

Route 140 Safety Improvement Task Force

Thursday, September 24, 2009 - 7:00 PM

Butterick Building, Town of Sterling

MEETING MINUTES

TASK FORCE MEMBERS:

Will Ahearn, Westminster; John Fairbanks, Westminster; Alex Fiandaca, Princeton; Arthur Frost, MassHighway District #3; Brad Harris, MRPC; Joe O'Brien, Princeton; Peter Remelius, Westminster; Rich Rydant, CMRPC; Dick Sheppard, Sterling; Mickey Splaine, Princeton; Robert Temple, Sterling

GUESTS:

Clair Degutis, Princeton; Mark Fiandaca, Princeton; Paula O'Connor, Princeton; Mark Packard, Sterling (Sterling Greenery); George Pape, Sterling; Lucy Parker, Princeton; Jean Theurkauf, Sterling; Helen Townsend, Princeton; Richard Traina, Sterling; Judy Tyler, Princeton

PLANNING AGENCY STAFF:

Jonathan Church, CMRPC; Jon Ding, CMRPC; George Snow, MRPC

Welcome-Town of Sterling:

Dick Sheppard, Sterling Board of Selectmen, called the meeting of the Route 140 Safety Improvement Task Force to order at 7:10 PM. He welcomed all in attendance to the town of Sterling. *He noted that Sterling held a public information session on August 13th that was fairly well attended with active discussion. A summary of the session was included in the handout materials prepared for the meeting.*

Introductions and Guest Comments:

Task Force members and guests introduced themselves around the table. Mr. Rich Rydant introduced Jonathan Church, Principal Transportation Planner with CMRPC. Jonathan indicated that he would provide a presentation later in the meeting about *Walkable Communities*.

Review and Approval of May Task Force Meeting Minutes:

Following a brief introduction, Mr. Sheppard turned to the minutes from the May 28th meeting of the Route 140 Task Force. He asked for a motion to approve the minutes. A motion was made and seconded. The minutes from the May meeting were unanimously approved.

Planning Agency Updates:

MRPC

MRPC Transportation Program Manager Brad Harris, assisted by planner George Snow, indicated that after the last meeting MRPC continued working on any remaining data collection activities in the communities of Sterling and Westminster. The MRPC staff went over the various Route 140 materials presented in a number of meeting handouts that included the following summaries:

- 24-Hour Traffic Volume & AM/PM Splits
- Speed & Truck Volume Splits
- Design Speed Ranges
- FHWA Vehicle Classification Scheme
- Peak Turning Movement Count Volumes & Level of Service (LOS) Analysis
- Sight Distance Investigations
- Sterling & Westminster Vehicle Crash Rate Analysis

Brad Harris explained a number of Route 140 maps that the MRPC staff had posted around the room. He referred to the GIS produced maps while explaining the details of Route 140 traffic volumes, travel speeds and vehicle classification related to heavy vehicles. In response to questions from those in attendance, Mr. Harris explained how intersection turning movement counts are manually conducted. Referring to the handout materials, he explained how to read the posted intersection volumes observed at the various study intersections along Route 140.

Mr. Snow explained how to identify safety issues at various intersections as well as how vehicle crash rates are calculated. In response to a question from the floor, he explained that the vehicle crash data used in the Route 140 study was researched at the local police departments, supplementing data available from MassHighway. The crash diagrams completed for various intersections will be included in the report document.

CMRPC

Rich Rydant, CMRPC Project Manager, indicated that the planning agencies look to complete remaining data collection activities before the snow falls. Mr. Rydant distributed a number of handouts including several charts and maps. He pointed out that the handout materials include a summary of the June public information session held in Princeton. As Westminster has yet to

hold their respective session, it was suggested that the materials be used as a reference. Mr. Rydant also explained how the Princeton public information meeting was posted on the town website and well attended.

Mr. Rydant then explained the example Corridor Profile Working Outline, saying how the report can be customized for the needs of each community. He then explained the results of a Travel Time & Delay study conducted along Route 140 in Princeton. In order to produce the chart included in the meeting handout, CMRPC used a new software package called "TravTime". Mr. Rydant explained that CMRPC staff drove a vehicle equipped with a GPS device, several times both northbound and southbound, along Route 140 in Princeton in order to obtain the results that are illustrated in the chart.

In response to a question, it was clarified that the graph only shows results for the town of Princeton. It was confirmed that the graph results do not reach to West Boylston through Sterling. The charts show that field measured travel speeds basically indicate a free flow condition for Route 140 traffic. The lowest speeds were observed through the East Princeton Village area. There was a question concerning the fluctuation of traffic along Route 140 during different times of the day. Examples used were "Friday at 5 PM" or a "Sunday evening in January".

"Walkable Communities" Presentation:

At that time, Jonathan Church of the CMRPC staff gave a PowerPoint presentation on the subject of "Walkable Communities". The presentation included general examples of poor walkability conditions and how to identify them. Further, various recommended designs for improved walkability and place-making were suggested. Questions and comments received from those in attendance included the following:

- Can any of these designs be built along the Route 140 corridor?
- How does one factor for limited right-of-way in sidewalk designs along certain segments of Route 140?
- Wouldn't allowing pedestrians on Route 140 be potentially hazardous because of existing speed limits and traffic volumes?
- Can these design examples be included in zoning bylaws?

Following the question and answer session, the Task Force members from the Town of Princeton expressed interest in scheduling a field workshop in the East Princeton Village area in the near future, perhaps sometime in October. Also noted was the potential for a Transportation Enhancement Program application in order to implement the envisioned pedestrian and bicycle improvements through the Village area.

Concluding Data Collection Activities:

The planning agency staff noted that over the next two months that they will attempt to complete all data collection activities needed to conduct the various analyses that will be included in the report document. A basic inventory of Route 140 culverts is planned by both agencies in their respective communities. Other remaining field work includes observing the available lines of sight at a number of study intersections.

Next Steps:

The planning agency staff indicated that some of the next steps of the study process, besides completing any data collection activities, will include conducting Level-of-Service (LOS) analyses to determine the operational characteristics of Route 140 during the peak travel periods.

Mr. Rydant commented that the Task Force will need to begin discussing various improvement options for Route 140 to be considered by each of the host communities. It was mentioned that the towns may eventually pursue a range of improvements customized to meet the needs of each respective community. The need to assign project priority was also discussed. One ranking method to perhaps consider is the Transportation Evaluation Criteria (TEC) methods developed a few years ago by EOT and MassHighway.

A comment from the floor indicated that any future construction of recommended improvements would need to be phased in some manner as well as include provisions for construction zone traffic control. Route 140 will need to remain functional while improvements to address safety, drainage and other issues are being implemented.

Further, the planning agency staff will meet at some point in order to discuss and determine report document content and formatting.

Future Meetings:

The next two meetings of the Route 140 Safety Improvement Task Force were scheduled for November 19, 2009 at 7:00 PM in Westminster and for January 21, 2010 at 7:00 PM in Princeton.

Adjournment:

Mr. Sheppard adjourned the meeting at 8:45 PM.

