

**Saco Route 112 / Exit 36 Area Transportation Study
Public Meeting Report
September 27, 2018**

Staff/Agency/Consultants attending: *Patrick Fox, City of Saco; Nathan Howard, MaineDOT; Bruce Van Note, Maine Turnpike Authority; Erin Courtney, Maine Turnpike Authority; Tom Errico, T.Y. Lin; Carol Morris, Morris Communications*

Patrick Fox, Saco Public Works Director, opened the meeting by thanking everyone for coming to this second meeting. For those who had not been at the first meeting, he explained that the traffic was not just a Saco issue, but also a regional issue, and so the City is working with MaineDOT and the Maine Turnpike Authority, to provide a broader perspective as well as more ability to implement larger solutions. He introduced Carol Morris, Morris Communications, who is handling public outreach for the consulting team.

Agenda: Carol introduced the members of the study team and provided a summary of the evening's agenda, noting that she and Tom Errico, study team manager, would be covering all the possible alternatives being considered.

Study Purpose and Study Area: Carol showed the study area map and reiterated that the Study Purpose was the guiding statement for the study, the basis on which final decisions would be made: *Evaluate and identify long-term solutions to regional transportation issues associated with westerly connections from I-95 in the vicinity of Exit 36. Specifically, the purpose of the Study is to evaluate the potential for managing and improving access to Route 112, making safety improvements at intersections, maintaining and improving easy access to and from the Turnpike, and separating local and through traffic as much as practicable. Recommendations are subject to foreseeable funding and in the context of safety and mobility needs statewide.*

General Process/Regulations: Carol explained that analysis is essential to making decisions on the final actions/alternatives and that all reasonable solutions must be considered. She reminded everyone that funding is constrained.

Decision Matrix: Carol noted that there are multiple problems that the study is assessing (congestion on Route 112 west of the Turnpike, congestion at Route 112/Industrial Park Road intersection, congestion at Turnpike ramps, traffic on neighborhood streets, safety issues at North St. intersections, and safety issues at Jenkins Road intersection). Some of the proposed actions/alternatives would solve some of these problems, and some would solve others. The matrix illustrates how the team will track this in making a final recommendation on a package of actions/alternatives.

Evaluation Criteria: Carol listed the specific areas in which each action/alternative

would be evaluated: Transportation Efficiency Improved over existing condition (VHT/VMT), Safety Improved over existing condition, Turnpike/City Maintenance Costs, Funding Viability, Traffic Operations Improved over existing condition (LOS/Delay), Turnpike Operations, Construction Costs, Cost/Benefit Analysis, Landowner and resident impacts, Permitting, Hazardous Materials, and Environmental and Cultural Resource impacts.

Finally, she summarized what the team had heard from meeting attendees at the June Meeting. Tom then stepped up to talk about the specific alternatives that the study would evaluate.

Alternatives: Transportation Demand Management: This, called TDM for short, consists of encouraging the use of carpools, vanpools, available transit and Park and Ride lots. Tom noted that this is becoming a more popular way of reducing the number of single occupancy vehicles common in Maine and the study would include it in the final recommendations.

Alternatives: Transportation System Management

Signal Warrant Analysis at Route 112/Jenkins Road: Tom said that the team has completed the warrant analysis here, and the good news is that the intersection does warrant a signal based on FHWA regulations. He cautioned that the intersection was a complex one, however, and that adding a signal would include adding new turn lanes on both streets, without which the signal would not solve the congestion issue.

Route 112/Industrial Park Road Intersection – Turn Lanes or Roundabout: Tom said that the traffic counts at this intersection would require a two-lane roundabout (similar to those on Western Avenue in Augusta), which would require a significant amount of land acquisition. However, he noted that adding turn lanes would be less intrusive and if they were added on both roads, would significantly reduce congestion at this location.

Added Road Capacity at Industrial Park Road/I-195 Ramps: The eastbound ramp alternative will include adding an additional lane on the ramp (a second left lane) and another lane on Industrial Park Road to receive the two turning lanes. This would have a positive effect on the afternoon traffic congestion here. On westbound ramps off I-195, there appears to be no need for signal, it is fundamentally okay now, but we will have to see what it looks like when we look at the computer modeling for the future.

