



Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.

Kilton Road
Six Bedford Farms, Suite 607
Bedford, New Hampshire 03110-6532
603 644-0888
FAX 603 644-2385

**Meeting
Notes**

Attendees: Chris Waszczuk, NHDOT
Mike Dugas, NHDOT
Marty Kennedy, VHB
Senan Murdock, VHB
See Attached Attendee Lists

Date/Time: December 4, 2002/5:00 PM &
December 12, 2002/5:00 PM

Project No.: 51272

Place: Timberlane High School,
Plaistow, NH & Kingston
Town Hall, Kingston, NH

Re: NH 125 Plaistow – Kingston
Access Management Workshops

Notes taken by: Senan Murdock

Introduction

Prior to the formal presentation, plans were setup in an “open house” setting to address issues, comments, and questions in an informal manner with the public on an individual basis.

For the formal meeting, Chris Waszczuk opened the meeting and made introductions. C. Waszczuk provided a brief overview of the project history and status and explained that the purpose of the meeting was to review the conceptual access management plan being considered for the NH 125 Corridor.

Access Management Considerations for NH 125

Marty Kennedy reviewed the general concept of access management stating that the purpose of access management is to improve the efficient movement of traffic while enhancing the safe and efficient access to/from abutting properties. Marty described the benefits, implementation strategies, and some commonly applied case law pertaining to access management.

M. Kennedy described the overall access management plan noting that the primary features of the access management plan, which was developed in the original corridor study, are to establish signalized intersections along the corridor to accommodate most of the left-turn movements, construct raised medians to restrict left-turns, and to provide connector roadways or internal connections between properties to provide access to the traffic signals.

M. Kennedy stated that the 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 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). The plan for the segment north of the Hunt Road/Newton Junction Road intersection would be to maintain a single lane in each direction, widen the shoulder area where needed, and to provide left-turn lanes at major intersections. The northern segment would not be median divided.

M. Kennedy proceeded to describe the details of the plan including the locations of proposed traffic signals, connector roadways, jug handles, and breaks in the median for emergency vehicles. Marty noted that some of the connector roadways 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 stated that we are finding it very challenging to provide internal connections for the properties along the section of NH 125 from Main Street to Walton Road. We have not settled on a solution for this area, but we are considering a 2-way center turn lane or perhaps median breaks at consolidated driveways.

Marty also presented photo visualizations of the proposed 4-lane section: one with a concrete median and one with a landscaped median. He stated that concerns have been raised at previous meetings that widening the roadway would encourage higher travel speeds. Our feeling is that the landscaped median would not only be aesthetically pleasing, but would likely have the effect of moderating travel speeds as the corridor would have more of a boulevard appearance.

Project Development Process and Targeted Meetings

C. Waszczuk then reviewed the Project Development Process and explained where the NH 125 Study was in that process. He explained that this project has been included in the State's Ten Year Transportation Plan and is targeted for construction in 2005. He also explained that this project is currently in Phase 2 of the Preliminary Design and Environmental Evaluation process and that the Department expects to hold a Public Hearing in the Fall of 2003. The Final Design would begin after a successful Public Hearing.

C. Waszczuk reviewed the meetings that had been held to date:

- Introductory Access Management Meeting – June 13th, 2002 (Kingston Town Hall)
- Access Management Open House Workshops – August 7th, 2002 (Kingston Town Hall); August 12th, 2002 (Plaistow Public Library)
- Plaistow Selectmen's Meeting – NH 125 Segment in Plaistow – September 9th, 2002 (Plaistow Public Library)
- PACE/Chamber of Commerce Meeting – September 17th, 2002 (Plaistow Public Library)
- Informational Access Management Meetings (1 in each Town) – December 4th, 2002 (Timberlane High School); December 12th, 2002 (Kingston Town Hall)

C. Waszczuk reviewed targeted dates for upcoming meetings:

- Corridor Wide Access Management Meeting – February, 2003; Location TBA
- Kingston Selectmen’s Meeting – NH 125 Segment in Kingston – February, 2003; Location TBA
- Public Informational Meeting – NH 125 Segment in Plaistow – March, 2003; Location TBA
- Public Informational Meeting – NH 125 Segment in Kingston – May, 2003; Location TBA
- Public Hearing – NH 125 “East Road to NH 111” – Fall, 2003

Comments/Questions from the December 4th Access Management Workshop in Plaistow, NH

Comment – How is a truck from Texas going to know that you have jug handles up here in Plaistow?

Response – C. Waszczuk explained that a comprehensive signing package would be included as a part of this project. He also explained that drivers of delivery trucks usually have their routes planned out, and call ahead for directions. Chris noted that there could be a few isolated incidents of trucks making a wrong turn, but that the benefits of the access management plan would outweigh any inconvenience to a single truck.

Comment – Mr. Sullivan commented that he would like to see the traffic signals coordinated. He also suggested that signs be placed along the corridor indicating what vehicle speed the traffic signals would be coordinated to. He also asked how much land would be acquired on each side of the road. Mr. Sullivan added that he wanted to go on record that he was against the drainage design that was shown at the Public Hearing for the Kingston project.

Response – C. Waszczuk explained that the existing right of way was approximately 100’ wide. He also explained that the proposed roadway widening would physically fit within that 100’ width if the road were widened equally on both sides. Chris noted that in certain locations, the road may not be able to be widened equally on both sides and that there may be some strip right of way acquisitions and retaining walls that are required to construct the project. He noted that the overall widening concept was still being refined and would be discussed at upcoming Public Informational Meetings early next year. C. Waszczuk stated that signals would be coordinated. He explained that theoretically, vehicles travelling at the posted speed limit would not have to stop at all the traffic signals. Vehicles travelling either too slow, or too fast would likely get stopped at each signal.

