

Saco Route 112 / Exit 36 Area Transportation Study
Public Meeting Report
February 13, 2019

Staff/Agency/Consultants attending: *Patrick Fox, City of Saco; Joe Laverriere, City of Saco; Nathan Howard, MaineDOT; Peter Mills, Maine Turnpike Authority; Ralph Norwood, Maine Turnpike Authority; Erin Courtney, Maine Turnpike Authority; Tom Errico, T.Y. Lin, Todd Serbent, T.Y. Lin; Carol Morris, Morris Communications; Bill Moore, Stantec; Lauren Meek, Stantec*

Please note that this meeting report should be looked at in combination with the PowerPoint presentation that accompanied the meeting. The slides can be found here.

The meeting began at 6 pm.

Patrick Fox, Saco Public Works Director, opened the meeting by thanking everyone for attending. For those who had not been at the first two meetings, he explained that the problems this study is seeking to solve were not just a Saco issue, but also a regional issue. Because of this the City is working with MaineDOT and the Maine Turnpike Authority to provide a broader perspective as well as to have more capacity to implement solutions. He introduced Carol Morris, Morris Communications, who is handling public outreach for the consulting team.

Agenda: Carol asked how many people had been to the two previous meetings and a large proportion of the audience raised their hands. She provided a summary of the evening's agenda, with the main purpose of the meeting to hear input on the potential solutions that have been developed. She asked people to hear about all of the solutions before giving their opinions, but did encourage clarifying questions during the presentation.

Study Purpose: Carol reviewed the Study Purpose and reiterated that it is the guiding statement for the study, and 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 decisions on the final actions/alternatives and that all reasonable solutions must be considered. She reminded everyone that funding is constrained.

Decision Matrix/Evaluation Criteria: Carol reviewed the criteria used to rate each of the options, explaining that when Tom has completed his explanation of all the options, she would provide them with a simplified version of the matrix as a handout. The specific evaluation criteria are: Transportation Efficiency Improved over Existing Conditions (VHT/VMT), Volume Change at High Crash Locations, Traffic Operations Improved over Existing Conditions, Traffic Volume Changes on Key Streets, Bicycle and Pedestrian Conditions, Cost Estimates, Funding Viability, Cost/Benefit Analysis, Landowner and Resident Impacts, Hazardous Materials, and Environmental and Cultural Resource impacts. Finally and very important, she said, Does it Meet Study Purpose and Need, or, in other words, does it solve the problems.

Tom then stepped up to talk about the specific options that have been evaluated.

Short-Term Improvements: These are all improvements that have already been completed or could be within 2-5 years. He noted that funding has not been allocated and in most cases, design and permitting would be required.

(INSERT CHART)

Tom noted that the last four items were on hold based on the outcome of this study, and provided an update on those:

He noted that signals at Franklin and Spring Streets make sense and would be approved for traffic signals, but the recommendation would likely be to do one at a time and monitor the results. He also agreed that a turning lane on Route 112, which would get turning vehicles out of the way of through vehicles, merits consideration.

Tom explained that the Jenkins Road /Route 112 intersection does meet MaineDOT criteria for a traffic signal. He showed a graphic illustrating how it might be designed, noting that it is not a simple signal, it would need geometric improvements: a left turn lane on Jenkins, plus adding a turn lane on Route 112. This will need to go through a design process. Hillside would be either part of the signal system, or blocked, and this would be decided during the design process.

Looking at Garfield, Tom noted that the street provides a link between Route 112 and Route 5 – and there are safety issues with this use. Short term, a narrow island that prohibits a left turn from Garfield to Route 112 will help this immensely. This traffic will spread out to other streets. To see how this works, Tom said, the new configuration can be tested and monitored to see how much it helps, but it should improve mobility in the corridor.

Tom then showed the graphic for a proposed signal at Spring Street, and indicated that

the intersection does meet the MaineDOT warrants, but the offset nature of the intersection is challenging and would need to go through a design process.

Longer-Term Alternatives: Tom explained that each of the longer-term alternatives has been evaluated based on its success in fixing specific problems (for example, reducing traffic on Route 112 between the Turnpike and Jenkins or reducing traffic on Industrial Park Road) as well as negatives such as property and environmental impacts. Other important considerations include cost and funding viability, i.e., is funding available. Finally, does the alternative meet the overall Purpose and Need – does it solve the overall problems that prompted the study.

