

## ONLINE QUESTIONS/COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

(UPDATED APRIL 19, 2010)

### **Question/Comment #1:**

I enjoyed a wonderful Bicycle Ride through Tiverton and Little Compton yesterday. Unfortunately, I couldn't get to Portsmouth and Newport because the bridge over the Seekonk is Auto only. Is there a solution in the works?

### **AIPC Response to Comment #1:**

*As part of the Transportation Study, we will be looking at bicycle connections within Aquidneck Island and existing and planned connections over the bridges. The latest information we had heard from the RIDOT was that a bike path is proposed to be installed on the north side of the new Sakonnet River Bridge, which connects Tiverton to Portsmouth. We will be gathering additional data on the most current plans and schedule as part of the Study.*

*There is a new Sakonnet Bridge under construction that will provide a bicycle lane to connect Aquidneck Island with Tiverton and beyond. I believe the timeframe for completion is 2014. In the meantime, keep your bike rack intact for crossing over!*

### **Question/Comment #2:**

As you do your study on Aquidneck Island, is there any chance you can do a small quick study during your long term study?? I sent in a letter to the editor at Newport Daily News in May 2005 about my thoughts on traffic flow around Middletown. Specifically about Miantonomi to Green End Ave, Just East of Aquidneck Ave. Since then, we been though Tall Ship Traffic, Road Construction on East & West Main Roads, New Lights, Sidewalks, and currently sewer work on Miantonomi. Still, the backed up traffic on Miantonomi and Green End Ave is the same. There are plans to change the two intersections crossing Green End (Valley & Aquidneck), but can't the State or Town do a quick, non expensive test. I'm just one single voice, so I'm asking you, to ask whoever, wether it be the State or Town. Can you change the duration of the lights and lengthen the cycle times by at least 10-15 more seconds. This way the West Bound traffic on Green End Ave. has time to past and the East bound traffic can begin to flow alleviating the backup that has been occurring for years, literally. (This was monitored and done manually during the tall ships, but when that past, they put it back to the default normal setting.) I can forward the original letter, but will need an email to forward it too. Also, on another note, if you need the timing of any lights in Newport & Middletown, I'm very familiar with the cycles and how they can be and should be tweaked to be more user friendly. Thank you for you time.

### **AIPC Response to Comment #2:**

*Thanks so much for your insightful comments and suggestions. We have contacted RIDOT with regard to their Green End Avenue at Valley Road Project, which was initially scheduled to be advertised for construction in October, but has been reportedly delayed. We will be seeking updated schedules for this project and all RIDOT projects on Aquidneck Island as part of the planning process. We will also pass*

*along your comments and suggested changes to the signal cycle lengths to RIDOT as well.*

*Providing efficient signal timing and coordination on the Island is a major objective of this effort. We are much interested in your observations and thoughts in this regard. I have provided my email below if you would be so kind as to forward me the letter you sent to the editor of the Newport Daily News.*

*I would urge you to stay connected to our website as we progress into the early public outreach stages of the study. The first of a series of public workshops will be scheduled and announced on the website shortly.*

**Question/Comment #3:**

1. Will you summarize the key concepts from previous transportation studies that VHB plans to take advantage of at the first public forum? 2. Please describe the potential for the use of roundabouts. I recently left the Keene NH where the community faced several "problem child" intersections where this worked out well - after overcoming significant public skepticism. The state and local planners secured the consulting services of Barry Crown, a world leader in this field to help.

**AIPC Response to Comment #3:**

*Thank you for questions and interest in the Aquidneck Island Transportation Study. The primary purpose of the first public workshop will be to provide an overview of the transportation study and masterplan development process, and to obtain early public involvement and input. At this very early point in the study process, we want to make sure the study team is doing more listening than speaking - and the focus is not yet on "solutions". That being said, we have certainly provided previous studies, data and reports to the consultant and expect that they will be considered in future technical investigations & alternatives analyses and discussed in future public workshops.*

*With regard to roundabouts, we will certainly be considering this intersection treatment application during the course of the study. I would urge you to stay involved throughout the study process and look forward to seeing you at the first public workshop.*

**Question/Comment #4:**

We are firm supporters of more public transportation and a reduction of vehicular traffic in Newport and on Aquidneck Island.

**AIPC Response to Comment #4:**

*Thank you for your comment and support of public transportation and improved traffic conditions on the Island. I would urge you to attend and participate in our upcoming public workshops and stay connected through our project website. Study updates and upcoming workshop dates can be found there.*

**Question/Comment #5:**

Am very interested in the study and in attending the public/forum meetings. Please add my name and email to your contact list and let me know when and where the meetings will take place. Great job! I look forward to participating and helping where I can.

