area roadways and intersections, traffic volumes, accident rates, level of service (operating conditions such as delays and safety) and environmental conditions. Currently a number of the unsignalized intersections and approaches to the rotary are at level “F” or failing and some locations of the study area, including the rotary, have crash rates higher than the statewide average.

The area is served by three transit routes and commuter rail and commuter lots. Approximately 800 parking spaces are available for use by park and ride or rail customers. Several thousand commuters use MBTA daily. The study team also reviewed existing land use and environmental conditions. The study area is largely a built environmental with some wetlands and flood plain adjacent to the Merrimack River.

Approximately 800 new residential units are either projected or under construction in both Dracut and Methuen. The study team also identified several parcels, especially in Dracut, that could be developed for industrial or commercial use.



**Summary of Future Conditions:** The study team used a computer simulation model, Transcad, to project future travel conditions in the study area. Study consultant Ed Bromage explained how Transcad models individuals and their families, using basic demographic characteristics such as age, marital status as well as levels of education, economic patterns of work and earnings. The model indicated in the year 2025 congestion and delay in the study area would increase to a level where there would be queuing of vehicles in the rotary during peak travel times.

**Issues Identification and Project Constraints:**

After reviewing existing and future conditions, a list of issues and constraints was developed by the study team.

## ISSUES

### Congestion and delay

- at intersections east and west of the rotary
- at side-street approaches at unsignalized intersections
- on the rotary causing backups/queuing onto I-93
- in AM peak queues on the rotary & Route 110 (Lowell Street) at entrance to I-93 southbound (by year 2026 queues projected to fill entire rotary)
- in PM peak I-93 northbound off-ramp has extremely long queues extending back to the highway (causes accidents)
- detouring from 110 east to Riverside Drive (also affects access to park)
- congestion degrades air quality

### Safety

- high travel speeds on Route 113 west of the rotary
- school bus access on Route 113 west in the AM and PM provides potential conflicts with traffic volumes
- truck usage to and from facilities in Dracut
- rotary has higher rate of crashes than the statewide averages for unsignalized intersections
  - I-93 South off-ramp has safety issues with rotary traffic
- intersections at Lowell Street /N. Lowell Street and at Lowell Street/ Haverhill Street have higher than average crash rates

### Area Growth

- residential and business growth in Dracut will place higher demand on Route 113 west of the rotary.

## CONSTRAINTS

### Existing Land Development

- residential and commercial property takings needed
- large commercial building near the south bound I-93 off-ramp limits possible changes to ramp
- narrow Rte 113 west right-of-way, small setbacks of homes limit the ability to widen road without takings



### **Environmental**

- 100-year and 500- year floodplains to the southwest of the rotary require permits and fill analysis for displacement of floodwaters if any alternative alters the floodplain.
- Wetlands permits and compensation/mitigation for drainage for affected areas required
- Impacts to a swamp west of the rotary and to an emergent wetland to the northeast and east of rotary
- Possible elimination of buffer areas to wetland areas.

**Community Discussion:** At the conclusion of the presentation, there was a lengthy dialogue among community members, including a number of Methuen City Council officials, the study team and Ethan Britland from the Office of Transportation Planning. Listed below are comments made by the public and the response given by the study team.

- Noise does not seem to be identified as an issue. Noise barriers need to be a consideration.  
**Response:** Noise IS an element looked at in the study's environmental evaluation.
- I feel like we're being held hostage by this project because I don't know if it's worth it to invest in improvements to my home. Knowing a timeframe for when improvements may start would help.  
**Response:** The range would be 5-10 years. The project would have to be on a fast track if it started in five years. If you invested in your home, the improvements would be accounted for in an assessment of fair market value. If the improvements would add to your quality of life, then there is not financial reason to hold back on investment.
- Was a cost analysis of the seven alternatives of the I-93 study done?  
**Response:** Yes it was done but the costs were done on 2002-03 construction rates.
- Is it possible the state might shelve the project to improve the rotary if there is no money?  
**Response:** The Office of Transportation is working hard not to let that happen. The goal of this study is to identify alternatives that have (1) reasonable costs and (2) are supported by the community. The state has a good track record of moving projects along that meet these goals so there is a good chance the this project will move through the system and be constructed.
- Is there anything citizens can do to fast track this project?  
**Response:** Stay active. Attend public meetings. Support the work of the Study Advisory Committee. Also much of the funding for the project will come from the federal government and these funds will have to be approved by the local MPO- the Merrimack Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization. It's important for the MPO to understand this project is a community priority.
- What's the recommendation to someone looking to buy a home on Noyes Street?
- The anxiety of people would lessen if people either got noise barriers or fair market value if their house was taken.



