



## **NH 111 Corridor & Wall Street Extension Feasibility Study Public Informational Meeting**

### **Windham High School Auditorium Minutes**

September 28, 2010

**Members Present:** David Sullivan, Sy Wrenn, Gerald Lewis, Tom McPherson, Bob Ashburn and Jack McCartney.

**Public Attendees:** See attached attendance list.

**Project Staff Present:** Laura Scott, Windham; Gene McCarthy and Mike MacDonald, (McFarland-Johnson); Cliff Sinnott and Roxanne Rines (RPC).

#### **Welcome/Introductions**

**Scott** welcomed everyone, reviewed the first public meeting and said tonight's meeting is for feedback and input from the citizens of Windham. She stated that the materials presented tonight will be available on the Town of Windham website, corridor page, as of tomorrow.

#### **Project Background; Purpose and Scope; Project Advisory Committee**

**Sinnott** gave a brief overview of the Rockingham Planning Commission and the Metropolitan Planning Organization. He then explained the background of the study and how it was initiated.

**Sinnott** continued that during the scoping process of what the study should include, it divided into three interconnected parts: 1) the Extension of Wall Street; 2) the existing 111, west of Wall Street (will that be adequate); and 3) the 111 Bypass.

The consensus from the first public meeting was that the 111 Bypass was not supported and but that Windham citizens did prefer a NH111 design that supported and enhanced the town village center concept which is a part of the Town's long term vision.

**Sinnott** introduced the members of the Project Advisory Committee that were in attendance at the meeting. He reviewed the agenda and format of the meeting. He then introduced Gene McCarthy from McFarland Johnson.

#### **Project Approach; Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS)**

**McCarthy** explained Context Sensitive Solutions: "CSS is defined by FHWA as a collaborative interdisciplinary approach that involves all stakeholders to develop a transportation facility that fits its physical setting and preserves scenic, aesthetic, historic and environmental resources, while maintaining safety and mobility". The committee members are the stakeholders in this project.

### **Project Problem and Vision**

**McCarthy** stated that the public kick-off meeting was held in November 2009. From that meeting, both Problem and Vision statements were created using comments that were received from the attendees.

The next step was to develop alternatives. Those will be presented tonight. The committee members will continue to meet monthly and create draft short and long term recommendations for the corridor. Once that is completed there will be another public meeting to present the draft recommendations. Comments from that meeting will be incorporated into the final report.

### **Traffic Modeling – projecting future traffic conditions**

**McCarthy** explained how the RPC traffic model works and how it predicts future growth. He reviewed existing and future (2035) traffic volume numbers along the existing roadway; the Wall Street Extension; and the Wall Street Extension and 111 Bypass.

### **Resource Identification**

**McCarthy** reviewed the findings from a Natural Resource Inventory that was undertaken by Meg Walker of Public Spaces. The undeveloped areas needed to build the new roads have wetlands; that would need to be avoided. Building in those areas would be a challenge and costly because of mitigation. He showed the areas and type of wetlands as part of the slideshow.

### **PUBLIC QUESTIONS, FEEDBACK, COMMENTS – PART 1**

**Mendoza** stated that he does not want anything, do not change anything. It is despicable that you people are destroying the town. This project is not good for the town.

**Dan Guttman** asked what the growth multiplier is for 2035, where is the justification for it. There is a lot of talk that once I-93 is built up that traffic will explode. Why is the state focusing on 111 instead of 101; wouldn't 101 make more sense as a cross state artery? What about creating community meeting places in the town village?

**McCarthy** stated the model being used is the RPC model, it does not assume a 1% growth every year for the next 20 years. The model is built up; each town gives the RPC their future prediction for housing and employment. He continued that both 111 and 101 are very important corridors. Why Federal Highway or DOT are focusing on one corridor instead of another is beyond the scope of this study. The committee is still looking at the big picture, when the recommended alternatives are chosen, the committee can then look at where some opportunities exist for community gathering places.

