



**NH 111 Corridor & Wall Street Extension Feasibility Study  
Project Advisory Meeting  
Windham Planning & Development Office  
Minutes**

December 7, 2010

**Members Present:** Bob Ashburn, Lee Maloney, Gerry Lewis, David Sullivan, Bruce Breton, Thomas McPherson and Bob Winmill.

**Project Staff Present:** Laura Scott, (Windham); Gene McCarthy, Mike MacDonald (McFarland-Johnson); and Cliff Sinnott (RPC).

**1. Welcome/Communications/Public Comment**

Attendees introduced themselves and stated what organization they represented.

**2. PAC Meeting Summary #12**

**McCarthy** commented that the statement attributed to him on Page 2 under B. Wall Street is not accurate and should be re-phrased as 'the Wall Street extension does not presently show enough transportation benefit to overcome considerable environmental impact considerations.' **Scott** clarified that she was asked to check on a presentation date for the local official meeting once the Committee was ready to move ahead with that meeting (last sentence of #7. Local Officials Meetings).

**3. Review/Approve Revised Problem and Vision Statements**

**Sinnott** received feedback from PAC member Ross McLeod that his comment made at the public information meeting has not been taken into account. He had commented at the meeting that the Problem Statement was inaccurate in asserting that the town center lacks 'public utilities.' **Sinnott** thinks the Statement should specify that it is the lack of water and sewer facilities that was been an obstacle to the development of the town center, not 'public utilities' in general. Members agreed to change lack of public utilities to a lack of public water and sewer.

**Sinnott** stated Maloney would like wording added in the problem and vision statements about the lack of and need for public transportation options. **Maloney** stated the town is not currently a walkable community and the committee should take public transportation into consideration in the event that a fixed route through town becomes a reality. **Sinnott** suggested that the following be added to the problem statement: 'with a lack of public water and sewer, a lack of public transportation'. Members agreed with the change.

**Maloney** stated as the price of gas continues to rise, a lot more people will take public

transportation busses and trains. She gave an explanation of current public transportation options in the area.

**Maloney** stated she would like the words 'pedestrian friendly' to remain in the vision statement. **McCarthy** stated those words were removed because of comments received at the public information meeting. **Lewis** stated the consensus from the public meeting was that although most people want a village center feel, people really are not going to park and walk around because of the volume of traffic that 111 handles. **Scott** stated most people at the meeting stated they are not going to walk around Windham.

**Sullivan** stated he agrees with Maloney, the group at the meeting was a small portion of the town and that 'pedestrian friendly' should remain in the vision statement. **Sinnott** said what he heard at the meeting was not that people were dismissing 'pedestrian friendly', but that the vision statement seemed to be too focused on those issues and on the town center goal and ignored other transportation issues in the corridor itself.

**McCarthy** stated at the kick-off meeting, (there were more people in attendance) those in attendance wanted a 'pedestrian friendly' village center as a strong element. Different people at different meetings have different opinions. That's why there is a committee, so that members can represent the majority consensus.

**Scott** stated if 'pedestrian friendly' is removed, the remaining vision statement still encourages working towards a pedestrian friendly feel of the area. **Maloney** stated she still would like 'pedestrian friendly' to remain in the vision statement. **Sullivan** agreed. **Lewis** stated he has reservations about making 'pedestrian friendly' the focus because he doesn't think that the statement is indicative of society today. There are other areas in the state that are pedestrian friendly. People will walk to stores that are connected to each other, but will drive to a different plazas if they are not close together and connected.

**Sinnott** stated this study is in part a long term planning vision, which should set a direction for the future improvements on NH111 that are compatible with the plans or goals for the town center. He continued that the bulk of the PAC's recent discussion has been about the status of the Route 111 corridor, in terms of the road profile, configuration, etc., from I-93 to the South Lowell Road intersection, whereas earlier we focused on the village center issues. 'Pedestrian friendly' in the village center and adjacent commercial area does not necessarily need to be applied to the entire corridor. We should be dealing with both the corridor improvement questions (roundabouts vs signals, number of lanes, access management, etc.) and also the specific design issues that are particular to the village area, (sidewalks, connectivity to commercial area, landscaping and architectural design, etc.). Discussion ensued about existing sidewalks in town and how useful they are.

