

Route 140 Safety Improvement Task Force

Thursday, January 21, 2010 - 7:00 PM
Princeton Town Hall Annex

MEETING MINUTES

TASK FORCE MEMBERS:

Alex Fiandaca, Princeton, Joe O'Brien, Princeton, Mickey Splaine, Princeton, Dick Sheppard, Sterling, Robert Temple, Sterling, John Powers, Sterling, Rob Protano, Sterling, John Fairbanks, Westminster, Arthur Frost, MassDOT D-3 Highway Division, Brad Harris, MRPC, Rich Rydant, CMRPC

GUESTS:

Annmarie Hurly, Princeton, John Lebeaux, Princeton, Kenneth Whitneg, Princeton, Phyllis Booth, Landmark, Brian Doherty, MRPC, George Snow, MRPC, Jon Ding, CMRPC

Welcome to Princeton:

Joe O'Brien, Princeton Board of Selectmen, welcomed the Route 140 Safety Improvement Task Force members and guests to the town of Princeton. He called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Around-the-Room Introductions:

Task Force members and guests introduced themselves around the table.
Those that were present are listed above.

Review and Approval of the Minutes from November 2009 Meeting:

Mr. O'Brien asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the November 19, 2009 meeting of the Route 140 Safety Improvement Task Force. The minutes were accepted as corrected and passed unanimously.

Mr. Rydant noted to the group that the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) oversees and certifies the transportation planning programs carried out by both CMRPC and MRPC. He reported that CMRPC staff had recently updated FHWA staff on the *Route 140 Corridor Profile* effort as well as the proactive public outreach effort carried out by the Route 140 Safety Improvement Task Force.

Planning Agency Updates:

Brad Harris stated that, after the last meeting of the Task Force, MRPC staff worked on the compilation of a Route 140 culvert and bridge condition inventory. MRPC also formulated a number of recommendations. At that time, Mr. Harris distributed a package of hand out materials based on work done by MRPC since the November meeting of the Task Force.

Brian Doherty reviewed the culvert inventories compiled by MRPC staff for Sterling and Westminster. As included in the handout, there were photos showing the condition of 12 culverts from each side of the roadway along with accompanying text. *(Rich Rydant later commented that CMRPC staff plans to emulate the presentation technique used by MRPC.)*

Robert Protano asked if there was a culvert missing on the Sterling map. Brad Harris answered it is a bridge at that particular location, Route 140 over Justice Brook. It is a concrete structure over 20 feet in length.

Mr. Harris then distributed a Pictometry image of the area around Route 140 and Mile Hill Road. He went on to explain that the contour lines on the map indicate that the segment of Route 140 between Mile Hill Road and Gatehouse Road is at a low elevation, essentially just above the surface of Wachusett Lake, part of the Fitchburg water supply.

Brad Harris indicated that another major task MRPC staff was working on was planning and then conducting winter season peak hour Turning Movement Counts (TMCs) at the Route 140 intersection with Mile Hill Road. Brad plans to contact the Management at the local ski area to coordinate this effort. The ski area generates a substantial volume of traffic, providing for both recreation and employment.

Joe O'Brien said the number of buses coming to the ski area on Route 140 will be significant during the ski area's peak hours of operation and will be reflected in the count results. He estimated that approximately 50 buses arrive at the ski area site on weekdays between 2:30 and 5:00 PM.

Rich Rydant distributed a similar package of information based on the work completed by CMRPC staff since the last Task Force meeting. Mr. Rydant went on to fully explain the map and accompanying photos of Route 140 culverts in the Town of Princeton. As part of this discussion, Mr. Rydant introduced a MassDOT map which showed bridges locations and ID codes for the towns of Princeton and Sterling. Arthur Frost indicated that it is possible for the same bridge to have different ID codes in each host community.

Overview of Potential Improvement Options:

Funding Programs

Brad Harris distributed a MRPC brochure that explains the requirements that need to be met to bring forth a transportation improvement project and have it listed on the Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) financially constrained four (4) year project listing. The MPO is considered to be the transportation policy and project programming body for the planning region. Mr. Harris explained the structure of the Montachusett MPO, with membership from MRPC and MART, MassDOT Secretary and Highway Division as well as locally elected officials, including the mayors of Fitchburg, Gardner and Leominster.

