



Meeting Notes

Attendees: Attached

Date/Time: November 19, 2008 6:00 -8:30 PM

Project No.: 10640.00

Place: Worcester Public Library

Re: Worcester Regional Mobility Study – Public
Informational Meeting 1

Notes taken by: VHB

AGENDA

- Study Team Introductions/Meeting Purpose
- Study Overview and Next Steps
- Break-Out Stations
 - Stations:
 - 1 - Community Considerations/Walking and Bicycling
 - 2 - Public Transportation (Bus, Commuter Rail, Air, Taxi)
 - 3 - Automobile and Truck Travel
 - 4 - Economic Development Considerations/Freight Transportation (Truck, Rail, Air)
 - Summary of Top Mobility Issues in the Urban Core
- Feedback from Break-Out Stations
- Comments

STUDY TEAM INTRODUCTIONS/MEETING PURPOSE

M. Blunt (CMRPC) opened the meeting, provided an overview, and introduced the study consultant team of VHB, COG, and Mullin Associates. D. Cooke (VHB) reviewed the meeting purpose and introduced the members of the Technical Committee and Advisory Group.

STUDY OVERVIEW AND NEXT STEPS

D. Cooke reviewed the study tasks and schedule. The study is comprised of the following six tasks that will run through September 2009:

- Task 1: Framework
- Task 2: Assess Existing/Future Conditions
- Task 3: Major Infrastructure Project Identification
- Task 4: Major Infrastructure Project Evaluation

- Task 5: Mobility Enhancement Options
- Task 6: Final Mobility Plan

D. Cooke reviewed the study area, and highlighted the goals and objectives of the study, as follows:

- Overarching Study Goal - Improve the movement of people and goods through the urban core of Central Massachusetts
- Specific Goals/Objectives
 - Reduce congestion
 - Improve safety
 - Improve transportation choice
 - Develop environmentally sensitive solutions
 - Develop transportation strategies that support economic development
 - Encourage consensus through an open and inclusive process
 - Develop recommendations that target demonstrated needs
 - Develop a range of project-specific recommendations for priority areas that have long-term benefits
 - Develop an Operations and Management Plan for the region

J. Wanat (VHB) reviewed the study website and the public participation plan which includes public meetings, technical/advisory group meetings, and small group focus sessions. The study website is www.vhb.com/worcesterregionalmobility.

M. Paiewonsky (VHB) reviewed the environmental resource mapping from GIS sources, including:

- Wetlands/Water Resources
- Water Supply Protection Areas
- Rare, Threatened and Endangered Species
- Recreation/Conservation Land/ Historic
- Environmental Justice Populations

J. Wanat (VHB) provided an overview of next steps for the study, which included additional public meetings anticipated for January 2009, April/May 2009, and August/September 2009.

BREAKOUT STATIONS

D. Cooke informed the group that for the next 45 minutes the meeting participants would rotate around to four stations where focused discussions on key issues will occur. At each station, study team members will facilitate the discussion and take notes. At the end of the breakout sessions, the study team members will report back to the overall group on what they heard.

The following feedback was provided during the breakout stations:

STATION 1 - Community Considerations/Walking and Bicycling

- Completion of Blackstone Valley Bike path will improve multimodal access to center of the city
- Education about design and implementation of walkable communities is needed

