



Meeting Notes

Place: Somerset Public Library,
Somerset, MA

Date: November 19, 2018

Notes Taken by: VHB

Project #: 14381.01

Re: I-195 Interchange 4 Transportation Evaluation – 11/19/18
Public Meeting Notes

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- The study team in attendance included Richard Brown (Somerset), Nancy Durfee (Somerset), Brian Martin (Somerset), Joe Wanat (VHB) and Skye Levin (VHB). There were approximately 30 attendees.
 - VHB (J. Wanat) opened the meeting and provided an overview of the evening's agenda which included a brief 25 minute presentation followed by a question/answer session. Attendees were provided aerial maps to annotate issues or opportunities.
 - The study focuses on a review of I-195 Interchange 4 (Route 103/Lees River Avenue) and the purpose is to: (1) address inefficient travel patterns; (2) improve highway access, and (3) improve safety.
 - The study includes 5 tasks beginning with a traffic analysis and ending with an environmental review of concepts/recommendations. The study will run through summer 2019. A follow-up public meeting is expected in April/May 2019.
 - Traffic counts were completed in October and VHB is currently preparing a traffic model of the areas intersections and freeway ramps. The traffic analysis will include an AM and PM peak hour assessment of how well the infrastructure handles the peak traffic demands. Preliminary findings suggest several constrained intersections along Route 103, specifically at Brayton Point Road, the I-195 westbound off-ramp, and at Lees River Avenue that experience high delays and vehicle backups.
 - Safety data is being gathered using RMV reported crashes from MassDOT data sources. Preliminary trends from 2012 to 2016 show that the highest crash frequencies occur at the same locations where there is traffic congestion - Route 103 at Brayton Point Road, the I-195 westbound off-ramp, and at Lees River Avenue. Data from 2017 is still being validated by MassDOT and this will be added when available. MassDOT records indicate two high crash "clusters" at Route 103/Brayton Point Road and I-195 westbound off-ramp onto Route 103 westbound.
 - VHB has already conducted field reviews of the traffic signal cabinets and soon will be conducting field reviews of wetland areas and an aerial survey of the interchange. This is being done to ensure that recommendations do not have detrimental impacts to the natural environment.
 - Conceptual improvements could range from short-term ideas to long-term solutions. Several initial observations were discussed as requiring attention:

- Inadequate “all red” clearance time at Route 103/Brayton Point Road, which has contributed to accidents especially given the presence of high-profile trucks.
- Many circuitous travel patterns requiring several left then right turns – especially to I-195 westbound from Route 103 and to Brayton Point from I-195 eastbound.
- Many closely spaced driveways along Route 103, contributing to crashes from vehicles entering and exiting the roadway.
- Illegal turning maneuvers, crossing the double yellow centerline, requiring dangerous pinpoint turns. These occur at the on and off ramps along Route 103.
- Unprotected left-turns along Route 103 at Lees River Avenue and Brayton Point Road, contributing to safety issues where through vehicles maneuver around queued left-turning vehicles with very limited sightlines.
- Excessive queues along Lees River Avenue extending from the Route 103 intersection which extend past the I-195 eastbound off-ramp, effectively blocking traffic on the ramp from proceeding onto Lees River Avenue.
- Inadequate geometry to efficiently accommodate trucks at Route 103/Brayton Point Road. VHB discussed a turning analysis completed that illustrated difficult turning maneuvers for large trucks.
- VHB discussed ways that the public can get involved and stay connected, including:
 - Provide comments tonight, either verbally, in writing using the comment sheets, or on the maps provided
 - Call the town at 508-646-2809 or email comments to the town (ndurfee@town.somerset.ma.us).
 - Provide an email address on the sign-in sheet so the study team can contact you about the project.
 - Monitor the town’s website (homepage and planning board webpage) for updates.
 - <https://www.townofsomerset.org/planning-board>
 - <https://www.townofsomerset.org/home/news/i-195interchange-4-transportation-evaluation-public-meeting>

Notes from Q&A:

- At the intersection of Brayton Point Road and Wilbur Avenue red light running is extremely common.
 - Most people wait 5-10 seconds after the light turns green, so they don't get hit by red light running cars.
 - It was also mentioned that there is a very short or negligible all-red phase
- At the intersections of Lee's River Avenue and Route 103 (Wilbur Avenue) there is a two second delay going eastbound, along with the light changes quickly and drivers don't always obey traffic laws.
- The juncture of Route 6 and I-195 is critical east and west. Lee's River Avenue connects these two large roadways and is only a single lane road unlike Route 103 that can accommodate more vehicles. It was mentioned that Lee's River Avenue is on the top 100 dangerous intersections in the state.
- A few attendees agreed that combining ramps and eliminating a few would assist in the confusion and illegal turns.
- A few attendees agreed that the new development at Brayton Point should have its own interchange point.
- It was discussed that the surround new developments would be incorporated in forecasting new traffic volumes for the future traffic conditions, but the developments would not be part of the study otherwise.
- An attendee mentioned that the Industrial Park on Route 24 was installed quickly in a few years.
- It was noted that there are many accidents at the corner of Rogers Family Restaurant.
- An attendee asked VHB to think outside the box, especially by using un-utilized blocks owned by National Grid to help improve the area.
- A four-way stop was suggested at Brayton Point Road and Wilbur Avenue.
 - It was discussed that a queue analysis would need to be completed.
- An origin destination study was suggested to be completed
- Due to the traffic changes at the 79 Interchange, additional traffic volumes have been added to Interchange 4 exit causing overuse and congestion.
- An attendee asked VHB to consider other locations near the study area that will be/could be developed.
 - VHB discussed how these developments will be incorporated into one analysis called the No-Build.
- An attendee suggested that Route 6 intersections should be included in the study and reviewed due to congestion
- Dedicated left-turn lanes and arrows are needed eastbound on Route 103.

