



**Meeting  
Notes**

Attendees: See Below

Date/Time: April 16, 2003 6:30 PM

Project No.: 51272  
Plaistow-Kingston 10044-B

Place: Plaistow Public Library

Re: NH 125 Plaistow-Kingston  
Planning Board Meeting, Town of Plaistow  
Access Management Presentation

Notes taken by: Senan P. Murdock

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**Attendees**

Tim Moore, Chairman  
Steve Ranlett, Vice Chairman  
Michelle Curran  
Merilyn Senter, ATF Member  
Kymberlee Lawton  
Chris Waszczuk, NHDOT  
Mike Dugas, NHDOT  
Marty Kennedy, VHB  
Senan Murdock, VHB

**Introduction**

Tim Moore, the Planning Board Chairman, opened the meeting and welcomed everyone to tonight's Planning Board meeting. He explained that there were two items on the agenda tonight and that the first item would be a presentation by the New Hampshire Department of Transportation on the improvements to NH 125 in Plaistow. He introduced Chris Waszczuk of the NHDOT.

**Presentation**

Chris Waszczuk thanked everyone for attending and explained that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the planned upgrade of NH 125 and specifically to discuss the access management component of the project within the town of Plaistow.

C. Waszczuk described the six-mile project limits, which extend from East Road in Plaistow to NH 111 in Kingston. He reviewed the Public Participation Process and explained that an Advisory Task Force has been set up to guide the development of the project and includes

officials from both Plaistow and Kingston. He proceeded to discuss the project history and the project need. In describing the project goals, C. Waszczuk expressed a need to address deficient sections of the roadway, to improve capacity, enhance safety, relieve congestion, and to enhance the safe and efficient access to abutting properties.

C. Waszczuk noted that in addition to the physical roadway improvements that would be necessary to address deficiencies, improve roadway and intersection capacity, and improve safety; that access management was needed to preserve the corridor capacity, improve corridor mobility, and enhance long-term safety. C. Waszczuk noted that some of the tools being investigated as part of the access management plan for the project include:

- Appropriate spacing for signalized intersections.
- Use of left turn lanes to eliminate left turn movements occurring from the through travel lanes.
- Use of medians to eliminate uncontrolled left turns.
- Use of connector or service roads to minimize points of access.

C. Waszczuk reviewed feedback received at previous public access management meetings, where concerns were voiced with the raised median, increased travel time, and truck turn-arounds. He explained that a modified plan has been prepared for the purpose of discussion tonight. The modified plan incorporates directional median openings that allow left-turns to exit NH 125, but does not allow left-turn movements to enter the roadway. The directional median was suggested by Chief Briggs of Kingston and is used in Florida. C. Waszczuk cautioned that the Department has some reservations with this modified concept and still feels the previous raised median concept offers the greatest measure of safety, which is especially important as the corridor continues to develop and traffic continues to increase.

C. Waszczuk then introduced Marty Kennedy of VHB to discuss the specific access management considerations in Plaistow for the NH 125 corridor.

Marty Kennedy presented a PowerPoint presentation that included a review of the project need, project goals, definition of access management, a discussion on the benefits and drawbacks of the directional median concept, and then proceeded to present and describe the modified access management plan.

M. Kennedy reviewed the project goal, which is to provide physical roadway improvements that are aimed at addressing corridor deficiencies, improving capacity, and enhancing safety. In addition, the access management plan will enhance corridor mobility and access, preserve capacity, and enhance long-term safety. The plan is aimed at addressing the existing corridor congestion (congestion results in the diversion of traffic onto local roadways) and reducing the number of vehicle accidents. The corridor experienced 297 accidents between 1996 and 2000. M. Kennedy also explained that the population of Rockingham County is expected to increase by 40 percent over the next 20 years, which will exacerbate the traffic problems along the corridor.