- All of the city's major squares are a hazard for bicyclists and pedestrians
- Make more communities walkable; funding is an issue; bike accommodations along major streets should be emphasized
- Integrate bikeways/pedestrian ways with highway construction
- Connect bike/walkways between neighborhoods
- Sidewalk safety is an issue in the City of Worcester, sidewalks are not maintained especially in the winter (snow/ice clearing)
- Rethink the bicycle-train connection (bikes on trains); same concept should be applied to buses
- Connection to Worcester Blackstone Valley is important for economic development
- Lack of funding for bikeways; slow process even if funding is available
- Need more attention to crosswalks (e.g. Shrewsbury/White City Plaza and housing projects around Shrewsbury)
- A regional sidewalk study for inter-connectability is needed, especially around schools
- Better bus transfers downtown for disabled/elderly; improved walkways needed
- Improve pedestrian/bicycle connections at destinations/hubs
- Downtown areas need to be ADA accessible for visual impaired with audible signals
- Safe/connected sidewalks encourages bus and walk commuters
- Culturally, pedestrians are not given right of way
- Planning process needs to include bike/pedways
- Local conditions – links between neighborhoods are lacking, not just for recreational but commuter walk/bike
- Walking for elderly/disabled should be given considerations (urban living)
- Audible crosswalk signals are desirable
- Land-use for towns/cities need to give consideration for walking/biking
- More bike safety/bike lanes; bicycle safety on media/commercials
- UMASS Campus on Route 9 - consideration for bike/pedestrian enhancements, including downtown connections

- Lincoln Street Shopping Plaza – enhance pedestrian accommodations from transit
- Research/survey on new technologies for painting the sidewalks/walking signs
- Salisbury Street/WPI Campus (Institute Road)/Union Station roundabout – candidate areas to consider strobe lights in the pavement for pedestrians at crosswalks
- Not enough sidewalks; the disabled are blocked on lots of trails; environmental justice – access from trails is not there
- UMASS Medical staff/students - biking/walking not viable, not safe; public transportation is not very convenient
- Pedestrian/bike accommodations in environmental justice areas are lacking
- More identified bike/pedestrian paths, both commuter and recreational
- Improve bike/pedestrian access to the lake and Urban Audubon (identify the route)
- Better connect neighborhoods (esp. Salisbury); very residential areas with schools lacking sidewalks
- Accessibility on sidewalks for disabled/blind/elderly/school children is lacking
- Sidewalks and crosswalks are lacking on Goddard Memorial Drive; there is no sidewalk from Airport Drive to Main Street at the bus-stops
- Many pedestrian signals need an upgrade
- Degraded sidewalks are a problem; recurring issue every winter where snow is plowed into the sidewalks or sidewalks are not cleared (City of Worcester is working on stronger penalties)

STATION 2 – Public Transportation (Bus, Commuter Rail, Air, Taxi)

- Consider transit oriented development at Union Station
- Lack of true transit linkages at Union Station/City Hall
- Consider Commuter Rail service to Providence – Blackstone corridor
- Improved linkages from commuter rail stations to employment, housing; need more commuter rail options
- Align bus schedules with Framingham CR line – more connections; Union Station should be hub
- Security of buses is a concern

- Need to address reverse commute and improved east-west transit access
- Rte 128 & 495 need transit options (no circumferential service)
- Possibility for commuter rail to the east through the existing Clinton/Ayer line (if there can't be more trains on the Framingham line)
- Possibility for Trolley/light rail within Worcester
- Limited bus service in Worcester
- Paratransit limitations (3/4 mile) from bus stops; should be door-to-door not curb-to-curb)
- RTA should service entire community
- Bus schedule limitations (need a coordinated services plan)
- Strengthen transit connections - customers, employers, housing
- Limited transit access to Airport (both road and transit); consider rail to Union Station from Airport
- Linking city and suburban Routes (Drop-off to pick-up)
- Better service needed to area colleges
- "Ride" type service here could/should be stand alone (dial-a-ride) more responsive to origins/destinations
- More WRTA "flex" routes
- Consider light rail on Route 9
- Millbury Street Super Wal-Mart development - consider using connection to P & W railroad
- Rail is underutilized
- Woonsocket Railroad Study - potential demand for light rail to Union Station
- Future planning should always consider public transit
- Need for a single transfer point
- Need for more circular routes/cross-town
- Need to better understand needs of disabled to provide useful service
- More ride matching services are needed

