

Route 110-113 Rotary Interchange Study
Study Advisory Committee (SAC) Meeting Summary
Wednesday, March 29, 2006

Searles Building
3rd floor – Great Hall
41 Pleasant Street, Methuen
3:00 – 5:00 PM

In Attendance: *Committee Members or Designated Representatives:* Louann Jendro, Tony Komornick, Gaylord Burke, Maria Kakavitsas, Frank DaSilva, Robert Flynn, Beverly Woods, Chris Metzemackers, Connie Raphael, Karen Courtemarche, Glen Edwards, Stanley Woods, John Whittaker, Jill Stackelin, Colie Ryan, ***Study Team:*** Ethan Britland, Paul Nelson, George Gefrich, Gary Bua, Carla Tillery, Jill Barrett, Sudhir Murthy and Diane Tsitsos.

Meeting Agenda:

- A. Welcome and Introductions**
 - Study Background
 - Purpose and Goals of this Meeting
 - Role of the SAC

- B. Study Overview**
 - Study Area
 - Goals and Objectives
 - Evaluation Criteria
 - Public Participation Plan

- C. Existing Conditions – Progress To-Date**
 - Traffic Analysis
 - Crash Data Analysis
 - Transit Services
 - Socio-Economic Data
 - Environmental Constraints

- D. Questions and Comments**

- E. Study Schedule and Next Steps**

- F. Next Meetings (SAC and Public Informational Meeting)**

A. Welcome and Introductions

Ethan Britland of the Office of Transportation Planning and Project Manager of the study welcomed attendees. Members of the Study Advisory Committee (SAC) and study consultant team introduced themselves. Ethan said this study was building upon the *Route I-93 Corridor Traffic Study*, in which seven alternatives were developed for the Route 110/113 Rotary Interchange but no consensus was achieved due to the lack of local participation at the outset. The recommendation of that study was to look at the 110/113 Rotary in more detail and with local and public participation. He expects the outcome will be a general agreement on the best alternative to improve the rotary area. Ethan emphasized this was a conceptual planning study that would result in a set of recommendations, which would then enter the project initiation and design process before any type of major construction could begin.

Ethan said the Study Advisory Committee had an important role in helping the study team understand the issues, providing input throughout the study process, and identifying an alternative that would be locally supported. George Gefrich said he hoped that working with the SAC would be informal and encouraged members to contact him to discuss concerns.

The primary agenda for the meeting was to discuss the first two tasks in the study's work plan. The consultant team made a [Power Point presentation](#) (2MB PDF file) on the work that had been completed to date and answered questions from SAC members.

B. Study Overview (Task 1)

George Gefrich, Project Manager of the study team reviewed the four elements of Task 1 of the study – defining the study area, goals and objectives, evaluation criteria and the public participation plan.

The study area is Rte 110/113 Methuen Rotary and about a one-half mile east and west of the rotary in Methuen, including the I-93 on and off-ramps (Exit 46). Also included will be Route 113 from Route 38 in Dracut Center to the Methuen Rotary.

The goal of the study is to improve mobility and safety. Objectives include reducing traffic congestion, reducing the frequency of crashes and queuing at the off-ramps onto I-93, improving air quality and developing cost effective alternatives.

Criteria used to evaluate the effectiveness or impacts of alternatives will be mobility, safety, environmental effects, land use and economic development, community cohesion, cost and schedule. Measures of effectiveness include: vehicle delays, crash rates, impacts on air quality wetlands, parks and open space, access to businesses and planned developments, adjacent neighborhoods, cost effectiveness and permitting requirements.

The Public Involvement Plan was briefly reviewed. About one half of the SAC members indicated they had already visited the project website www.methuenrotarystudy.org

There were no revisions suggested by the SAC to any element of Task 1.

C. Existing Conditions (Task 2) Progress to Date

The study team has performed analyses on traffic operations, crash data, transit services, socio economic data and environmental constraints.

Mass Highway conducted traffic counts in January 2006. The data recorded turning movement counts at five intersections (3 signalized, 2 unsignalized) during peak time periods, weekday 7 am to 9 am and 4 pm to 6 pm. Traditional methods of analysis were used to evaluate the level of service in the study area. Level of service is typically defined by the delay (in seconds) a vehicle experiences getting through an intersection. A rating system is used ranging from A (best conditions) to F (worst conditions). Existing conditions at the rotary ranged from A to F, depending on the time of day and location. Analysis of the four approaches to the rotary showed that each leg failed during peak periods. The southbound approach failed during both morning and evening peak periods.

The crash analysis identified three locations where crashes significantly exceeded the state average. These locations are Rte 110/113 Rotary, Lowell Street at North Lowell Street and at Haverhill Street. The majority of crashes (75%) had only property damage and no reported injuries.

To project traffic volumes in the future, the study team will perform travel demand modeling using the Massachusetts Statewide Model as a base. Travel volumes will be forecast for a future year horizon of 2026.