M Kennedy restated the definition of access management:

*Access Management balances mobility and access, so as to improve the efficient movement of traffic while enhancing the safe and efficient access to/from abutting properties.*

M. Kennedy stated that the original plan provided two through lanes in each direction from East Road to the intersection of Hunt Road/Newton Junction Road. Most of this segment, with the exception of the area just north of Main Street in Plaistow, would have a raised center median. Left-

turn lanes would be provided at each of the signalized intersections (East Road, the Drive-in site, Danville Road, Main Street, Old County Road, Roadstone Drive, and Hunt Road/Newton Junction Road).

M. Kennedy proceeded to review the details of the original plan including the locations of proposed traffic signals, connector roadways, jug handles, and breaks in the median for emergency vehicles. Marty identified the connector roadways that would be constructed as part of the corridor project. Those roadways included: the connector road on the east side of NH 125 opposite the old Drive-in site in Plaistow and the proposed frontage roadway that would connect Kingston Road to the new signalized intersection opposite Roadstone Drive.

M. Kennedy said that there was principally one issue that we heard "load and clear" at the access management meetings and that was that the raised median could adversely impact businesses along the corridor. He mentioned that Chief Briggs of Kingston had touted a "Florida Concept" that he had learned from Florida transportation officials. M. Kennedy explained that he has since been in touch with the Florida officials and that Marty and the Florida DOT have exchanged access management information. He presented a graphic from the Florida DOT that showed a directional median break, which allows left turn access into a parcel, but prohibits left turns out. The modified plan incorporates these directional median breaks.

Before presenting the modified plan, M. Kennedy discussed the benefits and drawbacks of the directional median. He stated that the directional medians provide primarily one benefit, which is improved access to businesses. In contrast, Marty presented an extensive list of drawbacks including:

- Increased Conflicts – Increased Accidents
- Reduced Deceleration and Taper Lengths
- Potential for Wrong-way Travel
- Difficult and Costly to Plow and Maintain
- May Limit Future Development
- Potential Issue of Fairness
- Requires Driveway Consolidation Agreements

With that, M. Kennedy described the modified plan noting that the plan maintains the continuous raised median island south of NH 121A due to the density of driveways and proposed frontage road. We have applied the directional median concept along the segment that extends from NH 121A to Hunt Road/Newton Junction Road. He also reviewed the criteria that Florida uses in establishing the median openings. He explained that the Florida DOT criteria for access management corridors allows for some deceleration to take place in the through lane, which reduces the required length of the left turn bay.

Before opening the meeting up to comments and questions, Chris Waszczuk briefly reviewed the project development process and discussed tentative dates for future meetings.

#### **Comments and Questions from the Planning Board**

**Comment** – Tim Moore, Chairman of the Plaistow Planning Board, stated that there was a copy of the Access Management Plan in the Planning Board office. He requested a copy of the modified plan for the town that residents and business owners could review at their own leisure. Tim also mentioned that there is a town ordinance that does not allow placement of signs offsite. He

explained that there would have to be some modification to this to allow for placement of signs along the corridor that would direct the traveling public to businesses.

**Response** – A copy of the plan was left with the town.

**Comment** – Merilyn Senter, Planning Board and ATF member, stated that she would like to pass along a comment from the Fire Chief. The Fire Chief was concerned about access to the Timberlane High School. Fire trucks access this complex several times a day. In order to cut down on arrival time, the trucks take a left onto Jesse George Road. This plan proposes a raised median on NH 125 across Jesse George Road, which will require the trucks to take a left onto Danville Road.

#### **Comments and Questions from the Public**

**Comment** – Don Clark, resident on Walton Road, questioned what was going to happen in the future to the south near the Haverhill line where NH 125 narrows to a single lane. If this section of roadway currently under consideration is widened, and more vehicles can travel on it, what will happen to the traffic situation at the entrance to I-495?

