

Route 140 Safety Improvement Task Force

Thursday, January 8, 2009 - 7:00 PM

Chocksett Middle School Library

MEETING MINUTES

TASK FORCE MEMBERS:

Dennis Rindone, Princeton Town Administrator; Arthur Frost, MassHighway District 3; Brad Harris, MRPC; Rich Rydant, CMRPC; Mary Ellen Blunt, CMRPC; Dick Sheppard, Sterling; Robert Temple, Sterling Highway Department; John Powers, Sterling; John Fairbanks, Westminster; Alex Fiandaca, Princeton; Joe O'Brien, Princeton

GUESTS:

Rex and Janeen Baker, Princeton; Patrick Deyo, Princeton; Phyllis Booth (*Holden Landmark*), Princeton; Sue Staudaher, Sterling; Wayne Earley, Sterling; Dino Dibattistta, Westminster; George Snow, MRPC, Jon Ding, CMRPC; Paula Owen, *Worcester Telegram & Gazette*; Brian Doherty, MRPC; Richard Traina, Sterling

Welcome-Town of Sterling:

Dick Sheppard, Sterling Board of Selectmen, welcomed the Route 140 Task Force and guests, and called the meeting to order at 7:10 PM.

Review and Approval of the Minutes:

When asked to consider the minutes from the October 16th meeting of the Route 140 Task Force, both Mary Ellen Blunt, CMRPC, and Arthur Frost, MassHighway District #3 office, suggested corrections to the draft minutes.

Ms. Blunt indicated that CMRPC staff (Bill Moisuk) was in attendance at the October meeting and that staff had progressed with a vehicle crash research effort of Route 140 through the town of Princeton, similar to that undertaken by MRPC staff for the communities of both Sterling and Westminster.

Arthur Frost indicated that accommodating bicycle traffic is a concern as well as the need to examine existing roadway drainage patterns. There are a number of locations along Route 140 where water drains across the roadway, leading to a potentially hazardous situation, particularly under freezing winter conditions.

Mr. Sheppard asked for a motion to approve the minutes of October 16, 2008. The minutes were accepted as corrected and passed unanimously.

Round of Introduction and Guest Comments:

Task Force members and guests introduced themselves around the table. Mr. Sheppard suggested everyone inform the public about the reasonable approach and parameters of the Route 140 effort.

Continue Discussion on Route 140 Corridor Profile:

- *Route 140 Vehicle Crash data for past three years:*

Rich Rydant from CMRPC and Brad Harris from MRPC summarized the Route 140 vehicle crashes in the towns of Princeton, Sterling and Westminster. Detailed vehicle crash information and diagrams were included in the meeting handout materials.

Vehicle crash research efforts need to look at the “root causes” or “common themes” of Route 140 vehicle crashes. Often times, as pointed out by Rich Traina, Sterling FD, “speed and impatience” lead to the crashes that have been documented by the two planning agencies.

Comments made on MRPC’s findings included the number of crashes at the Route 2A/East Main Street intersection in Westminster as well as the Route 140 interchange with I-190 in Sterling. At the interchange, six reported rear-end type crashes occurred on the I-190 southbound off-ramp to Route 140. Further, at the Route 140/Route 62 intersection in Sterling, line of sight issues from the eastbound approach of Route 62 toward the southbound approach of Route 140 were noted. Two crashes involved vehicles striking deer. Other crashes where snowy and icy conditions played a role were also discussed.

In response to questions concerning the speed of vehicles involved in the reported crashes and how far off the paved surface were objects struck, the crash reports submitted to local police often provide little information. *(It was noted that additional research would be necessary in an attempt to answer these questions.)*

- *Review and discussion of Route 140 concerns:*

Dennis Rindone stated that the listings of concerns need to be refined and expanded in order to be beneficial to RPCs.

A suggestion was made on uploading all project documents to town websites.

Westminster, Princeton and Sterling members stated that after the first meeting, they toured Route 140 and listed their major concerns. Those concerns were explained and discussed in the meeting, and included the following:

Westminster Concerns

Ongoing issues adjacent to the Wyman Pond area were noted, including limited line of sight due to roadway curvature and adjacent vegetation, as well as culvert issues that lead to perpetual winter icing and spring time flooding.

Other noted concerns included:

- Intersection of 140 and 2A
- Intersection of 140 and Narrows Road

Princeton Concerns

Princeton's expanded listing of Route 140 concerns was presented to the group by Joe O'Brien. The small, yet critical, bridge structure in the East Princeton village was reiterated as a concern due to suspected overweight vehicles.

It was suggested that truck traffic through the area be encouraged to use I-190 and Route 2 as opposed to Route 140, particularly in light of the posted bridge in the East Princeton village area. Perhaps signs can be posted in some manner.

Other noted concerns included:

- Bridge at Sterling-Princeton town line
- Sawyer field proximity to road, fencing, and other child safety concerns
- East Princeton Village area
- Bog area just north of Hobbs road
- Intersection of Route 140 & Route 31 (northern location)
- Intersection of Route 140, Rocky Pond and Myrick Roads
- Sight distances in Everettville
- Bicycle Traffic
- Entire route might need borings to determine the sub-base, ensuring an enduring project.
- Vertical and horizontal sight issues are evident in various locations

Sterling Concerns

Sterling's listing of Route 140 concerns includes the intersection of Route 140 with Route 62. This location is likely a top priority along Sterling's section of Route 140. Other concerns along Route 140 include the acute/obtuse geometry of Route 140 intersections with local roads, sight distance issues as well as the need for a paved turnaround for school buses and maintenance vehicles at the Sterling-Princeton town line.

Other noted concerns included:

- Sight line and drainage improvement on Clemence Avenue

- John Dee road needs to be at a 90 degree angle
- Intersection of Route 140 and Crowley road
- Redesign of ends of Johnson Road to prevent high speed cut-through
- Better delineation of Burpee Road
- Intersection of Still River Road
- Sight line hazard on North Oakdale Cutoff

Discuss Corridor Profile timeframe, cost and content:

Rich Rydant, CMRPC, using materials included in the meeting handout, explained the definition, components and procedures of a “Corridor Profile”. Further, he mentioned CMRPC’s GIS-based environmental consultation efforts. It was suggested that this could be an item of discussion on a future agenda of the Task Force, perhaps in March.

Discuss second round of DLTA funds:

Ms. Blunt, CMRPC, stated that staff will utilize approved UPWP funding on this project. Mr. Harris, MRPC, stated that they are still working on the funding resource. In regards to the DLTA funds, both agencies suggested that each town submit the application to the directors of MRPC and CMRPC, respectively.

Public Comments:

A guest asked if the study will in fact be conducted. The RPC staff answered yes.

A question was asked how long it will take to complete the study. Mr. Rydant and Mr. Harris answered it depends on the funding, but could be potentially be completed by the end of 2009.

A guest pointed out the major cause of the vehicle crashes could be speeding and impatient drivers. Enforcement serves to keep speeds down and could reduce the number of crashes.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting was scheduled for the evening of March 19, 2009 at 7:00 PM, likely to be held in the town of Westminster. *(If possible, a shorter meeting format was suggested.)*

Adjournment:

Mr. Sheppard adjourned the meeting at 9:10 PM.

NOTE: Holden Landmark and Worcester T&G reporters present at the meeting. Both publications subsequently wrote and printed articles concerning the January 8, 2009 meeting of the Route 140 Task Force.