Extension of I-195 to Route 112: Here we extend I-95 parallel to 112 and join 112 west of the Middle School. It avoids the Heath Overlook development. This is a full new interchange and there are two entry tolls. How did this do on the evaluation? It does a good job reducing traffic in these specific locations, but has significant building and property impacts, environmental impacts. We think it could be permitted, but there are impacts, and it is very expensive at \$60 million. This is an issue in terms of funding viability – it is a challenge to find that kind of money.

Modification of Turnpike Exit 36: This is not a new version of old Exit 5, because standards for interstate highways do not allow interchanges to be as close together as Exit 5 would be to Exit 36. So this is really an expanded Exit 36, providing access to Route 112. This allows you to get on the Turnpike from Route 112 either northbound or southbound, or to get off the Turnpike onto Route 112 either northbound or southbound. How does this do in the evaluation? It doesn't do much to reduce traffic between the Turnpike and Jenkins, but it does reduce traffic near and on Industrial Park Road, as well as reduces traffic on neighborhood streets. It won't reduce traffic on Garfield, but we do have a smaller safety fix for that. There are some property and environmental impacts. It costs \$34 million, and the Turnpike Authority is willing to consider funding this. It also meets Purpose and Need.

Route 112 Route 5 Connector: Tom noted that this option came up at the first meeting when people were drawing their ideas on maps. This new road runs just west of the Middle School between Route 112 and 5. It helps a little in terms of reducing traffic on Route 112 and Jenkins, as well as for Route 112 traffic near Industrial Park Road. The entrance to the Middle School would be incorporated into this new road. It would help to relieve pressure on Garfield as well as other neighborhood roads because it adds a new, straightforward connection. Adding to the road network always has positive effects on traffic congestion. It has some minor property and environmental impacts. In terms of funding viability, this would be locally funded, so that is a minor negative. By itself, it doesn't meet Purpose and Need. The cost is \$5 million.

A resident asked for more detail on where it would connect, noting that there are quite a few wetlands in that area and it was right next to her neighborhood. Tom said that the environmental issues had been looked at and there were some, but not as many as for the extension of I-195.

Combination of the Connector and the Exit 36 Modification: Tom said that, at this point, the team decided to look at combining the Connector and the Exit Modification. When you do this, you get a lot of benefits across the board, he noted. The Connector would help with neighborhood streets – it provides connectivity – and the Exit 36 reconfiguration helps with congestion at Industrial Park Road. Again, the rating sheet is simply a combination of these two options.

Transportation System Management: This study goes out to 2040, and during that time, traffic is likely to continue to increase, Tom noted. If nothing is done in terms of improving access to the Turnpike, many of the roads in the study area would need lanes added. He went over the list of potential changes (see below), all of which will add pavement and make the roads wider. He also explained that these options consider the region only from an automobile perspective. Wider roads are not great for pedestrians or bicycles, and many communities try to balance these needs, he pointed out. A question was asked about the black lines on the slides—do they indicate the amount of land that would have to be taken to make these changes? Tom said no, that the black lines are the approximate rights of way owned by the City or the state.

Middle School Entrance / Rt. 112
Route 112 NB Add Left Turn Lane
Hillview Ave / Jenkins Rd / Rt. 112
Route 112 NB Add Right Lane
Route 112 SB Add Left Turn Lane
Jenkins Road WB Add Left Turn Lane
Signalize
Lund Rd / Rt. 112
Route 112 SB Add Left Turn Lane
Lund Road WB Add Right Turn Lane
Lund Road WB Provide Left/Thru Lane and a Right Lane
Lund Road WB Add Right Turn Lane
Garfield St / Rt. 112
Garfield Street Right-In / Right-Out
Industrial Park Rd / Rt. 112
Route 112 SB Add Left Turn Lane / Receiving Lane
Industrial Park Road WB Channelize Right Turn Lane
Industrial Park Road WB Additional Left Turn Lane / Receiving Lane
Coordinate Signals along Route 112
Industrial Park Rd / I-95 EB Ramps
1-95 Eastbound Ramps NWB Additional Left Turn Lane / Receiving Lane