STATION 3 – Automobile and Truck Travel

- I-290 Eastbound – congestion caused by closely spaced ramps
- Burncoat/Lincoln Street – Signage issues
- Kelley Square works well – if you know it – horrible if you don't know it
- W. Boylston Industrial Area – only truck access is through residential area; consider Route 140 access
- East-west travel through the city is huge issue
- Route 9 Park Avenue section is the most congested with too many access points creating conflicts
- Look at the West Main St. interchange; consider access management onto Route 146
- Need better enforcement of the 50 MPH speed limit on I-290
- Getting through city is difficult – there are no straight roads; no grid system
- Route 9 (Highland Street/Park Avenue) is unreliable – too many closely spaced signals
- Signal coordination/synchronization on major streets is needed
- Proposals for east-west connections have environmental and community issues but should be studied in addition to improvements on existing east-west roads
- Problem area on Route 140 in N. Grafton at the railroad bridge
- Westborough Center – Rt. 30 underpass issues at the center
- Congestion is caused by lacking public transit use
- Suggested improvements at Kelley Square – depressing Harding Street to create a grade separation; look at Millbury Street at the Burger King; this will be important with the Canal District plans and possibly daylighting the channel at Water Street
- Belmont Street and Highland Street corridors need an overhaul
- Consider light rail options or transit signal priority along congested corridors
- Consider a rail link from Union Station to the Airport
- Belmont Street and Lake Avenue are congested
- It can take 30-40 minutes to get from South Worcester to West Worcester; need improved east-west roads

- Enhance public transit; link employment with economic development corridors and employment centers
- Cut-through traffic is a big problem; solution is to improve mobility on high capacity roads meant to carry the traffic and discourage use of neighborhood streets
- Pedestrian lights are very important and lacking throughout Worcester; not many audible signals
- There is a large disabled population, parking is difficult
- Washington Square roundabout properly designed to slow traffic but still not ideal for pedestrian crossing (much better than rotary); activate the wiring to the pedestrian lights at the roundabout
- Color blind issues with flashing lights
- Airport access is lacking; east-west travel is a challenge; the Airport and industrial area surrounding the airport is an important economic engine
- Signage on I-290 could be improved; through traffic tends to stay right making merging difficult; too many lane drops and not enough on-ramp distance; closely spaced on- and off-ramps cause the bottlenecks
- Consider a ramp to I-290 from Plantation Street
- All movements are not accommodated at I-290/Route 146 interchange; no connection from 146 Northbound to 290 Westbound resulting in use of Cambridge Street to Southbridge Street; no connection from I-290 Eastbound to Route 140 Southbound (Southbridge Street to Cambridge Street) – MHD is adding signage
- No direct connections between Route 146 to I-90 (need to use Route 20 connector)
- Interstate to Interstate direct connections are lacking at I-395/I-90 – no direct connection (need to take Southbridge Street/Route 12)
- 290/146 repavement is a big improvement
- Southbridge Street (Route 12) is a good redundant road with I- 290 (serve as a bypass); at the railroad bridge there is a constraint that prevents widening
- Route 12 is good alternate to I-190 in north
- Not a lot of redundant arterials
- Full access interchange at Hope Avenue would be desirable for the future (especially improved airport access)

STATION 4 – Economic Development Considerations/Freight Transportation (Truck, Rail, Air)

- Improve rail access to economic development areas
- Distribution center considerations
- Better linkages between development and land use planning
- Region needs a viable airport and access out to a 20 to 30 year window
- City Planning considerations
- Consider tax incentives for business serviced by rail
- Regional master planning and zoning considerations
- Businesses leaving city vs. businesses coming in; do the data reflect master plans?
- How to link this study with economic development – how to enhance ED with transportation planning
- Need for better/more effective public information about movement of goods and services
- Grafton/Upton RR outside study area – future economic development
- Rail spur considerations to airport/Union Station
- Some organization needs to assemble local plans, synthesize, identify holes/gaps from regional perspective
- Transportation planning for economic development should look not only at major interchanges but also secondary roads.
- Communication of rail opportunities/expansion
- Process needs to account for interests of communities affected by recommendations of this study, especially with respect to airport access
- Process (for this project) should maximize avenues for public information/public participation
- Provide community links from town websites to the study website
- Preserve rail access for rail dependent business (right-of-way preservation)
- Economic development for airport dependent business (include access)
- Improve truck access along Route 20 to service economic development
- Regional environmental council