Similarly, Rich Rydant distributed handout materials that detailed the structure of the CMMPO as well as a listing of the MPO's typical functions. He also reviewed materials that explained how the CMMPO TIP document is developed along with an example table of contents that demonstrated the wide range of materials, analysis and outreach that is required to compile the annual TIP. In response to a question from Joe O'Brien, Mr. Rydant indicated that the TIP focuses on the programming federal funding. Funding from other sources, such as the state, might be available for the Route 140 project. It was recollected that funding for Route 140 was included in an earlier Transportation Bond Bill passed by the legislature. The status of that money needs to be determined.

Continuing, Mr. Rydant reviewed a handout that provided an overview of the state's Transportation Enhancements (TE) Program. Projects in the Enhancement category include landscaping, amenities for bicycles and pedestrians, and town common beatification. (*Princeton utilized this funding program to restore the town common, completing the project in 2005.*) The state's Enhancement program is currently under review and revision. When staff obtains further information on the refined program, it will be forwarded to the Task Force membership.

Alex Fiandaca stated that the East Princeton Village area is a registered National Historical District. It would be ideal if the community could obtain Enhancement funding for envisioned improvements in the Village area as part of efforts to improve Route 140.

Arthur Frost stated that Enhancement projects will not be as competitive as highway and bridge projects. However, some of the Route 140 improvements suggested possibly fit TE funding requirements. Further, Mr. Frost suggested that the three towns seek to prioritize the locations suggested for improvement. Funding is expected to be limited and numerous parties will be competing for a portion of those funds.

Study Intersections

Brad Harris distributed handout materials that included a listing of potential improvement options along with aerial photos of each Route 140 study intersection in the towns of Sterling and Westminster. He highlighted the Route 140 intersection with Main Street at the Route 2 interchange in Westminster, indicating the possibility of a modern roundabout to replace the existing signalized intersection at that study location. This similar treatment could potentially be applied to the Route 140/Route 62 intersection in Sterling. A conceptual improvement plan for this location produced by MRPC was referenced and discussed.

George Snow then referred to a handout prepared by MRPC that introduced the concept of the modern roundabout along with some of the benefits realized through this type of intersection geometry.

Alex Fiandaca asked if the "shortcut" will be removed from the northwest corner of the Route 140/Route 62 intersection if a roundabout is constructed at that location. Mr. Harris indicated that the shortcut would be removed, noting that the conceptual plan is not exactly accurate on roadway right-of-way and parcel lines; it simply shows the concept of installing a modern roundabout at the Route 140 intersection with Route 62.

Road Segment

Rich Rydant referred to the excerpt from the (now) *MassDOT Project Development & Design Guide* document included in the meeting handout referring to roadway widths and the accommodation of multi-modal operations, particular bicycle and pedestrian.

Similarly, Arthur Frost also distributed handout materials excerpted from the *MassDOT Project Development & Design Guide*. They included a handout

concerning the definition of "Rural Area Types" as well as a section of the "Cross-Section and Roadside Elements" chapter of the document.

Alex Fiandaca asked if the entire Route 140 corridor will have the same road width after a potential improvement project is completed. Mr. Frost indicated that it would be optimal to have the same roadway width in each of the host communities, but, for various reasons, that may not be achievable. The intent is to safely accommodate existing and projected traffic volumes by providing a standard, consistent roadway width that accommodates multi-modes.

Next Steps:

Rich Rydant stated that the next steps on the *Corridor Profile* effort will be the compilation of a working list of potential improvement options for the consideration of the Route 140 host communities. Now that the Task Force has waded into the formulation of potential improvement options, this discussion will need to continue at the next meeting to be held in March. The discussion on preferred roadway widths also needs to continue.

Looking ahead, both CMRPC and MRPC staff intend to be compiling the report document when the Task Force meets in May. In response to a question, Mr. Rydant indicated that the respective MPOs will need to eventually program any selected improvement projects seeking federal-aid funding on the respective Central Mass. and Montachusett TIP project listings.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting of the Route 140 Safety Improvement Task Force was scheduled for the evening of March 18, 2009 at 7:00 PM in Town of Sterling.

Adjournment:

Mr. O'Brien motioned to adjourn the meeting, was seconded, and, when voted, the January meeting of the Route 140 Safety Improvement Task Force ended at 9:05 PM.