Safety and Operational Improvements at Garfield Street: This location is off the chart in terms of number of crashes, and it is a complicated intersection: close to lots of other intersections, no easy solutions. We are thinking that making this a right in, right out only intersection - by putting a median or an island at the end of Garfield that blocks left turns - would help mobility on Route 112 and make it a much safer location. In the afternoon, 300 cars in one hour turn left here. We asked, if you prevent them, where would they go? Well, 100 or so go to home, in the neighborhoods, and 200 keep going

to Route 5. With this fix, the 200 would probably get to Route 5 via Loudon Road. The 100 would probably use various different routes to get to their homes. We can look at testing this solution next spring.

New Roadway Facilities

Connection from Lund To Eastbound I-195 Eastbound Ramps: Tom noted that this would take pressure off the Industrial Park Road intersection; cost and impacts will be determined.

Route 5 to Route 112, Shadagee Road to Lund Road. Tom explained that they are looking here to relieve pressure on the neighborhoods, looking at putting in a new road from Lund towards Shadagee. They will test to find out what it would do in terms of solving the problems we've talked about.

A Spur Connecting Route 112 to Industrial Park Road: Here the study team will need to look at what it would cost, what it would benefit and what the impacts to people and the environment would be, based on the list Carol talked about earlier. Tom noted that this is the spur that has been talked about, people are looking at the environmental issues right now, we'll look at costs, and you'll see the full result at the January meeting.

Exit 36 Interchange Modifications: This is the opening up of Exit 5 that you have been asking about; Tom explained that it is not possible just to move the Jersey barrier and open it up as that would not be safe. They have looked at it in conjunction with Exit 36. Because the two are so close together, it's important to follow road design criteria. There has been no detailed analysis yet. He explained that the design would add a half interchange on the west side of the Turnpike, with a signal, allowing people to get directly on or off the Turnpike to Route 112 on that side. The design would have two toll plazas, and it includes another lane that doesn't mix with the faster traffic. It would be similar to the way Turnpike Exit 2 southbound exits to the Kittery malls – there is a smaller road parallel to the Turnpike. Tom added that this work has been done by Stantec in conjunction with the study team.

Route 112 to Route 5 Connector Road: Tom said that the team is also looking at a new road between Routes 5 and 112 near the Middle School. He noted that the team does not yet know how that would work or where it would go, but it may help.

ELIMINATED: Flag Pond Road: This is the one option that the team has taken off the table, Tom noted. It's too far away from the study area to have an impact, and it would take a significant amount of work and dollars to build a new entrance/exit.

Tom also showed a sample of the Evaluation Criteria Matrix, which is the document that will integrate the analysis on all the alternatives and help to identify the most effective ones.

Public Feedback

1. Someone asked what the schedule was for the study, and more important, how long it would take any of the solutions to be implemented. *Response:* The study will be completed in February. There will be short and long-term recommendations; for example, Short term would include a signal at Jenkins or the median at Garfield, which might take 3- 5 years.
2. How will the decision be made – and who makes the decision? *Response:* The decision will be made by the three study partners (City of Saco, MaineDOT, Turnpike Authority) based on the criteria we showed you.
3. Will the Exit 5 alternative relieve pressure at Industrial Park Road? *Response:* Yes.
4. The Gorham Connector only took a couple of years to build. That's a lot of pavement. Why can't this happen in two or three years? *Response:* The Gorham Connector actually took more like 15 years to plan, decide where, do the engineering and find the funding.
5. We have to pay gas tax *and* tolls; people in the north don't have to pay tolls. We deserve some investment down here, we have put up with this too long.
6. A resident of North Street talked about noise and crashes by her house, how much the city has grown since her family bought the house, and how her house has been damaged due to constant vibrations of tractor trailer trucks. She thinks Poland Springs should pay part of the cost because they are creating the bulk of the traffic. She also mentioned a new school going in on Simpson Road that is going to create more traffic. She understands studies are necessary but they have gone on too long. She says that all the new residents are paying taxes so why is there no money for construction?
7. The Exit 5 change is not going to help if they're heading southbound, they will still be traveling on Route 112.
8. There was mention of the Poland Spring trucks that go into the Industrial Park. *Response:* The data from Poland Spring indicates that this is a relatively small number of trucks.
9. A resident expressed concern that this is an either/or proposition in terms of short term or long-term solutions. *Response:* No, the recommendations will include a combination of both, not just one solution.
10. The only solution is to get the trucks out of here. *Response:* Tom and Carol met with Poland Spring over the summer. The company is required by their permit to take Route 112 to go to the Turnpike.
11. The new road from Route 5 to 112 by the school, would that change the school buses, or change how people get to the school? I am a teacher and I live on 112. *Response:* We don't know yet. We'd like to talk to school personnel, teachers and parents before we explore this further.
12. Can trucks be held back during the time when school is starting and ending? *Response:* We asked that question and we have the Poland Spring log. We