**AIPC Response to Comment #5:**

*We do apologize for the lateness of our response to your emailed comment and request of August 30<sup>th</sup>. There was a glitch in the transmission of the email. We do hope you were able to attend our first public*

*workshop on September 29<sup>th</sup> and will be able to participate in some or all of the remaining three workshops planned throughout the study process. We have added you to our email contact list to receive updates and notices of future meetings. Thank you for your interest and offer of assistance as well.*

**Question/Comment #6:**

Rt 24 completion was halted in the 1960's due I believe to eminent domain laws benefitting the few instead of the many. That doomed East and West Main to be our "highways" which our casualty and fatality statistics tell us they are not very good highways. It also retards business on the Island as traffic along the eastern corridor generally bypasses the Island (I will drive to Westerly via Providence versus going through Aquidneck Island and I live in Portsmouth!). So, if you want bike paths, pedestrian, and business to flourish, we must return East and West Main to its rightful owners and move "through" traffic to a real highway. Here's the process as I see it: 1. Eminent Domain: work to change eminent domain laws. A good example of this is Sakonnet River Bridge which will be built not in the most engineering friendly spot and took years of fighting delay. Give 150% of values and give displaced Island business' priority to Rt24 highway exit cloverleaves and taxpayer will SAVE time and money! 2. Funding: what's very ironic is the same eminent domain laws in the 60's created the Providence S curve; another RI transportation debacle only now being fixed to it's original 1960's design. Of course, all Aquidneck Island tax dollars are helping to fund the Providence fix! 3. Voter apathy: we've become numb to turning into Glen Farm with a minivan full of kids at 5pm while 3 other lanes zoom by at 50plus MPH. With voter apathy comes elected official apathy. We need someone to recognize the big picture and work for our grandchildren!

**AIPC Response to Comment #6:**

*Thank you so much for your comments and commitment to improving transportation and safety on Aquidneck Island. We appreciate your sentiment regarding big picture planning, which is why we believe this project to be so important - the first truly comprehensive island-wide multi-modal transportation improvement study and masterplan. We urge you to attend and participate in the upcoming first public workshop for the study to be held on:*

***Tuesday, September 29, 2009  
from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.  
@ the Middletown Town Hall  
350 East Main Road  
Middletown, RI 02842***

*Please see the attached flyer and visit our project website at [www.vhb.com/aquidneck](http://www.vhb.com/aquidneck) for more information and continuing updates. We do hope to see you at the workshop.*

**Question/Comment #7:**

Is there a public meeting this month (Sept)? If so, when and where.

**AIPC Response to Comment #7:**

*The first open house and public workshop for the Aquidneck Island Transportation Study will be held on:*

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from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.  
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350 East Main Road***

**Middletown, RI 02842**

Please see the attached flyer and visit our project website at [www.vhb.com/aquidneck](http://www.vhb.com/aquidneck) for more information and continuing updates. We do hope to see you at the workshop.

**Question/Comment #8:**

Any chance of making one of the Main streets (East or West) a continuation of Rt. 24 all the way through to the Newport Bridge? Then do what you can to add bike/pedestrian support to the other main road.

**AIPC Response to Comment #8:**

*Thank you for your suggestions in your email of September 21, 2009. We do apologize for the late response to your comments. There was a glitch in the transmission of the email. If we understand your comments correctly, you are suggesting that one of the two "Main" roads be utilized to continue Route 24 traffic to the Newport Bridge and the other be upgraded to safely support north-south bicycle and pedestrian travel directly on or adjacent to the facility. If we are incorrect in our interpretation, please let us know. Your comments are important to us and will be shared with our Technical Steering Committee. We are still in the data collection and technical investigation stage of the study but these types of suggestions are very important as we advance to the identification and evaluation of alternative improvement scenarios in the future. We urge you to stay involved and connected to the project website as we progress. Again, thank you.*

**Question/Comment #9:**

The American Lung Association in Rhode Island is interested in keeping up with this study.

**AIPC Response to Comment #9:**

*Thank you for contacting us with regard to the ALA's interest in the Aquidneck Island Transportation Study. We are pleased to add you to our email contact list to receive future study updates, information and meeting notifications. We urge you to also stay connected throughout the study process via our project website and future public workshops. If you have not done so already, please take the opportunity to complete our online community survey posted to the project website.*

**Question/Comment #10:**

I was at the meeting last night and I commend you on a good workshop! It was interesting and informative with good input from participants. However, please be aware we had 65 guests, which was good, but they do not really represent the over 100,000 residents of the island. 1/3 of the guests were retired and most of the others part of special interest groups, and almost no one under 40. Please keep in mind many opinions and ideas of this group are not in line with the needs and wants of the entire island community. Yes there were some good ideas and dreams, but in the end 95% of us need to quickly and efficiently get around, on and off the island. This means we can not reduce the size of major roads or devote part of them to bike lanes, among other nicities. Thank you again for including us.