Comment – I have never been on a road where the timing of traffic signals has been maintained through the years anyway. Is it considered a taking if significant grading and tree removal is required? Will the property owners be compensated for this?

Response – C. Waszczuk explained that any work done outside the right of way would require easements, which the property owners would be compensated for.

Comment – I think, from your studies, you are trying to improve the efficiency of the roadway from end to end. I don't think the majority of the people who use the road travel from end to end. I think that most of the traffic that uses this corridor, uses these businesses along this corridor. You will be increasing the travel time to these businesses because you are constructing this median.

Response – C. Waszczuk stated that most of the vehicles would only have to travel ½ mile out of their way each way. He explained that the extra distance, at a speed of 30mph, would only take one minute to cover. It would take an additional minute to stop at a signal and make a safe U-turn. The total extra time would be 2-3 minutes. He explained that currently, left turns out of side roads and businesses, are currently taking 3-4 minutes.

Comment – From the standpoint of an individual's perception, I think the additional mile is going to act as a deterrent and will result in an increase of traffic and accidents on the local streets.

Response – M. Kennedy noted that the additional ½ mile was the worst case, and that the average vehicles would be travelling, on average, ¼ mile out of their way. He explained that once NH 125 is improved, traffic on local roads should decrease. Today, there are already motorists diverting to the local street system to avoid the delays along NH 125. Most of the corridor will experience improved operations that will result in less traffic being diverted to local streets.

Comment – You stated that people making U-turns would have a dedicated green arrow. They won't because they will be conflicting with vehicles making a right turn on red.

Response – M. Kennedy explained that vehicles will not be allowed to make a right turn on red, and that there would be signs that would say "No turn on red". He explained that the overall safety benefits of the raised median island would outweigh the possibility that a vehicle would make an illegal right turn on red and cause an accident with a vehicle making a U-turn. He explained that studies have shown that U-turns are safe maneuvers.

Comments/Questions from the December 12th Access Management Workshop in Kingston, NH

Comment – I am concerned with the loss of left turns at Dorre Rd. Based on your concept, trucks wanting to head north would need to travel southbound and use a jug-handle to reverse direction. We operate approximately 70 trucks a day out of our site, all carrying time sensitive material (ready mix). I would estimate that this would add an additional 8-12 minutes to our trips. Based on this concept, our service area could be drastically reduced. I would suggest you take some hard traffic counts before you continue with this concept.

Response – M. Kennedy explained that the proposed plan includes a connection from Dorre Rd to Roadstone Drive. With this connection, your trucks would have access to the proposed traffic signal and would not have to reverse direction. Marty went on to say that for the access management plan to be successful, there would have to be cooperation between the towns, the NHDOT, and also the property owners along the corridor. He explained that the idea would be for connections to be provided across abutting parcels with easements. Traffic signals could be installed at these major access points, only if the volume is high enough to warrant a signal. The connections are needed to meet the volume warrants.

Comment – Mr. Leavitt from Leavitt Auto & Truck stated that he was concerned with losing spontaneous traffic to his business if the median is constructed. He noted that although he sees a lot of brake lights along the corridor, he had never had to wait more than 20 or 30 seconds to

make a left or right hand turn. He mentioned that he is also concerned about the landscaping in the median blocking the view to his business.

Response – C. Waszczuk explained that this concept presented tonight has worked well in other areas. For example, businesses have flourished along South Willow Street in Manchester. Chris warned that in the future if nothing is done, customers might avoid the corridor due to the congestion and hazardous conditions.

Comment – Chief Briggs stated that he thought the Department really needed to take a good look at the “Florida Concept”. He mentioned that the Florida Concept provides public access for vehicular traffic and emergency access. He said the concept includes “offset medians” which would protect vehicles from head on collisions. He noted that he really isn’t sure if the jug handle concept is going to work. He mentioned that there were a number of accidents at the jug handle in Kingston. As a result, the State removed it. Chief Briggs also stated that he had spoken with officials from Danvers, MA. He said that even though they have breaks in the median on their roadways, officials from the town say that the traffic has become so congested over the past 20 years that they can’t access the median breaks.

Response – C. Waszczuk stated that he would be happy to review any information that the Chief can provide. Chris noted that he expects that the Florida material would be similar to what was being presented at tonight’s meeting.

Comment – Leslie Hume asked if a decision had been made to move the project from 2005 to 2006 or 2007. She noted that this is an important project and needs to be kept moving forward. She also explained that she didn’t feel that the plan incorporated the feedback given at the access management workshops this summer. She noted that she is concerned that the raised median will turn a commercially viable area into a throughway.

L. Hume also noted that she would like to see more frontage roads in Kingston. She explained that the Kingston section is less developed, and it would be easier to build the frontage roads now. She said she thinks the idea of extending Kingston Road is a good one, but she is concerned that they will be left with useless lots on Rte 125. Ms. Hume stated that she was under the impression that the road wouldn’t have to be widened as much if good access management concepts were utilized. She stated that if there were business that advocate this type of access management plan, the Department should provide their names and phone numbers. She also noted that she didn’t see any driveway consolidations, and that she had safety concerns with the jug handles.

C. Waszczuk thanked everyone for attending. He mentioned that all abutters would be notified of upcoming meetings, and that he would be around for a little while after the meeting if anyone had any further questions or issues.