

Saco Route 112 / Exit 36 Area Transportation Study
Public Meeting Notes
June 14, 2018

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

Patrick Fox, Saco Public Works Director, opened the meeting by thanking everyone for coming. He explained that the City has been aware of traffic issues in the area for some time, and had been gathering information. He said the information made it clear that the traffic was not just a Saco issue, but a regional issue, and Saco by itself would not be able to solve the problem. As a result, for this study, the City is partnering with MaineDOT and the Maine Turnpike Authority, which will provide a broader perspective and more ability to implement larger solutions. He introduced Carol Morris, Morris Communications, who is handling public outreach for the consulting team.

Agenda: Carol provided a summary of the agenda so the audience would know what to expect. She explained that Tom Errico, Study Manager would briefly go over some of the data that has been collected, along with the study's goals and schedule. But the real purpose of tonight's meeting is to hear from the public, she said.

Tom described the earlier studies and the kind of information available. He then explained that a Purpose Statement is developed for all transportation studies to make it clear what the goals are. He said this is a very important part of the study, and read it aloud:

Study Purpose: *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.*

Study Area: Tom then showed a map of the area included in the study, which runs east-west from Route 1 to Loudon Road, and runs north south from Turnpike Exit 36 to an equal distance south of Route 112.

Turning movements: Tom said the team is looking to understand turning capacity at key locations during peak hours – identifying how many vehicles can move through safely. Tom noted that about 650 vehicles are currently taking a left turn from Route 112 onto

Industrial Park Road during the peak morning hour. (*Peak morning hour is the hour with the highest number of vehicles.*)

Average annual daily traffic: Tom explained this is the total number of vehicles that travel through a location over the whole year, divided by 365. The numbers he showed were collected in 2016. He especially noted one very big number – on Route 112 between Garfield and Industrial Park Road, 18,000 cars go through in one day. This is the most traffic in the whole study area except for Route 1 north of Saco’s downtown.

Hourly traffic: Here Tom showed charts on how many vehicles are moving through the area at peak commute hours, noting that there is a clear morning and afternoon peak for all locations, apart from the Turnpike, which stays relatively steady all day. Traffic in the study area is high during peak travel hours Monday through Friday, and lower on the weekends. On the Turnpike, traffic is steady all week with a larger peak on Friday afternoon. Annually, the Turnpike traffic peaks in July and August. He noted that none of this would be surprising to the people in the room.

Crash data. The study area has multiple high crash locations as identified by MaineDOT. Route 112 at Jenkins Road, Lund Road to Garfield Street, Garfield Street, Industrial Park Road, Spring Street and Elm Streets all have serious issues, mostly due to people trying to pull out of side streets into heavy traffic.

Study Schedule: In the schedule Tom showed, he indicated that the team will go out and continue to gather data into August, meet with the permitting and resource agencies, and then begin developing potential solutions. The team will come back for another public meeting in October with a set of draft recommendations, hear feedback from the public, then go back and revise. The report will be completed in February. Tom said that this is a very aggressive schedule for a study of this magnitude and the team will be pushing hard to make it happen.

Public Feedback: Carol noted that while the next meeting was not until October, there is a study page on the City website, and she showed how to click through the site to find it. She also explained that everyone could go straight to the study page at www.sacocity.org/route112 , and recommended that people sign up on the web page for study updates, which would be regularly posted.

Issue in the Study Area: Tom noted that there were several issues that had been identified in the previous study, upon which this study would build:

- High crash locations and Intersections operating at unacceptable levels of service
- Safety/livability issues on local streets as cut-through traffic seeks alternate routes
- Traffic congestion at the MTA toll plaza and on mainline I-95.

- Long delays at all Route 112 intersections (except Middle School and Louden Road)
- Long delays at Industrial Park Road/WB -195 Ramp
- Long vehicle queues at Industrial Park Road/I-195 Ramps
- Two High Crash Locations (Route 112/Garfield and Route 112/Franklin Street)
- Route 112/Industrial Park Road was recently designated a High Crash Location
- No shoulder or bicycle lanes and limited pedestrian accommodations
- Cut through traffic on local streets between Route 5 and Route 112
- Route 112 lacks bicycle and pedestrian amenities.