**AIPC Response to Comment #10:**

*Thank you for your comments and for attending last night's public workshop. It is great to hear that you found it both interesting and informative. We too were very pleased with the input, energy and engagement of the participants. Please be assured that we are committed through the public involvement process to continue efforts to reach out to all members of the community from both a geographic and demographic perspective.*

*Again, thank you for attending and taking the time out to provide us your comments and ideas. We very much look forward to seeing you at the next public workshop.*

**Question/Comment #11:**

Unbelievable that there's no transit city bus system, only buses to/from Providence and Bellevue Avenue. (Yea, there's buses that go to/from the shopping centers, too. But a lot of good they are when there's no buses that can take you at least near your home with your bundles after shopping, unless you live right on Broadway, in Park Holm/Newport Heights or Bellevue since those are the only neighborhoods that are served.) Have a great bus system and that'll help cut down on the need to have a car, which is an absolute necessity as it stands now.

**AIPC Response to Comment #11:**

*Thank you for your comments regarding the need for expanded bus service on Aquidneck Island. Improving transit services, frequencies and reliability was a consistent theme heard throughout last night's first AIPC public workshop held on the Aquidneck Island Transportation Study at the Middletown Town Hall. We urge you to stay involved, stay connected to our project website and continue to participate throughout the study process. Again, thank you.*

**Question/Comment #12:**

I attended last night's program at the Middletown town hall. It was very good. I also just completed your on-line survey. It saddens me that your study is simply taking existing transportation pieces and moving them about, adding emphasis here, decreasing emphasis there. A few more people riding increased bus service; an additional handful of people riding bikes on dedicated lanes/paths are nice, but only amounts to lipstick on a pig. The American public has a hundred year history of wedded bliss with the automobile. You will not wean enough of them away from their cars to make a difference. Easier driving on AI will only encourage more car use. More air pollution. By all means proceed with all the inter modal talk you are so fond of, but focus on cleaning up the automobile's pollution. The technology exists or is about to. It will certainly be available by the time anything meaningful being studied now gets implemented. Use a combination of rewards, penalties and deadlines to get AI owners to convert to clean energy powered cars and trucks. Build huge parking facilities at the end of the three bridges and reward visitors who use the low cost electric powered vehicles available at these sites while on the island. The goal by 2030 is to have all vehicles used by owners, visitors and workers (except tractor trailers) here on AI use nonpolluting fuel. I can smell the clean air now. PS: I do this not for me. I do this for my thirteen grandchildren. Your grandchildren, too.

**AIPC Response to Comment #12:**

*First, thank you for attending last night's public workshop. We agree with you that it was a very good start. I am sorry that you feel the study is simplistic in nature but am encouraged by your commitment to improve our transportation system and the environment, which should not be mutually exclusive. Thank you for your suggestions with respect to fuel technologies and the potential use of incentives and disincentives for creating market shifts in our transportation system that reflect community goals/values. These are precisely the types of potential strategies, policies and actions as mentioned last evening that are so important to the development of the Master Plan. We do hope that you will continue to participate and bring new energy and ideas forward to move and continue to shape the planning process. Again, thank you.*

**Question/Comment #13:**

I just want to reiterate my request Tuesday evening: that you publish the significant reduction of climate-change emissions as a primary goal of the study, and you estimate and publish the change in greenhouse gas emissions from each of the actions you are considering for recommendation. Thanks for listening, and for the very well-designed and managed workshop.

**AIPC Response to Comment #13:**

*Thank you for your participating in Tuesday evening's workshop and for providing us your comments and requests, which will be provided to our Technical Steering Committee for their consideration in confirming and refining the study goals, objectives and evaluation criteria. As stated at the meeting, the final framework for the study with respect to goals, objectives and evaluation criteria will be posted on the project website.*

**Question/Comment #14:**

Thank you for a great session last Tuesday. Please keep us informed as to the ideas generated, as well as feasibility/progress with each. My primary interests: 1. Bike station at Gateway Center (similar to Portland Oregon, D.C. etc) 2. Better/Safer way to bike around Spring and Touro St 3. Newport>Providence Ferry -Year-round for commuters, if possible - Higher rates for tourists, (to help fund costs, marketed to tourists!) discounted commuter pass - Powered in part by Newport Biodiesel! :) Thanks again- great work thus far. Now let's bring this energy into action!