**Charlie McMahon** asked McCarthy to ratify that the town was told in the early 1990's that when I-93 is completed, projected traffic will be around 80,000 vehicles daily on 93 and 40,000 vehicles daily east-west on 111. **Sinnott** stated he recalls the 80,000 number but is not sure what the projected volumes on 111 were, but though it was about right.

**McMahon** continued that 111 is the east-west corridor of southern NH, how will Windham's resources be protected? How can the traffic model be rational? **Sinnott** stated current daily traffic volume projections (for 2035) are about 30,000 vehicles. The numbers used in 1990 came from a different model and explained the how it was created.

**McMahon** stated the Town needs to optimize what is has for a center, the state has dictated how Windham will plan its future, we are being held hostage by the I-93 project, until it is completed. He has

been told multiple times that the Town will be responsible for funding the corridor improvements. The Town needs an economic tax base to keep it vibrant, is the committee discussing this? **Sinnott** stated the cost and likely financing of the improvements is part of the study. Any improvements are still years away. If improvements are completed on 111 or any in-corridor, most likely that would be funded by both the state and federal dollars. If improvements are to be done along Wall Street, not sure who would fund this.

**Sinnott** addressed growth factors, stating that the model population projection numbers regionwide average 1.1% per year, which is historically low for this region.

**Guttman** stated he liked the presentation so far it made some good points. Based on the vision statement, is the goal of the committee to meet the vision statement? The data clearly indicates that the Route 111 bypass meets the goal of creating a town center. He does not agree with the vision statement because he would not use a town center. He lives in Windham because he likes the quiet. It is clear to him that building both the bypass and the Wall Street Extension meets the goal. It doesn't matter what agency funds the project, everyone pays for it.

**McCarthy** stated the 111 Bypass is not well supported by the committee, not because it doesn't meet the vision, but it has other community, resource and economic impacts. The bypass also was not well supported at the first public meeting. He asked if anyone else had any concerns about building a town center, again, there was a lot of support at the first meeting.

**Margaret Case** stated the vision statement is really nice, but it's not practical and will never happen. Twenty-five years ago Route 111 talks began, by the time this project is funded most of the people in attendance will not be around. It looks great on paper, just let it go.

**Ross McLeod** stated under the problem statement it is mentioned that there is a lack of public utilities, electricity and cable are available there. Should it specify water and sewer? Is it the intention of this project to bring water and sewer to the area? **McCarthy** stated he doesn't believe that is the case, from an economic perspective that is a constraint.

**Bud Sweetser** stated he agrees with a lot of things that McMahan had to say, funding is a big part of it. He was surprised by the comment that there isn't very much support for the bypass in as much as it was made a big part of the presentation. He does not agree with bypass either because it will bypass a lot of established businesses in town. He commented that a town center will never be a destination shopping area. **McCarthy** explained why the bypass was included in the presentation; it was one of the 3 components of the study. Some of the reasons the committee had for not pursuing it is the economic issues and that it bypasses established businesses.

**Joann Fadden** stated she attended the first meeting and realizes that a lot of people would like to have a town center, but this town is a major thoroughway. Does a village district have to be created? **McCarthy** stated the town does not have to do anything; one of the options is the no-build, it can be left the way it exists. There are in-corridor options that were developed. He asked that if citizens have more questions after the meeting tonight, they can call or email staff or committee members. Contact information for all members is on the back side of the agenda.

### **Explanation of Roundabouts**

**McCarthy** explained what roundabouts are and how they work. There is a 10-minute video that Federal Highways has created which is very good; it is located on the project website.

Roundabouts handle a high capacity of traffic with a smoother flow; they are safer than traditional signal

intersections; they are aesthetically pleasing; reduce pollution; slow traffic; and are safer for pedestrians.

He reviewed crash comparison data between traditional intersections and roundabouts. **McCarthy** showed slides of roundabouts existing in NH.

### **Corridor Alternatives**

**McCarthy** stated the alternatives being developed are:

No-build – there would be no improvements except for the ones included in the I-93 project.

Wall Street Extension – no improvements to NH 111 except for the ones included in the I-93 project; it would extend Wall Street to North Lowell Road/Londonderry Road.