**Maloney** suggested 'pedestrian friendly' be replaced with a livable, walkable village center. **McCarthy** stated committee members need to be comfortable with their problem and vision statements and asked members for their decision on the wording of both. **Sullivan** stated he agrees with 'pedestrian friendly', but not walkable and explained why. **Breton** gave his opinion about crossing Route 111. **McPherson** stated he agrees with Lewis, that most of Windham is not laid out to walk around. He is not decided whether to keep 'pedestrian friendly' in the statement.

**Sinnott** emphasized that the vision can have elements that are appropriate to some parts of the corridor and not others. Discussion ensued about sidewalks and maintenance of them. **Scott** stated if the corridor is planned properly than village center should happen. **Sinnott** suggested that if the vision statement was broadened to state "here is what is envisioned for the corridor and it will be done in such a way that the village center develops in such a way, over time, to meet our goals."

**McPherson** suggested the following language for the vision statement “the historic town center of Windham can become a pedestrian friendly village by assessing improved road systems”. **Sullivan** stated if the words “pedestrian friendly” are removed, it does not mean the town center will not have pedestrian friendly abilities in the final plan because it states “served by multiple modes of transportation”. He is OK with striking “pedestrian friendly” as long as the committee is not giving up possible sidewalks along the corridor.

**Sullivan** made a friendly motion to remove “pedestrian friendly” from the vision statement. He revised the first sentence to read “The historic town center of Windham, NH, will become a vibrant village center accessed by an improved Route 111 corridor system that serves multiply modes of travel more safely and efficiently”.

**Sinnott** stated there should be wording in the statement about what the committee is trying to achieve in the corridor. The committee is trying create a corridor that functions efficiently, serving existing and future growth, but does so in a way that is compatible with a town center.

**Sinnott** stated one of the things that has been driving the corridor design itself is the aesthetics of the corridor. The town has been trying to avoid a super highway through the middle of town; it is not well reflected in the vision statement.

**Scott** suggested a further changes to the first sentence: “The historic town center of Windham, NH, will become a vibrant village center accessed by an improved Route 111 corridor system that serves multiply modes of travel more safely and efficiently in an aesthetically pleasing form”. Members decided to change the first sentence to the above.

**McCarthy** said that in the interest of time he and **Sinnott** would develop a revised problem and vision statement document and try to capture the intent of what has been expressed here, which may require some additional editing. This will be sent out prior to the next meeting.

#### **4. Consensus Decision: Preferred Alternates & Approaches**

**Sinnott** stated the goal of this meeting has been to choose a consensus of preferred alternatives and approaches for the corridor. If this is accomplished today, then Scott can ask that this committee to be placed on a Board of Selectmen agenda for a presentation to update them on the project and explain the preferred alternative.

**McCarthy** stated at the last meeting the consensus was that the Wall Street option would not be part of the Committee’s formal recommendation for this project, but that it will be left in the study for future reconsideration. The Wall Street option may have more significant and important traffic benefits to the town center in the future and therefore should be considered again in the future.

**McCarthy** stated the 111 bypass is not reasonable and is off the table. The committee needs to reach a consensus of the long term recommendation for the existing corridor. The plan developed after the last two meetings is: create a corridor that has a lower speed that it is not a super highway; has a four lane roadway with three 2-lane roundabouts: one at Wall Street, the Post Office/Village Green and at North Lowell Road/Fellows; the signal at South Lowell/Hardwood would be upgraded.

**Maloney** asked how bike lanes works with roundabouts? **McCarthy** stated two ways: an avid cyclist will be able to use the roundabout the same as the roadway. For the recreational bicyclist who isn’t comfortable riding through a roundabout, there are bike ramps. As you approach the roundabout, you get off the bike and walk around on the sidewalk.

**Maloney** asked if there is a benefit to having a roundabout at the Post Office and could one of the roundabouts be moved down towards the Route 28 and 111 intersection? **McCarthy** stated the plan originally had 4 roundabouts. One of the concepts is a median the entire corridor with no left turns. The spacing of each roundabout is about 1/3 mile at the existing intersection locations. **Scott** stated if the senior housing project is built, it will utilize the Post Office intersection.

Further discussion ensued about the Village Green property.