- Public should know who is on the advisory/technical committee groups for this study
- Freight/commuter rail balance – need to stay informed on this issue
- Creating priorities for economic development
- What is meant by economic development; needs to be understood in order to assure that type of transportation facilities are appropriate to economic development objectives

COMMENTS

The following written comments were received from the surveys at the meeting:

- Route 290 Eastbound during the morning commute is very busy; poor signage
- Route 12 North at Cambridge/Hammond Streets need left-turn arrows
- There is a lack of rail services from the west
- Open up one-way streets to two-way traffic to ease congestion on Highland Avenue
- I-290 does not work well and results in congestion on other roads like Route 146
- Trains need more service during rush hours and midday; need to be able to take bikes on trains at rush hour
- Most roads are somewhat hazardous for cycling – marking for bike lanes should be broadened
- Stop lights on Route 146 should be removed
- Need an additional on-ramp from Route 146 Northbound to I-290 Eastbound
- Existing bike paths do not provide a route for bicycle commuting; it is a recreation path and should be referred to as such; users include walkers, joggers, tricyclists, strollers, and dog walkers.
- The existing paratransit system works well
- Transportation is a major concern for the disabled; ADA compliance on sidewalks and crosswalks need to be looked at, there are many obstacles
- WRTA service works well
- Bicycle safety is lacking and needs to be improved
- Provide evaluation criteria to the public for feedback

- A shuttle from the train station to the airport makes sense
- Traffic signal timing and phasing needs to be updated regularly
- Passage on snow clogged sidewalks is a problem
- More public transportation for persons with disabilities
- Safe crossing for pedestrians (ADA) should be a priority
- There is a lack of Commuter Rail service to Boston midday
- Congestion in the downtown area, light system and timing should be changed because it bottlenecks at Main/Pearl, Main/Elm, and other downtown locations
- The crosswalk on Chestnut Street is not safe because cars do not stop for pedestrians crossing the street

The following comments were received from the project website survey:

- WRTA bus system is very reliable
- School Bus service for Disabled is good
- The bus system fails its patrons, in that it does not serve the commute pattern well, nor is there sufficient frequency to make it reliable; the system does very little to attract riders other than those who are captive to it
- The traffic signal system seems designed to completely impede traffic and lengthen commute times by unreasonable measures of delay
- Fairly good roads on certain commuting routes; getting around by car is pretty good
- Chandler Street/Shrewsbury Street/Plantation Street work well
- Lacking pedestrian/bicycle mobility
- Heavy automobile dependence
- Road maintenance is deferred due to funding
- Transit enhancements are deferred due to funding
- Safety for the handicapped
- Bicycling through Worcester to Shrewsbury, Grafton, Millbury, Auburn is not conducive; need to develop a safer network of bicycle routes

- Pedestrians - Downtown Worcester roadways need to be redesigned to better balance pedestrian needs - current roadways just serve needs of car
- Traveling by car on Route 9 near Lincoln Center in Worcester is difficult
- Frequently a traffic jam exists near the I-290 turnoff from Route 9 and UMass Memorial Medical Center (Belmont Street)
- Immediately west of Lincoln Center on Route 9, a green light signal tells people going BOTH east and west at the same time that it's safe to proceed, though some may think it's safe to turn left onto Main St when they might collide into incoming traffic
- Need handicap access and safety programs
- Conduct a survey through the Telegram and Gazette to draw public opinion of the transit system from outside the captive ridership pool
- Worcester has a lot going for it but everyone drives to their destination then gets in the car and drives to their next destination; improving walkability, starting with the downtown, would have a tremendous economic impact on the city
- You can't walk safely on any of the West side neighborhoods; there are no sidewalks on Salisbury Street, Moreland Street, Mill Street, and Flagg Street
- Suggest changes in the traffic light on Route 9 where Main St. and Highland St connect to reduce risk of collision from any who might wish to turn from Route 9 onto Main Street
- No cars should be allowed to park on Belmont Street, Worcester in the vicinity of UMass Memorial Medical Center in order to reduce traffic congestion and facilitate emergency access to the hospital from both ambulances and patients
- Due to the increased number of people moving to the area there's a marked increase in vehicular congestion on the roadways; at rush hours there's typically a 3 to 5 mile backup from Lincoln Square to Tatnuck Square; this however is not an isolated problem as all major public ways in Worcester are gridlocked
- Many traffic signals need to be retimed, roads need repaving and absolutely need to be widened (especially for commercial vehicles)
- Some areas are unsafe due to road conditions (i.e. Belmont and Plantation Streets where the roads are uneven); some are unsafe due to poor pavement markings (turn lanes, pedestrian).
- For some businesses to prosper (e.g. at the airport), eminent domain may be needed to expand the roads.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 PM. Slides from the meeting will be posted to the project website.