Public Feedback: Tom and Carol asked the audience to comment on and add to the above issues. *The below is a summary of comments heard, and is not intended to be verbatim quotes or inclusive of all comments.*

1. Original sketch of cut through road does not fix the problem due to Rte. 5 issues. Also, it would be very difficult for anyone who has property in that area. It can cut right through your property or worse, be close to it so you are surrounded by Route 112 and the new road. It might be a good solution for some people but not for us. I hope people will think of others when we get to solutions.
2. Has there been a study done that shows how much traffic would actually be moved off 112 if a spur is built? (A: *We will know soon. We will be modeling all potential changes.*) Any thought given to opening up the old exit? (A: *The Turnpike Authority is doing a parallel study to look into that. We will know soon.*)
3. I live at North St. on the corner of Garfield. The traffic is unbelievable, the Poland Springs trucks make the whole house shake. This has affected the integrity of my home. This is not just a safety issue, but a peace of mind issue.
4. Another comment about North Street, trying to pull out into traffic and the trucks making it dangerous to do so.
5. The traffic signals through the corridor are going to be getting “smarter.” (Comment from Pat Fox, Saco public works director)
6. Question about crashes – do they all include injury and death? (A: *No, it is based on dollar damage.*) This is my point. We need to humanize this. (A: *We will be doing a lot of analysis on crashes, you will get a lot of detail.*) Saco-Biddeford has tremendous momentum. We should look at this fix for the long term, not just five years ahead. (A: *We will be modeling out 20 years in the future.*) Flag Pond Road has an access point to the Turnpike already there for the police. It would provide access to Route 1 from the Turnpike. It should be opened to the public.
7. I live on Sullivan Lane off Jenkins Road. Exit 36 southbound is very dangerous. If we could use the old hotel exit/entrance it would be great. It is really unsafe to have a trucking route going right by a school. Unsafe for everyone. Maybe get people more quickly to the Turnpike rather than traveling all the way down 112. Originally the Way Way store was going to be a new exit, but now a new development has been built in that location. Jenkins Road is a cut through road

and is very busy with lots of walkers and kids. Very busy. There needs to be a Jenkins Road light. The pedestrian crossing light there is too low, motorists can't see it. Kids push the button and the cars keep going through. Happy to see some changes in Industrial Park Road, but I think there needs to be two lanes in each direction. It is not well marked, and painted signs would help. Garfield Street is very busy and dangerous. I vote to make it a dead end. Coming out of Garfield in the morning is impossible; it is too close to the industrial park. You need to fix that turn.

8. I'm on Jenkins Road, raised four kids and they walked or biked to middle school, one got hit by a car so he won't ride there anymore. People can't get out, and I let them out because I feel for them. But Jenkins is such a straight cutaway, it's like a racetrack this time of year.
9. Same issue. Moved to Jenkins Road when there were ten houses there. Now houses are both sides of the street, with a new one every 6-8 weeks. When the new houses are built in the new development, no one will ever get out of Jenkins Road. We also don't have a full sidewalk.
10. There was a comment about smaller towns farther north having several Turnpike exits, and we need to explore getting more in Saco.
11. We want to open the exit - I have heard it is too close. *(A. There are federal standards but we will look at it. The queuing between the two would be difficult to manage.)*
12. There was another comment about the new development going in now, and that more developments are planned. *(A. We are working with the City of Saco planning department, so we do have that information.)*
13. Live on corner of Route 112 and Franklin, counted 35 big trucks and small contractor trucks doing 45 mph in the off hours. Can count on one hand the times I've seen enforcement out there. Used to be 25 mph. We need speed bumps, anything, to slow these people down.
14. At Jenkins Road, would be helpful when school is in session to have a policeman there to help with traffic. Impossible right now and someone is going to get hurt. Kids push the button, don't look and go. Just for that half hour in the morning.
15. Live on North Street, know the issues with that intersection. Timing of the light is off. That light is constantly going off. Used to be 18-20 second between when each side would turn green, now it is much longer. Cars cut right in front of other cars. They pull over in the middle of the road and the trucks can't make the turn. 400 trucks a day one way, so 800 trucks a day, Cars are going by at night, 50 mph. Not enforced at all. Also, many of them are texting, you can see it.
16. Talk to everyone you know, just follow the rules, we can't legislate personal decisions. We all have to do better, not text, slow down,
17. I have put a lot into my home – what if I don't want to move? Even worse, what if a new road just goes close to it? It won't be the same and it's not right.
18. The bypass is not going to happen because they've been studying this since at least 2004 and we are still working on a study. That's 14 years.