- Short-term needs include vegetation clearing at the major ramp entrance points and intersections along Route 103 as sightlines are obscured.
- It was suggested to look at eliminating Lee's River access to Providence due to congestion.
- In the final presentation, the attendees would like VHB to discuss the timeframe for when improvements would be completed.
- A few short-term improvements that were discussed were:
 - Adjusting the signal and making the all red phase longer
 - Possibly moving the stop bars to accommodate large truck turns

Notes from Comment Sheets/Aerial Maps:

- Please remember other economically important uses of I-195 from Somerset:
 - Route 6 Industrial Freight (Horner Cabinetry);
 - Riverside Ave/Taunton River Industrial Area (Gladding Hearn, Fortier Boats, Ferrara Custom Engines, Pearson Pilings, Tamer Environmental Manufacturing Aids);
 - Commuting to Boston and Providence;
 - Emergency Traffic diversion from Braga bridge to Veteran's bridge as Braga bridge decays with age and under-funded maintenance".
- Water/Sewer department has pipes and easements in area. Looking forward May meeting. Call if you need utility info.
- I-195 eastbound Off Ramp and Lee's River Avenue: Bad Signal timings.
- Lee's River Avenue and Wilbur Avenue: Box Widening for left turn lanes.
- Wilbur Ave and Brayton Point Road: No turn on red would help, or right arrow (southbound approach on Brayton Point Road).
- Red light running eastbound on Wilbur Avenue.
- I-195 westbound Off Ramp and Wilbur Avenue westbound: "If this ramp is not eliminated, noise abatement is needed!"
- I-195 Ramps and Wilbur Avenue: Proposed signalized intersection and combining off ramps (eastbound/westbound at same off ramp).

- Neighborhood southeast of intersection Wilbur Avenue and Brayton Point Road: Concerns of vehicles cutting through the neighborhood streets.
- Bridge on Brayton Point Road over I-195 is in poor pavement condition.
- Brayton Point Road, just east of I-195/bridge: Recently repaved but already in poor condition.
- Additional comments for Brayton Point Bridge: "Tough left for trucks, width & grade".
- Residents concerned about emergency vehicle access in residential areas due to congestion in the area.
- Direct Access road from Lee's River Avenue to Brayton Point Industrial Area (southwest corner).
- I-195 WB off ramp to Wilbur Avenue eastbound: Proposed add additional branch off of ramp curling back to Brayton Point.
- Wilbur Avenue: Proposed Industrial access road at approximately I-195 WB Off ramp leading to the Route 6 Industrial area, AKA Horner's Cabinetry.
- Note a probable historic stone wall on Wilbur Avenue.
- Note a probably non-historic stone wall on Brayton Point Road.
- Commented that Brayton Point Road is an excellent modern road with great potential, and that Brayton Point should win over Lee's River Avenue as the main corridor.
- Marked Riverside Industrial Area (Gladding Hearn, Fortier Boats Ship Builders, Ferrara Brothers engines, Pearson Pilings) on the map – doesn't seem to be any related recommendations.
- I-195 northbound to Wilbur Avenue westbound: Recommended to remove vegetation for clearer sight lines.
- Lee's River Avenue and Wilbur Avenue: add turning lanes on Wilber Avenue.
- Neighborhood southeast of Brayton Point Road and Wilbur Avenue: "Huge cut through to avoid left turn at Brayton Point Road southbound" cut from Wilbur westbound to Brayton Point Road southbound.
- Speed study needed at Brayton Point Road and Wilbur Avenue, westbound approach.
- Brayton Point Road and Wilbur Avenue: northbound approach (Brayton Point) recommended install/split to a left/thru and right turn lane.
- Brayton Point in the proximity of the baseball field and Wilbur Avenue: recommended widen lanes.
- Fly over off ramp from I-195 northbound to Brayton Point Road.
- On ramp from Brayton Point Road to I-195 eastbound.
- Remove I-195 northbound Off Ramp to Wilbur Ave westbound.

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- Remove I-195 southbound On Ramp from Wilbur Avenue
- Combine ramps located at I-195 westbound Off ramp at Wilbur Avenue: construct turning lanes
- Hill on Wilbur Ave (downhill eastbound): bad decline
- A sound barrier was suggested for I-195 and the surrounding neighborhoods.