

Route 117 Study Committee
Minutes of the Meeting of October 5, 2015

Committee Members in Attendance:	Donna Beninati Mary Ciummo Alice Coggeshall Al Ferry Mike Gorr Cia Ochsenbein Chris Post Alice Roemer Marianne Savage Burt Shnitzler
Committee Members Absent:	Mark Ayotte
Guests:	Pam Powell, Bolton Town Clerk

By consensus, the meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. at the Houghton Building. As the first item of business, the committee members were sworn in by Pam Powell, Bolton's Town Clerk. Burt Shnitzler was then elected chair of the committee. Selection of a permanent secretary was put off. Chris Post agreed to act as secretary *pro tem* and to take the minutes of the meeting.

The committee next reviewed its charge:

1. To review three reports on the future of Route 117 in Bolton forwarded by the Selectmen,
2. To prioritize the actions recommended in those reports, and
3. To report back to the Selectmen by December 15, 2015.

The three reports received from the Selectmen are:

1. *Non-Motorized Transportation Recommendations* submitted by the Town of Bolton Mobility Committee, dated September 9, 2014;
2. *The Main Street Safety Task Group Report*, dated October 1, 2002; and
3. *Route 117 Review of Ownership Transfer* done by MassDOT, dated October 2014.

A question was asked about why the date for reporting to the Selectmen had been advanced to December 15, 2015, from January 2016. With a definitive answer being unavailable, the consensus was that submission of a report by the earlier date gave the Selectmen more time to consider this committee's prioritizations in anticipation of the May 2016 town meeting.

Five minutes were then taken to allow the committee members to introduce themselves to each other.

Next, the committee discussed generally how to proceed. The consensus that emerged was to extract from the three reports the recommendations that were still relevant, to categorize them as an aid to analysis and understanding, and then to prioritize them in light of current needs and conditions. In the course of the discussion, the following points were raised:

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- The recommendations of the two town committees seem at odds with the recommendations of MassDOT. One of the main goals of the town committees appears to be traffic calming, while MassDOT's primary concern seems to be moving traffic through town more quickly.
- It is the committee's task to rank items with respect to current conditions and to consider, among other things, cost, traffic capacity, the town's character, and the effect on that character entailed by each project individually and jointly.
- Practicality and feasibility should inform the committee's choices. For example, sidewalks are within the town's capacity for action and will take on increasing importance as development of the town center proceeds. On the other hand, although everyone recognizes that commuting through Bolton is an issue, our ability to solve that issue is limited.
- Two ways to categorize items are to focus on items that can be done quickly and on items that are high-risk.
- While considerations regarding the center of town tend to dominate public discourse, we have to remember that Route 117 is a long road and deserves our attention from end to end. So, for example, we need to consider what can be done around the high school and at the Main Street/Forbush Mill Road/Green Road intersection.
- Safety should be a paramount concern; we all need to be able to cross the street safely.
- Where can we find funding for these projects? Is federal money available? Wasn't the new rotary on Route 70 financed with federal money from the TIP program? Does the town have the expertise to apply for grants or do we need to develop that ability?
- On the other hand, how much should cost considerations be a concern for this committee given its charge? While we recognize the role and importance of cost in selecting projects, our charge, the scope of our activities, and our time for completion are limited. Our task is to define priorities among a limited number of tasks and to leave financial considerations for the next stage.
- Why does Bolton have such high speed limits along Route 117 as compared to other towns through which 117 passes? What alternatives are available for controlling the speed of traffic?

In preparation for the meeting, Burt Shnitzler had prepared a document summarizing the recommendations of the three reports. The committee reviewed this summary with an eye to identifying the recommendations that remain relevant and to eliminating those that were not. The committee retained the following recommendations for its consideration:

Retained Recommendation	Source
1 - Improve the Nashoba Regional High School area by reengineering the Forbush Mill Road/Green Road/117 intersection to resolve all safety issues especially for pedestrians and bicycles crossing Main Street. Create walkways to the school from surrounding neighborhoods.	<i>Non-Motorized Transportation Recommendations</i> (Mobility Committee Report, September 2014)