NH 111 Bypass – there would be 2 lanes on NH 111; one lane roundabout at existing North Lowell Road; upgrade signals at South Lowell Road; signal are new NH 111 and Fellow Road; upgraded signal at Wall Street.

In-Corridor Improvements: 1) in-corridor signal: 4 lanes on 111, upgraded signal at North and South Lowell Roads, and retain proposed Signal at Wall Street; 2) in-corridor one-lane roundabout: 2 lanes on 111, one-lane roundabouts at North and South Lowell Roads and at the Village Green/Post Office, and two-lane roundabout at Wall Street; 3) in-corridor 2-lane roundabout 4-lane corridor: 4-lanes on 111, 2-lane roundabouts at North and South Lowell Road, at the Village Green/Post Office, and at Wall Street; 4) in-corridor roundabout with Wall Street Extension: 2-lanes on 111, one-lane roundabouts at North and South Lowell Road, at the Village Green/Post Office, and 2-lane roundabout at Wall Street; and Wall Street Extension.

**McCarthy** then reviewed the existing conditions in the corridor.

### **PUBLIC QUESTIONS, FEEDBACK, COMMENTS – PART 2**

**Nick Varga** stated the Wall Street Extension would affect him because the roadway would be right in his front yard. In the spring time the back area floods, could the road be laid out 2 miles to the north with an on and off ramp from I-93? **McCarthy** stated there will be no additional exists on 93. **Varga** asked if any other options had been looked at to the north or south? What would happen to the current 4-lane intersection? **McCarthy** stated the current intersection could continue to function, it might need a signal, but not a roundabout. There have been no other options look at further north.

**John Boss** asked what percentage of traffic is coming from the west toward Hudson? **McCarthy** reviewed the numbers earlier in the presentation; about 1,000 vehicles pass through headed to I-93 during the am peak hours. Would there be any cost or aggravation decreases if a 2-lane roundabout was installed at Wall Street? **McCarthy** stated there would be a cost saving if the road stayed within the corridor, can't really say if that would that off-set the cost of building the Wall Street Extension. All costs would need to be investigated.

**Dave Faggo** stated the vision of a community center, is nothing more than a vision, it will never happen. Instead of building the Wall Street Extension, he agrees that most of the traffic is people trying to get to work in the morning and get home at night. They are not looking to stop and stroll around. If that is the case why not improve North Lowell Road. It would be much more cost effective to put in a nice little roundabout. **McCarthy** stated the committee has looked at the existing corridor and how it could function without a bypass or extension.

**Wayne Morris** asked if the Police of Fire Chief had any concerns about emergency vehicles using roundabouts? **McCarthy** stated both chiefs are on the committee and have not voiced any concerns with

roundabouts and safety. Every roundabout project worked on has had that concern. There is an education element and people need to learn how to drive a roundabout properly. **Morris** asked is there is enough space between North Lowell Road and 111 to accommodate a roundabout? **McCarthy** stated there are ways to accommodate and there are always concerns about takings.

**Sally DiAngelo** stated roundabouts cause confusion, she sees it at the one on 28 in Derry. When you enter a roundabout you have to slow down, then speed up, then slow down again for the next one. This will cause back-ups into town. Also, it is bad for emergencies. If roundabouts are pedestrian friendly to cross, then that will create more back-ups. **McCarthy** stated a roundabout is not a traffic circle. A 4-lane roundabout would move the most traffic of any of the alternatives looked at. A 2-lane roundabout will process more traffic than a traffic signal. The speed issue is important, roundabout speed is usually 15 mph so in between roundabouts would probably be 30 mph. Four or 5 roundabouts in a row are possible, they will not impede the flow of traffic. The entire corridor will have a slower speed limit.

**DiAngelo** stated 111 is a major east/west corridor and you are going to run people at 50 mph up to town and then slow them down; people will avoid Windham. **McCarthy** stated people may be willing to live with the volume of traffic if it is going at a slower speed.

**Scott Bates** asked about optimal capacity numbers in the corridor. **McCarthy** stated it depends on individual intersections and reviewed the traffic numbers from earlier in the presentation. **Bates** stated he likes the single roundabout with the smaller footprint. **McCarthy** stated the number may mean a lot to himself and Bates, but doesn't mean much to a lot of people. Is the 4-lane section unreasonable? **Bates** stated he is not happy with four lanes.