- Why not offer noise barriers now to homeowners on Allen and Noyes Streets?  
**Response:** Mass Highway has a priority list for barriers and won't build sound barriers if they are going to be torn down. This interchange is not on the priority list because of this study and the likelihood of improvements being constructed. Putting up noise barriers would also be complicated by the Merrimack River if barrier blocked views of the river.
- Will this project be put on the back shelf and have funds diverted?
- When this study is completed, will there be alternatives? If yes, will we know if there will be takings of houses?  
**Response:** Yes, there will be alternatives at the end of the study. Impacts to homes will be generally known but not verified until later on in the project design phase.
- No more publicity please! It makes it harder for us to sell our homes.
- We feel like we're starting over (from I-93 study three years ago) for this study.
- Dracut has originated problems and impacts (traffic, truck noise) so the town needs to be involved in this study.  
**Response:** The Town of Dracut is actively represented on the Study Advisory Committee.
- When do we get short-term improvements?  
**Response:** Some might be implemented in a matter of months after the conclusion of the study.
- Is the amount of public involvement normal for this type of project?  
**Response:** Yes. In recent years Mass Highway has increased its efforts to involve the public.
- We appreciate Mass Highway having meetings like this. Who know the problems better than those who live here?
- Are there any studies available on air quality of living next to highways?  
**Response:** There have been studies that show if you reduce vehicle idling, air toxins are reduced.
- Do you know how bad air quality impacts are? Will you know later in this study? Will this study do sampling?  
**Response:** We do not assess air quality impacts or do sampling in this study. However, more detailed analysis will be done when there are alternatives to evaluate.
- I appreciate your good will, but can I be sure the real value of my house will be verified if it's taken by the state?  
**Response:** The state has well established procedures for determining property values. The most current information we're aware of are in the towns of Lincoln and Concord. Information on the takings may not necessarily be public, but the town planners in these communities could perhaps help provide information.
- Is it inevitable that there will be takings?  
**Response:** We do not know that takings will be necessary.
- Is there any provision for compensation for pain above value provided by fair market value?  
**Response:** Mass Highway has a detailed process to establish value when there are takings.



- Would you post information on the state's procedures for eminent domain (takings) on the study website?  
**Response:** We are very reluctant to post information on eminent domain on the website at this point in the study because if people see it they may believe that takings are already planned and that is not the case.
- Real estate agents won't take our house for sale because of the publicity three years ago that led the public to believe the project was imminent. Please publicize nothing will happen soon.
- Can noise barriers be the first thing put in once a project starts construction?

**Written Comments:** People who attended the meeting were also encouraged to write down their concerns and suggestions and drop them into a comment box. The following is a list of comments submitted:

- Sound barriers. Install Barriers as a first step to construction. High sound barriers. People's bed rooms are on the 2nd floor. We don't need strobe lights flashing in our bed rooms during night construction.
- The amount of noise needs to be reduced. Alternative #7 from the previous study is the best idea. Burham Road at Riverside Drive is not a major problem. The priority is exit 46 North bound at 93
- Noise barriers never put up on Ramp to 93 North! Sidewalks!
- Educate drivers on what yield means. People entering the rotary think they have the right of way. With an alternative to the rotary where does the traffic go when I-93 North is at a stand still as it is almost every morning?
- My back yard is the off ramp, the rotary, and the 93 highway. If you are going to wait another 5 years to start construction the traffic will be doubled. What are we suppose to do about the noise, pollution and vibrations that are slowly destroying my home? Will we get a sound barrier before the project? Need to do something about the Noise.
- We are concerned about the future of our homes/neighborhood. Also, a big concern for us is the quality of the air as a result of the traffic volume. We have had several incidents of cancer and tumors right on own street (my family has been directly affected by this) and we cannot help but be concerned about the health quality of our environment as related to the heavy volume of traffic and pollution. We also wish to know what will happen to our homes. Do we work in good faith that our homes will not be devalued by the expansion of the rotary project?
- I feel that an air/quality study be put forth promptly to see just how much of an impact this has for the people who live in the affected areas.
- We need to discuss short term solutions - Listen to suggestions from public - Proposed Road (on map now) from 113 to 110 to alleviate traffic from 113 - especially trucks from Dracut. Leave 113 (West of rotary) alone - no taking of homes. Prohibit trucks on 113



- Please do not schedule the spring meeting in Holy Week when most people are at Holy Week Services. The first meeting was scheduled on Holy Thursday when most of or many were at Church at 7 pm.
- When not congested, speed in the rotary is often excessive. When not congested speeding trucks & cars, from the rotary onto 113 at Branch Street is often excessive. Trucks use Bolduc St. from 110 to avoid the rotary AM & PM creating a dangerous situation.
- Re: Rte 113 West of rotary. There is a small fire station on Beane St. When traffic comes to a stand still, cars block intersecting streets, causing a safety concern for fire and/or police vehicles. Is there any possibility that the rotary can be removed and 110 & 113 take the routes they did previously, with on/off ramp redesign. The rush hour travel lanes are a disaster - you can't get on or off the highway.
- There are a lot of accidents at the intersections of Lowell St., Bolduc St and Riverside Drive. Cars heading towards Lowell via Lowell St. traveling quickly down the hill, traffic coming from Riverside Drive taking left towards Lowell onto Lowell Street get hit a lot. I was told that left hand traffic controls would not help. I strongly disagree. There must be traffic controls if that intersection exists in the final plan.
- Something should be done about trucks using Jake Brakes and loud mufflers. Put signs up on off ramps not to use Jake Brakes.
- Keep lights working. Stop building houses.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