**Response** – M. Kennedy first explained that the traffic in the area is going to continue to grow whether NH 125 is widened or not. In fact the diversion onto local streets, which occurs today is only going to get worse. As the congestion grows, motorists will seek alternate routes. By providing sufficient capacity and a well-designed access management plan, motorists will likely remain on the corridor rather than diverting onto local streets. He explained that the I-495 interchange is outside the limits of this project, and would involve a separate project directed by the state of Massachusetts.

**Comment** – Kymberlee Lawton, Planning Board member, agreed with Don Clark's concern and questioned why the city is only addressing this part of NH 125 in Plaistow.

**Response** – C. Waszczuk explained that this segment of NH 125 is the last remaining unimproved segment of the corridor. The Department had previously upgraded the section of NH 125 south of East Road so as to provide two through lanes in each direction plus turn lanes. The project limits of the unimproved segment of the corridor, from East Road to the Kingston Bypass, were set in the 10-year plan many years ago. With these types of projects, if the project limits are continually expanded, the project schedule continues to get pushed out, sometimes resulting in considerable project delays. The I-495 interchange area is a Massachusetts issue. There is a separate study that is being conducted by MHD to address that issue. Chris reiterated that traffic would continue to grow whether the road is widened or not. Diversion is occurring today and is only going to get worse.

**Comment** – Tim Moore mentioned that there are still other NH 125 projects on the books and those include from the Stateline to East Road. Even though the project described tonight doesn't include projects south of East Road, there are projects underway to make those improvements.

**Comment** – Merilyn Senter mentioned that she would be meeting with State Senator Chuck Morse and US Congressmen Marty Meehan and Jeb Bradley on Friday morning to discuss this particular issue. One of the options that is being discussed is a new exit off of Route 495, which would bypass the north section of Haverhill.

**Comment** – Tim Moore asked if NH 121A was going to be widened to two lanes because of the double left in the NB direction on NH 125.

**Response** – M. Kennedy explained that it would be widened to two lanes for approximately 500-600 feet and then it would taper back down to a single lane.

**Comment** – Fred R., Walton Road, stated that he preferred that the end of Walton Road be closed to NH 125. He is concerned with traffic entering Walton Road near Sawyer's Function Hall, bypassing the traffic on NH 125, and connecting over to Danville Road.

**Comment** – Steve Ranlett, Vice Chairman of the Planning Board, clarified that with the proposed plan, motorists traveling north on Walton Road from Route 121A, towards the function hall, would not be able to make a left hand turn - only a right turn.

**Comment** – Anne Marie Cardinal, 22 ½ Walton Road, explained that she has three kids that ride their bikes in the road because there are no sidewalks. Motorists, who currently travel along Walton Road at high speeds, are a threat to her children. Ms. Cardinal also stated that she has contacted the Police Department asking for police to patrol the road because it gets worse when the high school gets out. She went on to say that her other concern is that if access is terminated at the northern end of Walton Road, every time Sawyers has a function, their patrons are going to be going down Walton Road to get out. If we block it off, we will be stopping traffic from coming in, but we will also be stopping vehicles from getting out.

**Response** – M. Kennedy explained that the problems of cut-through traffic and high speeds are existing problems and are somewhat unrelated to the proposed improvements to NH 125. However, these existing problems could be addressed by discontinuing all access/egress of Walton Road at NH 125.

**Comment** – Marco Fiore, Main Street, noted that the median would restrict traffic to and from the businesses. He asked if it would be feasible to move the businesses back away from the highway.

**Response** – M. Kennedy explained that relocating existing businesses in order to accommodate a collector-distributor roadway in front of businesses would be cost prohibitive and would severely impact existing businesses. Providing this type of treatment in built-up areas, such as the southern section of NH 125, is often impractical.

**Comment** – Marco Fiore, Main Street, suggested closing off Walton Road to through traffic. Provide an access for the function hall off of NH 125, but don't allow traffic to travel to the south on Walton Road. Many of the attendees agreed with this concept.