A review of existing transit services, bus and rail, has been completed. There is additional capacity on existing routes, up to 55 seats per hour in each direction for the Lowell-Lawrence bus, and 56 seats per hour for the Methuen-Boston commuter.

Preliminary research on socio-economic conditions has been initiated. To date all information has been gained through secondary sources and will be followed by interviewing municipal representatives. Area population and top industry sectors have been identified.

Screening of environmental resources has been completed. Wetland and water resources exist near the rotary that may require permitting and mitigation. Project runoff will need to be treated before discharged into the Merrimack River. Two species of dragonfly on the Threatened and Endangered list are found near the project area. High and medium density residential development is adjacent to the existing rotary that may lead to concerns about potential noise impacts to nearby residences.

D. Questions and Comments

Q. Will this study take into account new growth occurring in the area?

A. *Yes. This study would use a 20-year planning horizon*

Q. Will this be the last study before we will see results?

A. *The goal of this study is to develop a recommended alternative that is technically and financially feasible and supported by the public. No further study should be needed. If the project is advanced within MassHighway then it will proceed to the Environmental Process as an EA or EIS. At the end of that process it would then proceed to Final Design and ultimately construction.*

Q. Speed, especially by tractor trailers on Route 113 is a problem. Is there a way to measure their speed?

A. *Yes, MassHighway will perform speed counts on Route 113 at various locations*

Q. Are tandem trailers legal on Route 113?

A. *We will research this issue.*

Q. Does entrance to the park on Route 110 impact the traffic operations?

A. *We will look into it for further analysis*

Q. Does data show if crash rates were affected by weather?

A. *Accident reports filed by the police were reviewed. Weather did not appear to be a significant factor. Crashes are likely more related to geometry (physical design) of the rotary area.*

Q. When accident rates were examined, were accidents on the ramps designated as a highway accident or local road accident?

A. *Ramp accidents are considered as a highway accident.*

Q. Do you factor in accidents that were not reported to police? I observe many accidents that are minor where the police are never called. This leads me to believe your accident data is not a true picture of the actual number of accidents that occur.

A. *We can only count accidents that have been reported to the police. However, we are measuring the accident rate of the rotary in relationship to the entire state and it indicates there is a problem even without considering accidents that go unreported.*

Q. Do the crash rates used in the MEV (Million Entering Vehicles) statistic compare rotaries to each other?

A. *No. MEV refers to vehicles entering all signalized and unsignalized intersections.*

Q. Has a study been done on the lane markings that were painted at the rotary and have they made things better? (Most citizen members on the SAC said they thought the lines made navigating the rotary worse.)

A. *No study has been conducted on the effectiveness of the lane markings. But we will look into this issue further.*

Q. Have you considered increasing LRTA bus service on Route 113 in Dracut?

A. *We will look at existing service levels in the area and make recommendations for service adjustments if warranted.*

Q. Do you know the age of the riders on the Water Street bus route?

A. *No. That type of information is not collected for ridership statistics*

Q. Would the study team want to look at a traffic study done for a gas station proposal on Haverhill Street?

A. *Yes, we would like to review all available data.*

Q. I don't agree with the study team's designation of high vs. medium density housing. Would you let me know the criteria you used?

A. *We will let you know the criteria used for land use and discuss it with you.*

Q. Can residents help figure out where traffic is coming from and going to by asking people stopped at the rotary?

A. *Doing an Origin and Destination study was not included in funding this study. However, the Route I-93 Corridor Traffic Study did collect limited traffic pattern data at the rotary and it will be included in the analyses. Further, we do not recommend that anyone talk with motorists in that it may be unsafe.*

Q. Who is paying for this study?

A. *Funding is provided through the most recent Federal Transportation Authorization Act.*

Q. A few years ago money was set aside to pay for improvements at this rotary. Will the earmarked money lapse if not used?

A. *We will check into that and inform the SAC.*

Q. Many commuters using the rotary travel back and forth to Boston, so the morning and evening peak travel times may be 6-9 a.m. and 4-7 p.m.

A. *The typical peak periods are 7-9 AM and 4-6 PM. However, we will look at the traffic count data to determine if expanded peak periods are necessary.*

Q. The tubing for traffic counts on North St were placed at the wrong location because it missed the Branch St traffic, so traffic may have been under counted.

A. *MassHighway can conduct new counts in order to pick up the Branch Street traffic.*

Comments:

- 1) Route 113 queuing west of the interchange backs up as much as a mile, past the cemetery.
- 2) The study team should examine the Dracut people who take rail service to Boston from Lowell.

E. Study Schedule and Next Steps

1. Continue data collection to identify existing deficiencies and alternatives constraints and take new traffic counts at Branch Street
2. Project traffic volumes for future conditions (up to 2026)
3. Establish future year deficiencies and constraints
4. Hold a public informational meeting

F. Next Meetings

A public informational meeting is tentatively scheduled for May. Public Informational Meetings are typically held at 7 PM in the evening for convenience to the general public. Suggestions of where to hold the meeting included the library and neighborhood schools.

The next SAC meeting will be held after the Public Informational Meeting, and notification will be sent via email.