**Guttman** asked about the impacts the alternates would have on Range Road. **McCarthy** stated the model can not account for every specific road, it looks for growth and shortest trips.

**McLeod** stated he likes roundabouts, they function smoothly and people do accept them once they learn how to drive them. Two lane roundabouts are more practical. **McCarthy** spoke about five roundabouts in New York state.

**Carol Pynn** asked about the historic district section of North Lowell Road and their homes, will there be takings? **McCarthy** reviewed how the road could potentially affect properties with an aerial view. **Pynn** stated she likes the idea of traffic being slowed down. She asked how truck traffic would maneuver through a roundabout? **McCarthy** stated they are going to progress very slowly. **Pynn** then asked if roundabouts will cause diversion? **McCarthy** stated roundabouts are designed to accommodate large trucks and explained the truck apron included in the roundabout.

**Pat Nyster** stated he doesn't like the idea of a center island traveling the entire roadway with no cut-outs for businesses. He suggested a wider center island that could accommodate cut-outs for left hand turns. Without access it could be detrimental to businesses. **McCarthy** stated it is done purposefully and explained the reasoning for it. He continued that left hand turns can't be accomplished today, in the morning because of traffic volumes and safety issues.

**Nyster** asked if the roundabout safety/crash statistics are national or NH DOT? **McCarthy** stated national. **Nyster** asked how safe a roundabout would be in this climate. **McCarthy** stated there are challenges, but roundabouts are much safer. **Nyster** commented on the vision statement, it talks about maintaining Windham's rural character and quality. He would like to see some revised and modified architectural provisions in the ordinance, just to make sure any future development is pedestrian friendly.

**Ginny Campiella** stated she does not like the Meredith roundabout, you have to go very, very slow. Roundabouts could create road rage. She stated the vision statement is a dream and its time to turn

back the clock. The community area is okay the way it is. There is a need to move the traffic through the area as quickly as possible. I do not like the idea of roundabouts.

**Kathy DiFruscia** stated she owns one of the historic houses and asked how much of her property would be taken. **McCarthy** gave the same explanation that he did earlier in the meeting. **DiFruscia** asked how easy it is to go through a roundabout when changing directions? **McCarthy** stated traffic flows through a roundabout smoothly and showed a simulation.

**Paul Donovan** spoke about the Derry traffic circle at rush hour, people do not let you in, it is a disaster, there are back-ups and trucks will avoid the weigh station.

?? asked about peak hour numbers, does it take in effect the people who are using the roundabouts to turn around? McCarthy stated people turning around does change the dynamics.

**Dave Faggo** stated he liked the presentation. He is in favor of the 4-lane option, it comes the closest to the vision of a village district. Larger roundabouts are the way to go, they are a good option.

**Morris** asked why a computer generated traffic model wasn't be used? **Mike McDonald**, McFarland-Johnson, showed a simulation video of what capacity would be like in the corridor.

**McCarthy** again reminded the audience that all materials can be found on the webpage, located on the Town of Windham's website. Committee member contact information is on the back of the agenda and to please contact one of them with any more questions, comments or concerns.

?? stated traffic signals make better sense than a roundabout. **McCarthy** stated signals timing can be changed, but they do create an imbalance of traffic flow. They have shown that roundabouts will work in the corridor. ?? asked if roundabouts could be supplemented with lights? **McCarthy** stated a true roundabout will not have any signals, but the next intersection after a roundabout could have a signal.

**Donovan** asked staff to be careful with their model and future traffic projections. He again stated there are delays at the Derry traffic circle. **McCarthy** stated the model being used is a good tool, but data being used is just a guess.

### Next Steps

**McCarthy** thanked everyone for attending and for their input, a lot of good information was given. The committee will discuss all of the issues brought up tonight at their next meeting. After the draft report is complete, another public meeting will be held in early December for further comment. The town will add this power point presentation to their website.

Meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Roxanne M. Rines  
Recording Secretary