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Retained Recommendation	Source
2 - Extend paved shoulders on Main Street from Hudson Road west to the Lancaster town line.	<i>Non-Motorized Transportation Recommendations (Mobility Committee Report, September 2014)</i>
3 - Add a sidewalk on Wattaquaddock Hill Road from Main Street to Memorial Field in order to complete walking loops on the town land around the elementary school buildings.	<i>Non-Motorized Transportation Recommendations (Mobility Committee Report, September 2014)</i>
4 - Extend sidewalk on the north side of Main Street from Harvard Road west to connect to the sidewalk at the Pondsides residential development.	<i>Non-Motorized Transportation Recommendations (Mobility Committee Report, September 2014)</i>
5 - Create short segments of walkways at danger spots. Example: At the sharp curve on Sugar Road by Firematic Supply Co. and at the tennis courts on Green Road.	<i>Non-Motorized Transportation Recommendations (Mobility Committee Report, September 2014)</i>
6 - Extend the sidewalk on Main Street from the Bolton Office Park/Country Manor Senior housing east to Hudson Road to connect to the shops at the Country Cupboard and the potential mixed use village overlay development.	<i>Non-Motorized Transportation Recommendations (Mobility Committee Report, September 2014)</i>
7 - Turning lanes and refuge islands will improve bicycle and pedestrian safety at some exposed intersections; for example Green Road/Forbush Mill Road with Route 117; turning left on to Wilder Road from Route 117; turning left on to East End Road from Route 117.	<i>Non-Motorized Transportation Recommendations (Mobility Committee Report, September 2014)</i>
8 - Current and future traffic lights should have associated crosswalks and pedestrian control.	<i>Non-Motorized Transportation Recommendations (Mobility Committee Report, September 2014)</i>
9 - Extend the sidewalk on the south side of Route 117 from the Library to the Catholic Church.	<i>Non-Motorized Transportation Recommendations (Mobility Committee Report, September 2014)</i>
E - Seek better control and speed of traffic in high school area.	<i>Main Street Safety Task Group Report (October 2002)</i>
F - Other recommendations in high school area: Add a barrier to modify Classic Pizza parking lot so drivers cannot cut corner entering Forbush Mill Road. Limit access to the intersection.	<i>Main Street Safety Task Group Report (October 2002)</i>
F - Other recommendations in high school area: Clear brush from northeast corner of Main Street and Green Rd to increase visibility for drivers entering Main Street.	<i>Main Street Safety Task Group Report (October 2002)</i>

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Retained Recommendation	Source
F - Other recommendations in high school area: Consider/research the following question: If the official address of the high school were changed from Green Road to Main Street, would this help to add a school zone?	<i>Main Street Safety Task Group Report (October 2002)</i>
K - Install a traffic light at Manor/Harvard Road, possibly with separate left turn bay.	<i>Main Street Safety Task Group Report (October 2002)</i>
L - Add a pedestrian-activated light to cross Wattaquodock/Main.	<i>Main Street Safety Task Group Report (October 2002)</i>
M - Consider redirecting traffic flow in Manor/Harvard/Wattaquodock Hill Road triangle.	<i>Main Street Safety Task Group Report (October 2002)</i>
N - Increase visibility of crosswalks.	<i>Main Street Safety Task Group Report (October 2002)</i>
P - Increase number of crosswalks.	<i>Main Street Safety Task Group Report (October 2002)</i>
Q - Extend and maintain sidewalks.	<i>Main Street Safety Task Group Report (October 2002)</i>
Short term: All areas of the corridor where 4" wide pavement marking exists would be restriped with 6" pavement markings.	<i>Route 117 Review of Ownership Transfer (MassDOT, October 2014)</i>
Short term: Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance issues with wheelchair ramps, crosswalks, and sidewalks would be addressed.	<i>Route 117 Review of Ownership Transfer (MassDOT, October 2014)</i>
Short term: The damaged metal railing along concrete wall at Pond Park next to Mechanic St. would be replaced and upgraded. Currently several of the railing posts are corroded at their base to a point where they are disconnected from the wall. These posts are effectively providing no support and pose a safety hazard to pedestrians and vehicular collisions.	<i>Route 117 Review of Ownership Transfer (MassDOT, October 2014)</i>
Short term: Upgrades to guardrail and guardrail end treatments would be performed.	<i>Route 117 Review of Ownership Transfer (MassDOT, October 2014)</i>
Short term: Sight Distances at intersections would be evaluated and improved.	<i>Route 117 Review of Ownership Transfer (MassDOT, October 2014)</i>