**AIPC Response to Comment #14:**

*Thank you for participating in the public workshop Tuesday evening and for your comments and suggestions, which will be provided to the study team and our Technical Steering Committee. Please stay connected to our study website for the most up-to-date information on the study progress and schedule. We look forward to seeing you at the next the public workshop.*

**Question/Comment #15:**

I am very interested in the on going results for the reduction of ghg and the encouragement of alternative transportation methods.

**AIPC Response to Comment #15:**

*Thank you for your recent comment posted to our project website regarding your interest in GHG reductions and encouragement of alternative transportation methods. We welcome your continued interest and participation in the study process and urge you to stay connected to the study website for future updates and notices of meetings.*

**Question/Comment #16:**

I went to the Public Info Meeting on Sept 30. When I was there I got caught up in the wish list sort of mentality of how I wish things were right now. After thinking a little, it is clear that the plans should be a major step toward reducing carbon by 80% by 2050. That is VERY different than smoothing out the roads and improving signal timing. A large part of this might have be education so people understand the urgent need to change the way we think about travel.

**AIPC Response to Comment #16:**

*Thank you for participating in the public workshop last Tuesday evening and for your comments regarding carbon emissions reductions and education. Your comments will be provided to our study team and Technical Steering Committee. Please be assured that while this is a transportation study, it will be*

*conducted within the context of the community's land use, economic and environmental plans. Again, thank you for your comments and we look forward to seeing you at the next public workshop.*

**Question/Comment #17:**

I am happy to see that reducing automobile use on the island is a priority for the study. Specifically, making it easier for visitors to move about the island on foot or by bike will reduce the need for diesel powered tourbuses, lowering the amount of diesel emissions on the island. Newport County is ranked among the 20% worst counties in the country for cancer risk from hazardous air pollutants, of which diesel exhaust is the greatest contributor. We also have to look at diesel emissions from water craft as they contribute significantly to poor air quality on the island. Newport County is among the worst 50% of all counties in the US for carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide and volatile organic compounds pollution. The greatest sources of these air pollutants in Newport are passenger vehicles and pleasure craft. Thank you for taking all of these issues seriously to protect the island's environment and islanders' health.

**AIPC Response to Comment #17:**

*Thank you for your suggestion for improving bicycle and pedestrian travel on the island to reduce reliance on motorized/diesel-powered vehicles and adverse impacts to the environment and the community's quality of life. Your comments and continued participation are very important to the development of the Multi-Modal Transportation Master Plan. We encourage you to stay involved and continue providing input throughout the study process.*

**Question/Comment #18:**

Would like to receive auto emails re any further meetings on the Transportation Study. Additionally, I was not available for the first meeting on Sept 29th--is there any summary of the minutes that is available? If so, please advise how I might access. Thank you.

**AIPC Response to Comment #18:**

*We have added you to our email list to receive automatic updates and notices of future study meetings. The meeting notes of the September 29<sup>th</sup> Public Workshop will be posted shortly.*

**Question/Comment #19:**

As President of the NH Railroad Revitalization Association in Northern New England I have been interested in rail revitalization as part of a balanced multi-modal transportation system not only in my area but throughout New England. Tourism is the universal industry of the region. The major destinations that are the most popular came to prominence because of their accessibility by multiple modes of transportation, rail being the most prominent. However those same destinations are now inaccessible except by automobile. Newport being the classic case. Its popularity is such that the experience of visiting the region could become so intolerable that people may not want to return. The spike in the summer population is such many year round residents wish they would not return. I did read your survey and was glad to see that rail was supported. I actually have several questions.

Will you be evaluating the restoration of rail to your area as part of the restoration of service to New Bedford Fall River? This would reconnect your project area with Boston by rail but also allow access to your area by residents of southern New Hampshire, (MBTA commuter rail) and Maine, (the Downeaster). Will you be you be evaluating restoring rail over the connection to Providence thus allowing a connection to New York? After the "big dig" are there any engineering obstacles left that cannot be addressed?

I noticed your survey was geared to the resident. Considering that your area is a major tourist destination, will your ridership projections reflect the the difference between seasonal and off season ridership? Keeping in mind that the season is no longer the rigid Memorial Day - Labor Day period but is much broader. Like April to New Years. In your project area it could become year round with the right transportation system. Will you be evaluating the effect of public transportation on seasonal and off season air quality? Will you be considering seasonal ferry service from your project area to Long Island or other destinations?