- discovered that during the school opening period there is the least amount of trucks in the 24-hour period. We wondered why and determined it's because the truckers don't want to deal with that traffic either. Truck numbers were highest at 11 am to 3-4 am. There are 20-30 trucks each hour during that time period.
13. There was concern from a property owner about the wetlands, other obstructions and the disruption to his property should a spur be built west to Route 112. Other participants talked about how much the town has grown up around them in the past decades, which they did not ask for.
 14. When will the MTA do away with tollbooths and install the ones we can just drive through? *Response:* Someday, but it will take a long time due to the fact that of the 6 million visitors who come to Maine each year, many do not have EZ Pass. Only a very small number of people don't pay with the existing system. But with drive through tolling, that number rises exponentially.
 15. Are you looking at park and rides and ZOOM, to increase ridership by expanding infrastructure? *Response:* Yes.
 16. Can't there be more police enforcement to keep speeds down? *Response from Deputy Police Chief Corey Huntress:* The Saco police force has three officers and a supervisor on each shift. There are complaints on speeding from all neighborhoods. Saco has not added to its patrol force in 25 years.
 17. What about cameras to catch speeders? *Police Response:* They are illegal in Maine.
 18. Can we get a speed study done on Jenkins? *Police Response:* The 85th percentile is 48 miles per hour at Jenkins. If we call the state in, they are likely to raise the speed limit from 40 mph to 45 mph. When we do enforce, we target certain times of day, those that are most likely to be able to catch speeders.
 19. A comment was made that Jenkins is a very different road at one from the other and it should have at least two different speed zones. *Police Response:* We could look into that. Tom also warned that sometimes that request does not go the way residents want and speed limits get raised.
 20. A resident wanted to know what the City is going to do about stopping all the houses that are being built and the trucks that are going by – growth is going crazy – I can't pull out from my drive. If nothing is going to be done for five years, what are we going to do in the meantime? *Response from Patrick Fox, Public Works Director:* We can't stop development in Saco, People own land, we can't stop them from building on their own property. But this study is a \$200,000 tool that will allow us to show the need and advocate for more money. The community will need to weigh in on this. But even as a good tool, it won't give us easy answers. All new roads recently built in Maine have taken ten plus years of work and planning to make them happen. The resident pointed out that the City can place a moratorium on building permits.
 21. Will the matrix you showed us include numbers or are the measures qualitative? Do the three organizations have to evaluate the matrix separately or will there be one evaluation? *Response:* The measures will all be quantitative, numerical. There is an advisory committee made up of the three organizations - the City,

MaineDOT and the MTA – they will together look at the data in the matrix and, with the study team, develop recommendations, which will be agreed on by all three.

22. Are you going to look at the future traffic numbers or is the study just using today's traffic numbers? *Response:* The study estimates traffic volumes through 2040.
23. There was a suggestion to have Poland Spring move closer to the Turnpike.
24. When the City makes decisions on this study, how much do they weigh the needs from other parts of town? This is about an hour-long problem. Do they take that into account when making a decision on town priorities? *Response:* This is up to the City when the time comes.
25. It was noted that a traffic signal on the corner of Jenkins would definitely slow the trucks down, even though the resident was not completely happy with the idea as he lives on that corner.
26. A resident asked if future growth of the City is taken into account in the forecast? *Response:* Yes.
27. Is it possible for the school to change its hours back to where they were before? That change made it worse. *Response:* Carol commented that changing school hours takes a lot of time and thought, so a change back is unlikely. Tom added that if all kids took the bus, things would be greatly improved. (*Applause*)
28. Are there any regional studies showing why traffic is increasing so much in southern Maine? Most of these solutions will not help me, who lives on Route 112, and my house shakes. This is a regional issue. *Response:* There are no regional traffic studies taking place now that the study team is aware of.
29. Comments on Garfield suggestion: There was concern about how and where an island would be fit in, several comments that it might work.
30. It was asked if the City could just put one-way signs in? *Response:* The City could do that but we find that people do not generally pay attention to signs.
31. Tom noted that he was very confident that if the team is able to reduce traffic movements at this location, there will be fewer crashes.
32. There was a comment that this is a regional issue, not just Saco. Why aren't regional entities paying for it? Pat Fox *Response:* There is a regional transportation entity called the Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System, of which Saco is a member. They fund studies and construction projects, and will be part of the implementation discussion. He also noted that MaineDOT and the MTA are statewide and regional, respectively.