

Route 140 Task Force
Thursday September 4, 2008 – 7:00 p.m.
Princeton Town Hall Annex
Meeting Minutes

TASK FORCE MEMBERS:

Alex Fiandaca, Princeton; Glenn Lyons, Princeton Highway Department; Joe O'Brien, Princeton Board of Selectmen; Ken Whitney, Princeton; John Powers, Sterling; Robert Protano, Sterling; Richard Sheppard, Sterling Board of Selectmen; Robert Temple, Sterling Highway Department; Will Ahearn, Westminster Highway Department; John Fairbanks, Westminster Board of Selectmen; Peter Remelius, Westminster; Arthur Frost, MassHighway; Brad Harris, MRPC; Glenn Eaton, MRPC; Dennis Rindone, Princeton Town Administrator; Rich Rydant, CMRPC

GUESTS:

Helen Townsend, Princeton; Glenis Eden-Kilgour, Princeton; Carolyn Nelson, Princeton; Joyce Snene'ju, Princeton; Phillip O'Brien, Princeton; Brian Doherty, MRPC; Joshua Hall, Westminster; Jacqueline Casale, Princeton; Joseph Casale, Princeton; Jim Truitt, Princeton; Valerie Truitt, Princeton; Larry Greene, Princeton; Mickey Splaine, Princeton; George Snow, MRPC; David Watson, Princeton; Jon Fielding, Princeton; Jennifer Fielding, Princeton; Richard Traina, Sterling

Welcome and Guest Comments:

Joe O'Brien called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m.

Dennis Rindone welcomed everyone to the first meeting and discussed in general the reason for this meeting and group.

As part of introductions, several community members voiced their concerns about the possible loss of trees during the process, as well as people losing lawn area just to better accommodate high speed traffic and more vehicles. Residents of Route 140 indicated that they would like their neighborhoods to remain the same, and to keep Rte 140 as a small town road and not change it into more of a highway.

Route 140 Background and Historical Perspective

Larry Green of the Princeton Road Advisory Committee spoke about the history of Route 140. He indicated that Rte 140 is a commuter road for the area, and the numbers of cars that pass over it have increased significantly in the last two decades. Mr. Green stated that we should consider the maintenance of Rte 140 as well as the potential cost to the towns in the area.

A community member asked Mr. Green which direction the skiers come from.

L. Green replied that the mountain draws between 800,000 to 1 million visitors per year and that his concern was with the winter traffic heading to Wachusett Mountain. A directional split is no available because traffic counts are not done in the winter due to the weather conditions.

Task Force Process Discussion - Citizen Involvement

D. Rindone discussed the need for the Task Force and the public involvement process that will be maintained throughout. The task force will work closely with any design firm for the road, and the road construction will be done according to the needs and requests of the task force. Drawing upon the successful process used by the Route 2 Safety Task Force, of which Mr. Rindone is a member, it is his feeling that as the process moves along and potential designs and alternatives are discussed, extensive meetings or input from the public will lead to better solutions. That is what the Task Force will seek: public input and comment.

During discussion on the public involvement process, the following comments were made:

- A task force member mentioned that a bike lane should be considered on Rte 140 due to the heavy traffic from cyclists.

- A comment was made that cyclists do not pay taxes or fees of any kind for using the road, and that since most bike lanes are not well maintained the cyclists would most likely be riding in the roadways even if there was a specific section or lane for them.

- A community member indicated that the biggest problem with bicycle traffic is that motorists need to be more educated on the presence of cyclists. Cyclists have the same rights as pedestrians and other people who use the road.

- R. Traina stated that widening Rte 140 is not the solution for the problems with the roadway. He indicated that slowing the traffic down is going to be the answer to the majority of the problems that people are having on Rte 140.

- A community member stated that those changing the road have an obligation to the people who live on the roadway to ensure that their neighborhoods remain safe for their children and pets.

D. Rindone stated that as part of his work on the Route 2 Task Force, members took into consideration all of the public comments and kept the public informed. That is what the Route 140 Task Force hopes to do with these meetings.

Possible Funding Sources

The following individuals discussed possible funding sources for projects and/or studies on Route 140.

- State Representative Lewis Evangelidis explained that he is not advocating for any particular job or proposal, but he is present to help the task force pay for the actions they decide that need to be done for the roadway. L. Evangelidis explained the capital spending process as well as the bonding of funds for specific projects. He also explained that money needs to be bonded before any projects can receive funding. He and Sen. Chandler have placed in the Transportation Bond Bill, a line item for \$14 million for improvements to Route 140.

- B. Harris of the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) indicated that there are target funds for Highway Safety Improvement Projects (HSIP) to improve roadways in the Commonwealth. If there are projects identified through the task force where there is a safety problem, then maybe some of the funds can be allocated to the Route 140 project. Through the TIP (Transportation Improvement Program) process, the RPA's can work to possibly advance some HSIP projects for Rte 140.

- Rich Rydant of the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) discussed what is necessary for a corridor study for Route 140. First there would be a determination of the key locations on this route in order to conduct traffic counts. Location recommendations from this task force would be taken into account. Also, in order to get a crash analysis of the road, the organization doing the study would need to look at the crash data from the police departments, in order to produce crash diagrams and determine the safety of the road. As well as traffic counting, bridges and pavement analysis are also crucial to the completion of a corridor study. Mr. Rydant also mentioned that it also extremely important to do an environmental profile of the area, to get an idea of surrounding areas.

- Arthur Frost of the MassHighway Department stated that it is important to take into account the concerns of the people that will be affected by the changes to the roadway.

D. Rindone indicated that any project designer would have to meet with the task force and the public several times in order to make sure all concerns will be appropriately addressed. He also mentioned that there are five task force members who live on Route 140, and that they are not going to allow any drastic actions to be taken during this project without representing the opinions of the citizens that live in the area.

Future Meeting Schedule

Mr. Rindone indicated that the next task force meeting would be held on Thursday October 16, 2008 at 7:00 p.m. at the Princeton Town Hall Annex.

D. Rindone asked the task force about items for the next month's agenda. He indicated that he would be putting the corridor study on the next agenda for more discussion, as well as the election of a chairman.

A comment was made that each town should come up with the top two or three issues they have with their section of Route 140.

A community member asked the task force if they could acquire traffic counts for the last 3 years as opposed to the traffic from over thirty years ago.

R. Rydant replied that the data could be broken down further.

A comment was made about the bridges, and whether or not they would be included in the corridor study.

A. Frost replied that bridges would be studied outside of the corridor study; however since they are town maintained, flooding and bridge information would be available at the towns.

Adjournment

D. Rindone adjourned the meeting at 9:00 p.m.