I understand that there may be new development along some of the historic rail corridors. When rail is acknowledged as being viable will a serious mitigation program be developed so that rail can be restored. In NH there is a horrible double standard between rail and highway. In highway construction if the project is wanted enough there are very few obstacles that stand in the way. In rail restoration those same obstacles suddenly become insurmountable. For example with highway construction the effect on neighboring property would be mitigated. The property would be taken for fair market value or sound barriers would be constructed. With rail the project would be dismissed without an evaluation of mitigation options. Such as reduced train speed, sound barriers or history. Some of these same buildings near a rail corridor being proposed for restored service were there during the age of steam rail. I appreciate the time you are taking in reading my comments.

**AIPC Response to Comment #19:**

*Thank you for taking time out of your schedule to participate in the study process. Please understand we are very early in the study process having just held our first public workshop (out of 4 planned over 18 months) and have not completed existing conditions analysis much less the identification of transportation improvement alternatives. Therefore, it is premature to comment on what alternatives will be evaluated as we move forward. That being said, at a planning level, estimates of modal shift for possible rail connections to the Fall River/New Bedford service extension were anticipated. Feasibility studies of major intercity transportation capital improvements are beyond the funding capabilities of this study; however, depending on the outcome of the study it is possible that certain feasibility studies could be identified for funding within the resultant Transportation Improvement Plan. We would encourage you to stay connected to the project website and continue providing your input as alternatives are identified for further study.*

*With regard to your question on whether ridership projections will reflect the difference between seasonal and off season ridership - VHB will be developing seasonal adjustment factors based on numerous outreach tools at their disposal including seasonal traffic data, online surveys conducted, post-card origin-destination surveys (almost 9,000 distributed) and a transit origin-destination postcard survey done through RIPTA.*

*In response to your question on evaluating the effect of public transportation on seasonal and off season air quality, one of the study criteria used to evaluate transportation alternatives will be impacts on air quality. The methodology for doing so will be discussed in future meetings with our Technical Steering Committee. Again, thank you for your questions and comments.*

**Question/Comment #20:**

Once during an event in Newport I was unable to get a cab company to answer the phone. Later, I learned that cabs are licensed for certain locales only. I think it would be in the public interest if extra taxis from outside this locale could be used for special events.

**AIPC Response to Comment #20:**

*Thanks so much for your comment and suggestion. One of the messages we heard clearly at our first public workshop on September 29th was the need to improve traffic management, information and services during the Island's numerous special events. In addressing transportation needs during special events, we agree that it is extremely important to consider all potential resources available to us - including those beyond our municipal and regional boundaries. Your comment and suggestion regarding the potential use of additional taxi service during special events from outside the locale has been provided to our consultant and will also be shared with our Study Steering Committee. Again, thank you for your time and participation.*

**Question/Comment #21:**

You must get firsthand experience about the transportation issues you are working on. Prior to the next public hearing everyone being paid to be part of the transportation study should, indeed must, take a round trip on the RIPTA bus routes #63 (Newport/Middletown) and the #60 (Newport/Providence). FYI the fare is \$1.75 each way. I would also like to suggest that as many members as possible take a bike ride on the island, preferably along the main roads, but don't endanger yourselves. I'll be looking forward to hearing about your observations at the next public hearing.

**AIPC Response to Comment #21:**

*We appreciate your continuing participation and input into the study process. Your comments regarding the need to experience first-hand the transportation issues that you are evaluating has been shared with the entire study team. We do look forward to seeing you at the next public workshop and sharing observations and ideas.*

**Question/Comment #22:**

Ok, I've read the links and am impressed by the comprehensiveness of the study...so far. Time for action. Many of the recommendations in the report's minutes can be taken immediately. --Traffic calming on downtown Newport streets and East and West Main Roads via lane reductions and bike path establishment. Only cost is the paint...see Portsmouth and their part of West Main north of Clements for a perfect example. --Improved RIPTA service and responsiveness. As an example, I am forced to use a car to URI because their first bus in the morning arrives at 8:05, classes begin at 8:00. Why wasn't that schedule designed with thought to URI's schedule? No response from RIPTA at all. There's others. If this project is to be more than an exercise in futility, it will have to prove itself through substantive and timely action. Otherwise just another waste of money evaluating a process we know is broken.

**AIPC Response to Comment #22:**

*Thank you for your comments regarding potential transportation system improvements that may be possible to implement prior to completing the study and developing the multimodal transportation plan. Because this study will result in a plan of recommended operational, capital and program improvements, AIPC made sure to have state and local implementing agencies well represented on the study steering committee (RIDOT, RIPTA, municipalities, etc.). As we are now entering the transportation analysis phase of the project, there may be opportunities for the implementing agencies to advance certain system improvements in advance of the study conclusion. We will certainly share your comments with those agencies should those opportunities arise.*