

## **Route 140 Safety Improvement Task Force**

Thursday, May 28, 2009 - 7:00 PM

Thomas Prince School Library

### **MEETING MINUTES**

#### ***DRAFT PENDING TASK FORCE REVIEW & ACCEPTANCE***

#### **TASK FORCE MEMBERS**

**Princeton:** Alex Fiandaca, Joe O'Brien

**Sterling:** Dick Sheppard, Robert Temple, John Powers

**Westminster:** Will Ahearn, John Fairbanks

Brad Harris, Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC)

Rich Rydant, Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC)

Mickey Splaine, MassHighway District #3 (Princeton)

#### **GUESTS**

Phyllis Booth, Holden Landmark

Kevin Toohey, Princeton Roads Committee

George Snow, MRPC

Brian Doherty, MRPC

Jon Ding, CMRPC

#### **Welcome-Town of Princeton**

Joe O'Brien, Princeton Board of Selectmen, welcomed the Route 140 Safety Improvement Task Force and guests, and called the May meeting to order at 7:10 PM.

#### **Review and Approval of the Minutes**

After providing a brief introduction, Mr. O'Brien turned to the minutes from the group's March 19<sup>th</sup> meeting held in Westminster. The March meeting minutes were prepared by the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) staff. When asked to consider the minutes, it was indicated that Task Force member John Powers name should be removed from "guest" list. When Mr. O'Brien asked for a motion to approve the minutes, they were accepted as corrected and passed unanimously.

It was requested that when the meeting minutes are available that they be posted on the Princeton town website. The town clerk is the primary contact person on the website. MRPC staff will forward the corrected and accepted version of the March meeting minutes for posting on the Princeton website.

## **Round of Introduction and Guest Comments**

Task Force members and guests introduced themselves around the table. Mr. O'Brien noted that the three towns will collect the previously documented Route 140 materials before the next meeting and post them on community websites.

A brief discussion ensued regarding e-mailed study materials, the need to PDF and place items in a secure format prior to web posting. The potential for Internet links between the Route 140 host communities websites and the two planning agencies was also discussed.

Joe O'Brien suggested the evening of the June 18<sup>th</sup> for the contemplated public information meeting-a planning "charette" suggested by Rich Rydant to gain public input about Route 140.

## **Planning Agencies Activities & Town's Activities**

### ***MRPC***

Brad Harris reported that MRPC staff has produced maps of Sterling and Westminster and have highlighted the issues identified by the Task Force members on the maps. These maps were posted on the library wall. Mr. Harris provided handout materials summarizing the work completed by MRPC since the last meeting. The handout included Route 140 Improvement Priorities & Issues, a brief introduction to Roadway Safety Audits, a listing of proposed traffic counter locations, pavement condition materials as well as a revised summary of Route 140 vehicle crashes.

George Snow, MRPC staff, elaborated on a planned Roadway Safety Audit of the sections of Route 140 in Sterling and Westminster. MRPC staff has planned a similar effort in Princeton using the researched crash information, emergency personnel input and field visits by various parties. The intent of the planned Roadway Safety Audit will be to identify issues and to suggest solutions.

Rich Rydant indicated that commentary and perceptions from the respective police departments in each Route 140 host community would be useful, supplementing the researched crash statistics.

Robert Temple from Sterling asked about whether intersection locations were prioritized on the MRPC maps. Brad indicated that the study locations have not been prioritized-the entirety of the roadway is being examined. Mr. Temple also suggested that the e-mail addresses of the Task Force membership be posted on the community website; in that way, the public could submit comment online.

The success of the improvements implemented at the Route 140 intersection with Legg Road and Dana Hill Road in Sterling was noted. Here, the roadway grade was improved and signalized control was installed.

Line of sight issues at the Route 140/Clemence Avenue intersection in Sterling were mentioned as well as the offset geometry of Fox Fire Road and Crowley Road at Route 140.