19. Was on the planning board for four years, and nothing has changed. Takes me 10 minutes to get out of my street, 35 minutes to get to the exit and only 10 minutes to get to Portland. We have a wasted exit; DOT says it's too close to the other exit. We need that exit. DOT might need to bend the rules. I am very heated on this subject. Developers and builders keep coming. We need action.
20. Traffic in the last ten years has tripled. I don't walk my dog at night anymore. Coming out of Jenkins is impossible and from Hillview over onto Jenkins. We need an express to go north
21. Take your life in your hands getting out of Garfield, Shadagee. All the different strategies- you already got them all. Paint Shadagee, paint Jenkins. *(A. All these issues are common problems; we'll be looking at both long and short-term solutions. Systems management items like this are typically low cost.)*
22. The city is developing this area and promoting the residential living area. Is there a way to divert the truck traffic? There is a piece of land that is for sale on Flag Pond Road, what if DOT or the city bought this? Can't build on it. Also agree that Saco should have more exits.

Criteria Used for Decision-making: Tom noted that he had a few more slides that would be helpful for the audience in understanding how decisions would be made. He pointed out that analysis is needed; we can't just pull out a solution from the air. We need to consider all reasonable alternatives. Funding, like it or not, is an issue. There are constraints in terms of what money is available. He added that we need to understand what the costs are in order to know what solutions are reasonable. The criteria will include looking at which solutions reduce traffic (measured by such criteria as Vehicle Hours Traveled [VHT] and how many miles traveled {VMT}, safety, cost, does the solution work with the Turnpike, funding viability), where will funding come from), what is the cost/benefit ratio, what are the environmental impacts, what are the impacts on property and buildings, could we get the solution permitted. We need to document this process.

Continuing Public Feedback:

23. No good sidewalks or bike lanes. *(Tom noted that he does a lot of multi-modal Complete Streets work and this is a priority in that field.)*
24. Question on safety: Have you been effective in working with a community/police that was successful in implementing a safety program? I can tell when the police are out there because the house gets quiet. Everyone is going 25 mph. Do you have an example? *(A. Yes, in Portland we have done neighborhood traffic plans addressing cut through traffic and speed. Also in Falmouth on Blackstrap Road. That is their highest enforced street but they still have speeding problems.)* I would like to have the Falmouth example shown to them. I would guess that there are not enough resources for them to patrol all the time, but they need to be involved. *(Pat Fox noted that the police would be working with them on the study.)*

25. Standish, Buxton, that's where the affordable housing is. All that traffic is going down Route 5 and Route 202. The elephant in the room is Poland Springs. If there is a new road, will it be built to federal standards? *(A. Yes. Federally funded roads are built to federal standard. We have contacted Poland Springs and will be speaking with them some more.)*
26. There is nowhere to build a new road, and that stretch is a huge issue, as is Route 5. Figure out now how to divert traffic - not just trucks - from that area on 112 and get people past the middle school. Got to find a way to get beyond that. We need a solution that has the biggest positive impact on the most people.
27. Hearing that studies have gone on for 10 years. That's not okay. How can we make this person's house stop shaking in two months? All these houses are being built. You need to get it done in two months.
28. Jenkins Road, there should be a light there regulating people making left-hand turns. I have kids that go to school there, people are dropping off kids and then turning around and going back on the same road, just adding to the congestion.
29. Has Saco considered a moratorium on building? Every possible place to put a bypass has been built on. *(Pat Fox: It takes a lot to tell a community that they can't develop their own property.)* You are treating new homeowners better than those of us who have been here for years.
30. Why are we not meeting again until October? *(A. That is negotiable, but the reason the schedule is set up that way is because we thought that the next time you come back you would want to see some specific solutions, make some specific choices. Those won't be available until October.)*
31. What's different about this study? *(A. We will be able to tell you what the benefits are for each idea: how well it works, how much traffic it moves to different roads, are there any environmental issues, any permitting issues, what the downsides are. Previous studies were at a 30,000-foot view. Now you will get detailed metrics on each.)*
32. We are trying to be polite. We paid for a study with our taxes. Hearing that that study was an overview is upsetting. We need action. I don't want to be here in 10 years paying for another study. *(A. We are using all the data from the other studies as a basis for this study. There were good ideas in that study.) (Pat Fox: I have that study in my office and we use it for ideas on a regular basis. We have implemented a lot of "band aid" measures from that study – short-term solutions. Now we have the two transportation agencies involved and we can look at it on a regional basis. Before we have another public meeting, I will summarize the short-term fixes we have made over the last ten years in a concise statement on why we have done what we did and why we have not done other items.)*
33. A study is great but we need data
34. What will we see at the next meeting, will there be just one solution? Will it be one? *(No, likely there will be more than one recommendation, and we will show how we got to the recommendations, what worked, what didn't.)*

35. The schools changed the time they start and finish, so now it coincides with General Dynamic's shift, which has created more problems.