Tasker St / Village Green Dr. / Rt. 112
Route 112 NB Add Left Turn Lane
Route 112 SB Add Left Turn Lane
Tasker Street EB Add Right Turn Lane
Signalize / Coordinate with Industrial Park Road and Franklin Street
Franklin St / Rt. 112
Route 112 NB Add Left Turn Lane
Signalize / Coordinate with Industrial Park Road and Tasker Street
Spring St / Goodale St / Rt. 112
Route 112 NB Add Left Turn Lane
Route 112 NB Add Through-Right Lane
Route 112 SB Add Left-Through Lane
Spring Street EB Add Right Turn lane
Signalize

In terms of the effectiveness of these changes, Tom noted that the overall effect is not much. These do not meet Purpose and Need, and they are not inexpensive at \$9 million.

Transportation Demand Management: This includes Park and Ride lots, vanpools, carpools. Tom said these should be part of all transportation plans to minimize the number of automobile trips. But they do not decrease traffic volumes in the region in any significant way.

Overview of Options/Funding: Carol handed out a Matrix showing a comparison of all the options as presented and Tom reviewed each. (See end of document for the *Alternatives Comparison Matrix*.)

Tom then discussed potential funding sources: Funding can come through MaineDOT, the Maine Turnpike Authority, the City of Saco, and the Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System. The Turnpike Authority understands that this is a critical interchange for them; they have an interest in improving conditions. The City has funding through their impact development program: collecting money from developers to help offset development impacts such as increased traffic.

Carol then asked for comments from the public.

Comments/Questions from the Public

- A resident asked what about funding from the Federal government. Carol responded that federal funds are distributed through MaineDOT.
- A resident asked how the environmental impacts are measured: Tom responded that the study team includes a firm – TRC – that specializes in making these evaluations.
- A resident said that they liked A6 best: The Combination.
- Concern was expressed about modification of Exit 36: would there be backup from the distributor road onto Route 112? Tom said no, the modeling showed that it would work very well, that there wouldn't be backup.
- A question was asked about back up on the ramp to the toll plaza, and it was noted that initial design is for one lane, but the road would include three toll booths. This is not a final design, and may be modified should it go to final design. Tom also added that travelers would pay only to get on the Turnpike and not off.
- It was asked how long A-6 would last before A-3 had to be built? Tom said that A-6 would serve for a very long time, 50 years. The resident noted that this would not help the Jenkins Road-Route 112 Intersection. Tom noted that an overall redesign of the interchange would be helpful in fixing how the entire system worked, as opposed to trying to band-aid the problem by just fixing individual intersections.
- A resident said that the Exit 36 option looks confusing, asking if there is any other turnpike exit like that. Tom said yes, southbound at Exit 2 in Kittery, there is a collector-distributor road that separates traffic from the Turnpike. This is a safety feature to allow traffic to merge more effectively.
- A resident expressed concerns about the Connector road next to her neighborhood and the school...what are the benefits? She noted that there are other roads that link these two. Tom explained that a good portion of the neighborhood traffic is caused by people trying to get between Route 5 and 112, and this would generate some real benefits as a direct connection.
- Another resident asked why a connector road couldn't go right next to the Turnpike? Tom and Carol indicated that they would take a look at this.
- Concern was also expressed that there would be backup on new onramps for the Exit 36 modification. Tom pointed out that these would be two-lane ramps, so this would not be a problem.
- A resident said that he noticed there are multiple elected officials at the meeting, and asked how this information would be transmitted to Augusta, especially in view of the fact that funding is clearly a big issue. Senator Justin Chenette noted how important public feedback is to moving forward, and also stated that this is a priority, and now that there are concrete solutions on the table, the delegation can put forward a bill asking for specific funding to move the final proposal forward.
- A resident noted that the temporary closure of the market at Jenkins and Route

112 has improved traffic problems there immensely. He asked if there is any way to readjust the situation should something else open there. It was generally agreed that another store would open in its place, and that curb cuts may be adjusted.