**Winmill** asked the cost difference between a two-lane roundabout and a four-way stop. **McCarthy** stated cost estimates are not completed yet, but from a construction standpoint, costs are usually comparable. Roundabouts usually take up more property/real estate at the circle, so ROW costs are higher, but signal equipment and building turning lanes add to the cost of a conventional intersection – so they more or less balance out.

**Winmill** stated as a commercial operator he is 100% against roundabouts because they will cause significant problems for commercial trucks. He believes that fire truck response time will also be impaired. Roundabouts on Route 111 will force larger vehicles to use alternate routes and impact property values not in Windham. **McCarthy** responded that many of the difficulties that have been referenced have addressed in improved design; where they are installed they are generally functioning well, even in corridors with high truck volumes – such as the Malta NY example shown in the video. He understands they are not necessarily preferred by large trucks, but to address the Town's vision for this corridor does require finding a balance between what is best for the through traffic and what is best for the community.

**McPherson** stated from a fire response perspective, he doesn't know a lot about roundabouts, he has not heard feedback from other departments. **McCarthy** stated from DOT's perspective, the largest truck allowed on the road has to be able to go through the roundabout with a passenger car in the other lane. The design needs to be approved before DOT will allow construction. Discussion ensued. **Lewis** stated he is in favor of roundabouts. **McCarthy** stated there would be curb cuts along the median for emergency vehicle access only.

**Sinnott** stated if the above is chosen as the committee's choice, there should be a 'minority report' saying there was not complete consensus and explaining the concerns expressed.

McCarthy showed a roundabout slideshow and discussion ensued with members.

(Tape ended)

## **5. Local Officials Meetings**

Discussion was taken up on the proposed Local Officials meeting. It was determined that it would be best for the Selectmen to 'host' the presentation at one of their meeting, at which other Boards (Planning, Conservation Commission, HDC, Economic Development?) would be invited to attend. Sinnott said the prime objective of the meeting was to determine if PAC's consensus on the corridor preferred alternative would be supported the Selectmen and other local officials.

January 24<sup>th</sup> was selected for the date of the meeting; Scott or Sullivan will request time on the agenda for the meeting. It was also determined that presentation materials would be sent out to the BOS members and made available on the project website by January 13<sup>th</sup>.

The Committee will meet on Thursday January 6<sup>th</sup> to ensure that we are ready for local official meeting.

**6. NEW ITEM: Incorporating transit (services & facilities) into the 111 corridor – Committee Discussion**

**Lee Maloney** explained her concern that the project may not be incorporating future need of the public transit system in the corridor design. No east-west fixed route service is planned at the present time for NH111, but in the long term there may well be such service and the corridor design should accommodate facilities such as transit stops in the village center and perhaps several other locations, and also include pedestrian facilities to help transit users access the service. **McCarthy** said those elements will definitely be incorporated into the corridor conceptual plan.

**7. Preliminary results from No. Lowell Rd. classification counts**

McCarthy presented the updated results from the truck classification count conducted for North Lowell Road to determine the volume of trucks on the road and whether the Windham Weigh Station has an impact on this volume. A calendar was presented showing the data for a three week period in September/October. The calendar indicated the total number of trucks, the total volume of vehicles, and the percentage of trucks. It was explained that during the counting period the weigh station was hit by lightning and was closed for the majority of the counting period. There were only two days where the scales were open.

The calendar indicated the days and the hours for those days that the scales were open and compared the truck percentages for those times with times for other days that week and the previous week. In many cases the truck volume was higher for the times the scales were closed, which was not expected because the belief is that the scales cause trucks to divert to North Lowell Road. McCarthy stated that it was unfortunate that the scales were closed because there is not sufficient data to determine a correlation in the percentage of trucks. The counts did show that the overall percentage of trucks is quite low. It was agreed that there was no need to investigate this issue further since the evaluation proved the volume of trucks on North Lowell Road is low.

**8. Other Business**

A. Status of Contract Extension Request – Sinnott reported that the contract extension was approved; the end date is now June 30, 2011, but the draft report will be completed well before that.

B. Other; Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 6, 2010, at 9 a.m.

**9. Adjourn**

Meeting adjourned at 10:50 a.m.

Respectfully submitted (based on tape transcription and additional summary from C. Sinnott and G. McCarthy),

Roxanne M. Rines

Recording Secretary