**Comment** – Barbara Follett, 13 Walton Road, noted that her house is directly behind Larry's Seafood, and she feels the highway will be in her backyard. She agrees with closing off Walton Road to through traffic.

**Comment** – Patricia Tilden, Shady Lane, agreed with cutting off Walton Road/Shady Lane and making it a cul-de-sac because of speeding cars.

**Comment** – Maria Gilbert, 209 Main Street, expressed concern with having a double left turn lane in the northbound direction on NH 125 onto NH 121A. She is concerned with traffic being diverted into a residential area. She also feels that it would be much more difficult to get out of her driveway due to the increased traffic queues.

**Comment** – Anne Marie Pardo expressed concern that there would be more traffic with the double left onto NH 121A and suggested that sidewalks be constructed to make it safer for pedestrians.

**Response** – C. Waszczuk explained the issue of sidewalks did come up over the course of project development. The typical section that the Department is envisioning is two 12-ft wide lanes, 20-ft wide section reserved for the median, 5-ft shoulders for the bicyclists, curbing, and a panel for a sidewalk (that could be a sidewalk constructed as part of the project or a future sidewalk). In the area between East Road and Main Street, there was discussion of providing sidewalks along NH 125 and then carrying that sidewalk up Route 121A to Walton Road.

**Comment** – Christine Petrosino commented that it would be better to provide the double left at Danville Road.

**Response** – M. Kennedy explained that there were a series of meetings early on in the project relative to this issue. He explained that options were considered that provided for a double left onto Danville Road, and NH 121A. It was determined that NH 121A was preferred. As Chris Waszczuk mentioned, NH 121A is a state road. It makes more sense to provide the double left on NH 121A. It is also further away from the school entrance, which is a benefit. Geometrically, the configuration of the NH 125/NH 121A intersection would accommodate a double left more easily.

**Comment** – Tim Moore recommended constructing sidewalks on all these roads, where possible.

**Response** – C. Waszczuk explained that the State will construct the sidewalk as part of the project, however the State does not maintain sidewalks. Therefore, the Town would need to take on that responsibility.

**Comment** – The issue was raised whether or not the left turns accesses to businesses on NH 125 were going to be signalized.

**Response** – M. Kennedy explained that they would not be signalized. Motorists will need to wait for a gap in the traffic stream on NH 125. There will be sufficient gaps in the traffic stream once the roadway is widened to provide two through lanes in each direction and with the coordinated traffic signal system in place.

**Comment** – Steve Ranlett said that he was originally against the raised the median on NH 125. He mentioned that he was in Florida this February and he thought that these median breaks worked well. He mentioned he didn't have any trouble taking left turns across multiple lanes of traffic. He explained that if we are to go ahead with a raised median, this is the way to go. He noted it really works well in Florida.

**Comment** – Frank Banaski (Shady Lane) asked if a six-lane section has been considered on NH 125 (two lanes in each direction with two inside lanes as turn lanes without a median).

**Response** – M. Kennedy explained that we did consider a two-way center turn lane, however, accidents statistics show that there is an increased number of accidents with the uncontrolled left turn, as compared with the median. We believe the raised median is the best option.

**Comment** – Dan Johnson, Smith Corner Road, asked if u-turns would be permitted at these directional median breaks.

**Response** – M. Kennedy explained that u-turns are allowed at directional median breaks in Florida. We have been considering whether it makes sense here on NH 125. My initial reaction was that it would not be a good idea. However, we are continuing to evaluate the issue.

**Comment** – Dan Johnson stated that he thinks it is a bad idea for Walton Road to be blocked off and feels there should be a study of that area. He suggested making Walton Road one way heading north from NH 121A.

**Response** – C. Waszczuk explained that Walton Road is a town road, so any request to convert the roadway to a one-way operation should be directed to the Town.