- A resident at Garfield asked, if the Exit 36 modification is built, would trucks no longer go by her house? After some discussion of truck traffic and the number of trucks on the road, she was answered in the affirmative.
- There was a question about roundabouts at the high crash intersections. Since roundabouts take up a lot of space, Tom noted they had not seriously considered them for these locations other than at Route 112/Industrial Park Road.
- People on Route 112 west will not see any benefits, and a resident is concerned that if it is built, more people will come. Will the road get more maintenance? Pat Fox said that the road had been completely rebuilt recently because of the level of truck traffic from Poland Springs. There was a discussion that much of the noise and vibration is due to manhole covers that loosen up. The City has come and fixed these, and they are better for a few months.
- Carol noted that there have been a lot of good questions, but not so many people have indicated whether they are in favor of one or another of the options. A resident responded that the funding of these options seems to be the deciding factor and she has no way of knowing which could go forward. There was agreement expressed.
- A resident asked if the Route 112/Route 5 Connector would be limited access or would open that area up to development. Tom said that was unclear, but it would be a local street so could provide access to land as appropriate. He noted there has been talk of school expansion in that area, and it needs to be carefully planned.
- There was a discussion about the importance of planning and a clarification of the Planning Board's role – it is a group that *enforces* current zoning as opposed to making decisions on new zoning. City officials noted that the Comprehensive Plan was updated last year, and there is a major rezoning initiative going on right now that will address many issues being discussed here tonight. People should go to:
https://www.sacomaine.org/departments/boards_and_committees/zoning_order_revision_revision.php to take the survey and weigh in on housing, locations and types of businesses, etc.
- It was noted that Peter Mills, executive director of the Turnpike Authority, was in attendance at the meeting. Peter said that Exit 36 is the worst (busiest) interchange on the Turnpike and needs to be redone - it is showing adverse impacts on the mainline of the Turnpike. The modification of Exit 36, which has emerged from this process, is within the MTA's price range and shows opportunity. Peter noted that the public process is crucial to making this decision, and added that it would be about a four-five year process and could possibly be phased.
- A resident noted that it would take a referendum to obtain the \$5 million needed to build a Route 5/112 Connector.
- Tom clarified that the Connector and the Exit 36 Modification are not tied

- together and would be built and funded separately.
- A representative from Poland Springs said the company wanted to support the three partners (City, MTA, MaineDOT) and that transportation safety is important to them. He noted that the 400 trucks per day number that people say come through this region is accurate, but they do not do so every day, only during the peak summer season. Also he said that it is 18 trucks per day that travel to the industrial park, and this is only in the late fall and winter.
 - A resident said that in his opinion, the Exit 36 Modification seemed to be the best option, as the Extension is too expensive. The Connector should be considered separately. He said people could disagree, but he thought this is something that should get started.

Tom showed a slide detailing the schedule, targeting April for a final report.

Those who want to make additional comments online can go to the City web page at https://www.sacomaine.org/departments/administration/saco_route_112.php

The meeting was adjourned at 8 pm.

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Alternative Comparison Matrix

	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6
	Transportation Demand Management (TDM)	Transportation System Management (TSM)	Extension of I-195	Modification to Exit 36	Route 112/Route 5 Connector	Modification of Exit 36 and Route 112/Route 5 Connector
Reduce Traffic on Route 112 west of Turnpike	●	●	+	-	+	+
Reduce Traffic on Route 112 near Industrial Park Road	●	●	+	+	+	+
Reduce Traffic on Industrial Park Road	●	●	+	+	●	+
Potential to Reduce Traffic on Garfield Street	●	●	+	●	+	+
Reduce Traffic on Neighborhood Streets East of Industrial Park Road	●	●	+	+	+	+
Potential to Improve Bicycle and Pedestrian Conditions	●	■	+	+ ■	-	+ ■
Property Impacts	●	■	■ ■	-	-	-
Environmental Impacts	●	●	■	-	-	+ ■
Funding Viability	-	-	■ ■	+	-	+ ■
Meet Purpose and Need	■	■	+	+	■	+
Cost	N/A	\$9M	\$60M	\$34M	\$5M	\$39M

- No Change ●
- Minor Negative Outcome ■
- Minor Positive Outcome +
- Positive Outcome +
- Negative Outcome ■