Carol thanked everyone for coming. The meeting ended at 7:50 pm.

Written Comments on Maps:

36. I-95 West
37. Flag Pond Road has existing exits. Why not use them for public use?
38. Add exit off Flag Pond Road where the superfund site is.
39. FLAG POND ROAD!!
40. Put a Rotary at Jenkins Road/Route 112 Intersection
41. Put a cut-through road behind the Hillview Store
42. Close off Hillview Ave. There are still two entryways – Hillview Ave. Extension and Wendy Way
43. Something has to be done about the parking 'free-for-all' at the Hillview Market. We love the Hillview, however the parking position of vehicles can often obscure the view of drivers making the risky (and sometimes desperate after 10 minutes!) left turn from Jenkins onto Rt 112. Also, limiting the curb cuts on Rt 112 and on Jenkins for vehicles to enter & exit the Hillview should be moved as far back from the intersection as possible. The cost for improvements to the Hillview parking lot should be incurred by the city - not the market. At the least, there also needs to be a flashing yellow caution light at the Rt. 112 & Jenkins intersection. *These projects would have a small impact on Rt 112 traffic flow- but a big impact on safety, especially for pedestrians, including SMS students.*
44. Jenkins cars going left use Hillview Market's backyard to cut through - dangerous and illegal
45. Find a way to move Rte. 112 school traffic to Rte. 5
46. Jenkins is a raceway in a residential/school neighborhood
47. Two comments with phone number: North bound and South bound (*Meaning unclear*)
48. A major contributing factor is the astonishing volume of 18-wheel tractor trailer truck volume on Rte. 112. I've spent much time (often stuck behind one of these trucks!) mulling over potential solutions. My suggestion is to build a one-direction southbound Exit ramp onto the Turnpike directly from Rt. 112. This could be either limited to large commercial truck traffic (not sure if the MTA would permit this) or for all vehicles - which would require a left-turn lane for traffic travelling west on Rt 112 wanting to exit on to the southbound Turnpike. *This one project would do more than anything else to solve the morning congestion for all points east of Jenkins Rd (especially Garfield).*
49. Add a rotary where the NB 95 exit and NB 95 entrance ramps meet on 195.

Industrial Park Road Map

50. Add a rotary at the intersection where the exit from 95 meets IP Road
51. What is the number of Poland Spring trucks dispersing water at the Industrial Park?
52. The big afternoon commute 'choke point' is on the Industrial Park Road off-ramp just east of the Exit 36 toll plaza. Two suggestions: 1. Move the toll plaza utility building back from I-195. This allows for a full eastbound third lane thru the plaza to the Industrial Park Rd exit. 2. Add a right turn lane to the lower section of the Industrial Park Rd exit ramp. Moving right-turn traffic thru will help reduce ramp back-up.

West of Industrial Park Road Map

53. Put a rotary at the intersection of Lina Road, Rte. 112 and the road with the ball field on it
54. Spring Street and North Street intersection: This is a truck routes - a traffic light is needed here
55. Put a rotary at the junction of Route 1, Elm, North and Ferry Road

Study Area Map

56. Reduce speed to 35 mph – Foss Road to Loudon Street
57. Jenkins and Highland don't connect. Does that mess with the light?
58. Put a single lane off ramp near Jenkins (?)
59. Open old Exit 5, NB (see photo)
60. Open up off ramp through old f.w. to Rte. 112 (see photo)
61. New off ramp (2 lanes west). Eliminate traffic light at current off ramp. (See photo)
62. Move truck traffic to Rte. 5 and build ramp
63. Rte. 5 is better for handling truck traffic – wide and straight, few houses
64. Build connector from Rte. 5 to South Street Biddeford over Saco River with new exit for both cities
65. Single lane off ramp from 95 to County Road