**Comment** – Tim Moore said he would have the Highway Safety Committee look at it.

**Comment** – David Char(?)tier, suggested constructing a sidewalk on the north side of NH 121A because many people walk along that side of the road. He also suggested extending the sidewalk to Shady Lane because many people walk between these two neighborhoods.

**Comment** – The Plaistow Police Chief stated that there are 500 businesses registered in Plaistow. There are incredible growth issues occurring on NH 125 in the near future and there will be huge impacts to people living in this area and to the services we provide. Whatever gets designed needs to be consistent with what people think they can live with as far as public safety services.

**Comment** – Mr. Banaski asked if a separate right hand turn lane would be provided for westbound traffic on NH 121A near Sanborn Candies. He mentioned that everyone heading north on NH 125 from NH 121A currently cuts through the parking lot of Sanborn Candies.

**Response** – M. Kennedy explained that a right turn lane would be provided. Chris Waszczuk mentioned that the recent widening at that intersection was just an interim improvement and the limits of construction were confined to what could be accomplished within the existing right-of-way.

**Comment** – Mark Marino, Brickyard One Plaza, expressed concern that the frontage road extends through the center of his parking lot. He asked if it could be moved to the back of the parking lot.

**Response** – M. Kennedy explained that the frontage road has since been revised so that it does not go through the center of anyone's property. The concept tries to hug the property lines as well as avoid wetlands. The concept shown on the plan is very preliminary and will be refined in the future as the access management plan progresses.

**Comment** – Paul Neale, 191 Plaistow Road, Off the Wall Gymnastics, stated that he is against the raised median. He expressed his concern about the safety of u-turns noting that his customers will have to make u-turns. He feels that the additional lane on NH 125 in each direction will cause vehicles to travel at a higher speed. He feels that changing lanes to maneuver into the left turn lane at signals, and making a u-turn, is more dangerous than making an uncontrolled left turn exit across two lanes of oncoming traffic.

**Response** – Tim Moore said that he thinks people will get used to the traffic patterns, and it will work nicely. If the common practice is to make u-turns, people will adjust.

**Comment** – Mr. Neale feels there would be enough gaps in traffic for motorists to turn left out of businesses and therefore the raised median is not needed.

**Response** – M. Kennedy explained that we need to balance safety and convenience. He explained that statistically, a raised median is much safer. He noted that, as a community, you need to let us know which is more important to you - convenience or safety.

**Response** – C. Waszczuk noted that at a previous meeting, a women representing Bank North, which is south of East Road, questioned why the median wasn't being extended further to the south. She stated that it is very hazardous for the bank patrons to exit the property especially for vehicles desiring to turn left onto NH 125.

**Comment** – Steve Ranlett questioned who would maintain the median, if it were landscaped.

**Response** – C. Waszczuk explained that this is an issue that needs to be discussed. The landscaping would most likely consist of low maintenance plantings and mulch. He said that the State is not in a position to maintain the median, and that the NHDOT would be looking for the Town or some other organization to maintain it.

**Comment** – Tim Moore thought that the Alliance Club or the Garden Club might be a possibility. He noted that the landscaping would add a nice touch and give the corridor more of a boulevard look.

**Comment** – Merilyn Senter recommended that if the median is constructed that right turns on red be prohibited from Joann Drive because these turns would conflict with the southbound u-turns.

**Comment** – When will the work begin?

**Response** – C. Waszczuk explained construction is programmed to start in 2007 with some monies appropriated in 2005-2006. If everything moves forward, and the Public Hearing is successful, construction could start in certain sections as early as late 2005 and begin in other sections in 2006. Most of the funding is programmed for 2007.

C. Waszczuk thanked the Plaistow Planning Board for their comments and for the opportunity to present the project to them.

cc: J. Brillhart  
C. Waszczuk  
M. Dugas  
M. Kennedy  
M. Burlage, District 6  
T. Moore, Plaistow Planning Board  
G. Greenwood, ATF Chairman