The group also commented about the many private driveways along Route 140 and, in various cases, where the driveways meet Route 140 at odd angles and slopes, both upward and downward. Further, lines of sight are limited at other locations. Attention can be given to specific locations identified by the communities, however, improvements to driveways outside the Route 140 right-of-way are considered the responsibility of private landowners.

It was suggested that the old files including public input from the earlier Route 140 study be located in community files. (It was not readily known where these files were stored.)

Brian Doherty, MRPC, spoke about the pavement profile and traffic count information collected in the town of Sterling and Westminster. The need to maintain, preserve and improve the paved surface of Route 140 was discussed.

Rich Rydant indicated that the two planning agencies will complete traffic count and pavement condition data collection during the summer months.

Mr. Temple mentioned issues with solar glare at various times of the year, particularly at the improved Route 140/Legg Road/Dana Hill Road intersection in Sterling.

### ***CMRPC***

Mr. Rydant provided meeting handout materials to the Task Force membership and guests summarizing the work completed by the CMRPC staff since the last meeting.

He explained the map of traffic count locations where Automatic Traffic Recorder (ATR) machines will collect daily traffic volumes as well as the various MassHighway permanent count stations in the greater area from which data can be used to seasonally adjust locally collected traffic volumes. Alex Fiandaca, Princeton, asked whether it is necessary to place a traffic counter on Houghton Road. Mr. Rydant indicated that Houghton Road functions as a local road and that daily traffic are fairly low. The daily traffic counts for the study focus on the federal-aid eligible, state numbered routes, Route 140 and Route 31. As such, daily traffic volumes will be collected on all approaches to each Route 140 intersection with Route 31, north and south, have been collected to test the need for signalized control.

Joe O'Brien asked how the vehicle classification was done. Rydant stated that the ATRs collect the data and software determines vehicle class based on the number and spacing of the axles. (There are 13 different classification categories established by FHWA.)

Rydant went on to explain the yet to be completed graphic of existing intersection traffic volumes. He indicated that CMRPC staff will complete the traffic volume data collection effort in the next few weeks, while local schools are still in session.

As opposed to signalized control, it was suggested that "lesser options" are available, such as "Stop" signs with flashing lights. Mr. Rydant indicated that these devices, like the active speed monitoring signs outside the Thomas Prince School, are considered Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) applications. In general, the illuminated signs seem to have reduced the speed of vehicles traveling through the school speed limit zone.

In regards to Route 140 bridges, Rydant explained that by MassHighway definition, bridges are structures that are at least 20 feet in length or greater. All structures less than 20' in length are considered "culverts". As such, there are only two "true" bridges along Route 140 in Princeton. Both were recently rebuilt in 2003.

MRPC has requested inventory information from the Sterling and Westminster DPWs about the various drainage culverts beneath Route 140. Similarly, CMRPC would like to obtain a Route 140 culvert inventory from Princeton officials.

It was suggested that the "turn around" at the northern Princeton/Sterling town line, adjacent to the Route 140 bridge over Justice Brook, be repaved for the benefit of turning school buses and, in the winter months, snow plow trucks.

### **Public Comment**

Mr. O'Brien mentioned that the public information event, a planning "charette", will be held on the evening of June 18<sup>th</sup> at a location to be determined.

At this time, Joe O'Brien noted the presence of Kevin Toohey in the audience, a member of the Princeton Roads Committee. Mr. Toohey noted keen public interest in the ongoing activities of the Task Force and suggested that further efforts be made to publicize the meetings and to post available study materials on the community website. *(Editor Comment: Princeton has an excellent track record in fixing roads and being sensitive to the abutters and the surrounding environment- the Route 140 effort should be no different.)*

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Route 140 Safety Improvement Task Force was scheduled for the evening of September 24, 2009 at 7:00 PM, to be hosted by the town of Sterling, likely in the library of the Chocksett School.

### **Adjournment**

Joe O'Brien adjourned the May 28, 2009 meeting of the Route 140 Safety Improvement Task Force at 8:25 PM.