

**Route 110-113 Rotary Interchange Study**  
**Study Advisory Committee (SAC) Meeting Summary**  
**Tuesday, December 11, 2007**

Searles Building  
2<sup>nd</sup> floor conference room  
41 Pleasant Street, Methuen  
3-5 PM

**In Attendance:**

***Committee Members or Designated Representatives:*** Robert Andrew - Methuen City Council, Tony Komornick, Dennis DiZoglio – Merrimack Valley Planning Commission, Eleni Vartimos, Sen. Steven Baddour’s office, Colie Ryan, Chris Metzemaekers – Citizen Advisors, Joe Onorato – MassHighway District 4, LouAnn Gendro – Rep. Colleen Gary’s Office, Glen Edwards - Town of Dracut

***Study Team:*** Ethan Britland, Paul Nelson – Mass EOT, George Gefrich, Joe Cahill, William Grace - TranSystems, Jill Barrett – Fitzgerald & Halliday.

The main agenda items for discussion at the final meeting of the Study Advisory Committee were: 1) review public comments on the study, 2) selection of a preferred alternative from the two alternatives under consideration and 3) outline next steps needed to move from the study phase to a rotary improvement project that can be implemented.

***Short term alternatives:*** There was considerable debate about how to proceed to get the recommended short term alternatives on the ground within the next five years. Some committee members thought it was important to prioritize items because there wasn’t enough earmark money (\$1.5 million) to fund an estimated \$2.5 million in short term improvements. There was worry that projects wouldn’t even be put out to bid if there wasn’t enough money in hand to pay for the project. Joe Onorato of MassHighway said the committee didn’t need to concern itself with prioritizing or knowing where the money would come from to pay for needed improvements. This rotary is a priority because of safety issues. Joe Onorato thought MassHighway could take care of recommended new striping and signage. The SAC suggested prioritizing short term projects as follows:

- Striping
- Signage
- New Signals
- By-pass lanes

***Public participation and comment:*** Jill Barrett reviewed the amount of public participation that occurred in the rotary study. The number of people who attended each public meeting was similar - 85 in 2006, 90 in 2007. But people who came to the last meeting were from a much more dispersed geographical area within Methuen – 14 streets represented in 2006, with an additional 19 streets in 2007. A total of 119 individuals attended a public information meeting, with about 40% of that number attending both meetings.

The SAC reviewed comments – written and verbal – from the final public meeting held on November 8, 2007 to ensure the comments were considered in the study. Many of the concerns expressed were anticipated by the SAC. Residents’ desire for sound barriers to be installed immediately and concern about truck traffic and noise from truck brakes on Route 113 was expected. Sound barriers will be noted in the conclusions of the study but it is unlikely that barriers will be installed before construction begins. Signs prohibiting loud engine braking by trucks could be installed in the rotary area. It was noted that it did not make sense to divert truck traffic to Route 110 as their destination was likely locations on Route 113 in Dracut and there was not a viable connection between these two State roads further west. Also, it’s expected the noise impact of trucks using brakes will diminish when the improvements are made because the turning movements at the 113 signals will be simplified. Truck traffic on Route 113 is not expected to increase significantly because two years ago Dracut passed zoning regulations prohibiting more truck terminals.

Several members of the public objected to placing a new Park & Ride commuter lot along Route 113 west of the rotary because they believed it would put more cars onto Route 113 to access the lot. The study team will re-evaluate potential locations for this type of facility. One person suggested developing a bike route along the Merrimack River rather than devote space along the new route alignment. The Study Team responded the Massachusetts Bicycle Plan has identified a river route for future bike lane development. SAC members said they thought the proposed bicycle shoulder and sidewalks will go a long way towards establishing connectivity between the two sides of the rotary where none presently exists. A problem of orientation of the drainage grates (parallel rather than perpendicular to bicycle tires) can be solved by re-setting the drainage grate during cleaning.

There was some discussion about a proposal by Bob White of Northeast Roundabouts for consideration of a third alternative – keep the rotary but replace three traffic signals east and west of the rotary with roundabouts. Following the November 8 public meeting, the study team performed traffic analysis on the roundabout proposal and concluded that the weaving distance worked on the east side of the rotary but roundabouts would fail (LOS E in the AM, LOS F in the PM) at the Route 113/110 west intersection.

***Preferred Alternative:*** The SAC reviewed each of the two alternatives in detail, 2B (Modified SPUI- Single Point Urban Interchange) and 3A (Partial Cloverleaf) to determine if the group could select one of the two as a preferred alternative. Only one person at the public information meeting suggested 2B as a preferred alternative because the individual thought it was less invasive. The SAC noted that property takings were the same for either alternative and did not view 3A as more invasive. Ethan Britland shared the views of SAC member Stanley Wood of MassHighway who was unable to attend the meeting but wanted to express a preference for Alternative 3A. His preference was based on the following:

- In Alternative 3A there is more spacing between major signalized intersections so there is less potential for backups of stopped vehicles to near intersections. More spacing also helps to install signs properly.
- Major traffic moves (I-93 NB to 113/110 westbound & eastbound PM peak hours, and 113/110 westbound & eastbound to I-93 SB in AM peak hours) would benefit from free right turns.
- No signals under the bridge in Alternative 3A. (Sight distance issues not critical under the bridge.)
- Southbound on-ramp merge would be via two on-ramps for Alternative 3A vs single on-ramp for Alternative 2B. This is simpler and safer.
- Simpler to navigate interchange (loops [3A] vs partial SPUI [2B]). Drivers have familiarity with standard interchange design vs unfamiliar SPUI design.
- Easier to construct (large SPUI bridge creates traffic management issues for I-93).
- Less cost and less time to construct.

Joe Cahill of TranSystems noted the additional cost of 2B was based on the need to build a wider bridge and extend ramps. George Gefrich also said 3A had slightly better traffic performance. Queuing at intersections was the same for each alternative but the single ramp entrance for 2B could create stacking up in the AM peak.

Since 3A had slightly better traffic operation, cost less and was a design more familiar to drivers, the SAC agreed to designate 3A as the preferred alternative.

**Next steps:** The SAC heard about examples of other state projects that were able to move forward because it had an engaged citizen committee that continued to meet after initial study was completed. Dennis DiZoglio of the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission was designated as the SAC member who would take a coordination role for the group. The study team will turn over the list of community members who showed an interest in the study – email contact list and meeting sign-in lists to Dennis. SAC members concluded the meeting by complimenting the study process and the role of the committee in it.