**Worcester Regional Mobility Study
Public Informational Meeting #1
November 19, 2008
6:00 to 8:30 PM Worcester Public Library**

NAME	PHONE	EMAIL
John F Knipe Jr	(508)841 8513	
Pamela Alvin	508 595 9991	
Hannah Mathew	617-973-7477	hannah.mathew@cmrp.org
Shirley Shivar	508-929-3903	
William M. Morengo Jr.	508-791-0403	william10302001@yahoo.com
Randell Orme	774-242-1426	RandellO@charterinternet.com
BARRY LORION		
BOB FREY		
Carolyn Gordon, MA Comm for the Blind	508 754 1148	carolyn.gordon@masstate.us
Deborah Johnson		deborah.name.johnson@state.ma.us
Erle Denoncourt	508-841-8502	edenanco@b4.ci.shrewsbury.ma.us
Mary Ellen Blunt	508-459-3337	mblunt@cmrpc.org
EMIG DAUTMANIS	508-958-2648	
Deborah S. Orzack	508-792-9761	windriderch@charter.net
Laurie Connors	508-865-4754	lconnors@townofmillbury.net
Phil Nyberg	508-865-6434	pnyberg13@gmail.com
BRAD LAWSON	508-853-2835	VBL@GIS.NET
Marguerite Shaw Dudley	508-853-2835	hematoma@comcast.net
Debbie Malone	774-670-3708	dmalone10@verizon.net
Paul J. Jiricek	508-831-1431	dpr5152@yahoo.com

**Worcester Regional Mobility Study
Public Informational Meeting #1
November 19, 2008
6:00 to 8:30 PM Worcester Public Library**

NAME	PHONE	EMAIL
Dan Benoit	508 756-3262	dano@benoitreardon.com
Bob Ropes	781-465-9018	BOBRJRT@aol.com
JAN KRADVIC	617-566-3591	JKRADVIC@MASSPORT.COM
Karen Poutre	508-792-7545	karen.poutre@state.ma.us
Celia Brown	508 842 6735	celia@townisp.com
Kim McCoy	508 853 6477	mcbstone@yahoo.com
Jo L/et	508/340-9967	P.O. Box 16001
JOE WAWAT		Worc. 01601
BILL TSAKNOPOULIS	508-856-6508	UMASS
Jim O'Neil		State Rep.
Michelle Harris	413-284-1550	TOWN OF W. BOYLSTON DMR
Joe Borbone	508-929-1300	BORBONEJ@ci.worcester.ma.us
Lee Dillard Adams	508.868.4270	ldadams@inbox.com
Paul Adams	508 868 6177	podams@inbox.com
John BECHARD	508 752-1001	JBECHARD@VHIB.COM
Tim McGeourthy	508-799-1400,240	mcgeourthyt@ci.worcester.ma.us
Karin Valentine Goins	508-752-9742	kvgoins@charter.net
John Kravits	617 568-3500	JKravits@Massport.
Mike Dennis	508-791-0401	Mike.dennis99@gmail.com
John LaPointe	508-887-5809	GLAZ@aol.com