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Retained Recommendation	Source
<p>Long term: The intersection of Rte. 117 and Still River Rd (Rte. 110) in Bolton is a signalized intersection which sees heavy bicycle traffic coming from Rte. 110 and is adjacent a busy commercial store, Bolton Orchards. In spring 2014 MassDOT recorded a peak adjusted ADT count of approximately 2,600 vehicles for the north and southbound Rte. 110 approaches. The intersection traffic signal system is old and the travel lanes are narrow with minimal shoulder clearance available for bicycles. MassDOT would likely address several of the intersection issues in efforts to improve traffic flow efficiency and safety for all traffic modes. Safety upgrades that would be needed involve complete reconstruction of the intersection. This would include sidewalk connections, new signs, traffic signal system, and improved travel lanes. Moreover, MassDOT would look to move many of the access points to Bolton Orchards away from the intersection due to the in delays and potential crash hazards associated with turning entering/exiting traffic.</p>	<p><i>Route 117 Review of Ownership Transfer</i> (MassDOT, October 2014)</p>
<p>Long term: The typical cross section of the roadway along the Rte. 117 corridor has pavement widths of 24' and narrow to no shoulders. The lack of adequate shoulder clearance makes bicycle travel unsafe and discourages its use. One of the higher bicycle focused areas along the corridor is from the Rte. 117/110 junction at Still River Road moving eastwards towards the Bolton Town Hall. To accommodate safer multimodal traffic and sustainable transportation methods, MassDOT is inclined to take long term steps like roadway box widening at the most narrow sections of the bicycle focused areas. However, existing shoulders between the Bolton Library and the Town Hall may require less widening, as shoulder widths are increased in these locations. MassDOT would likely encourage 5' shoulders in both the eastbound and westbound directions in future project developments. This section in Bolton is presently used by some local residents to park their vehicles. On-street parking would be prohibited if control of Rte. 117 fell under state ownership. Roadway widening would also likely be used to add additional space in some of the more constricted travel lanes found near the Still River Rd. intersection of the corridor.</p>	<p><i>Route 117 Review of Ownership Transfer</i> (MassDOT, October 2014)</p>
<p>Long term: The Rte. 117 intersection with Wattaquaddock Hill Rd. experiences significant delays in the peak hours. Traffic backups can extend as far 1-495 along Rte. 117 and for over 1000 feet on Wattaquaddock Hill Rd. MassDOT is likely to widen both roadways to accommodate additional turning lanes at the intersection. The pavement widenings would also accommodate wider shoulders for bicyclists. Sidewalk would also be added. It is anticipated that structure takings would most likely be required.</p>	<p><i>Route 117 Review of Ownership Transfer</i> (MassDOT, October 2014)</p>

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The committee eliminated the following recommendations from its consideration, primarily because they have been accomplished:

Eliminated Recommendation	Source
F - Other recommendations in high school area: Add more lighting. There are evening events at the school (athletic events, meetings, performances) that require people to park on the south side of road. More light is needed for pedestrians to cross the highway. Police detail for larger events is needed.	<i>Non-Motorized Transportation Recommendations (Mobility Committee Report, September 2014)</i>
A - Remedy the illegal signs issue at Manor/Harvard Road intersection.	<i>Main Street Safety Task Group Report (October 2002)</i>
B - Create and appoint a more permanent advisory committee to monitor safety and traffic issues and communicate with other town committees to help us achieve a higher level of attention.	<i>Main Street Safety Task Group Report (October 2002)</i>
C - Increase police enforcement of existing speeds and behavior around schools.	<i>Main Street Safety Task Group Report (October 2002)</i>
D - Increase signage warning drivers of existence of high school or pursue official school zone status.	<i>Main Street Safety Task Group Report (October 2002)</i>
G - Increase signage on Main Street warning drivers of existence of school zone near Sawyer/Emerson Schools.	<i>Main Street Safety Task Group Report (October 2002)</i>
H - Implement aggressive speed control devices to slow Mechanic Street traffic.	<i>Main Street Safety Task Group Report (October 2002)</i>
J - Employ a crossing guard at Mechanic Street at School arrival and dismissal times.	<i>Main Street Safety Task Group Report (October 2002)</i>

Lastly, the committee defined a preliminary, working set of categories:

1. High School
2. Crosswalks
3. Sidewalks
4. Traffic Calming
5. Mobility (*i.e.*, all non-motorized transportation recommendations)
6. Intersections

It was then agreed that the next meeting of the committee would occur on Monday, October 19, at 7 p.m. Upon a duly seconded motion and affirming vote, the meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Chris Post

Approved by the Committee as submitted 10/19/2015

