

Route 109 Design Committee

Public Information Meeting

Wednesday, June 15, 2011 – 5:30 PM

Medway Public Library

High Street

Present: Paul Yorkis, Chairman, Route 109 Design Committee; David D’Amico, Deputy Director, Department of Public Services; Selectman Andrew Espinosa; Other Committee Members: Pam Benjamin, Matt Buckley, Peter Cooper, and Chan Rogers.

Also present: John Diaz and Geoffrey Howie, Greenman-Pedersen, Inc.

Welcome

At 5:35 PM Mr. Paul Yorkis, Chairman of the Route 109 Design Committee, welcomed residents to the meeting, and reiterated that tonight’s meeting is to give them further opportunity to examine the options GPI has developed to resolve traffic issues with the road redesign. He encouraged people to give input this evening and via the Town’s website. He pointed out the design alternatives displayed this evening, in addition to the original PowerPoint presentation, are available for review and specified that the tonight’s designs are the same ones revealed on May 4. No changes have been made yet.

Mr. Yorkis reviewed the overall design process, explaining the 25% design point which will be marked with a public hearing. He cautioned that, no matter what residents might like, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation has very specific criteria regarding road design and construction. He further clarified that all design criteria must be able to be viable for twenty years from the start of construction.

Main Street at Milford Street & Franklin Street – the Highland Portion

Mr. Geoff Howie, Greenman-Pedersen, Inc., briefly explained that the alternatives presented are just that, alternatives. No one design is weighted higher in preference than another.

Ms. Karen Grossman, 15 Slocumb Place, asked if there will be a traffic light where Slocumb Place enters Main Street. Mr. Howie responded that at this time the designs do not feature one at that location.

Mr. John Diaz, Greenman-Pedersen, Inc., stated they have reviewed existing conditions and traffic issues, and that they are sensitive to the church area and the historic district. They do, however, want feedback from as many residents as possible to learn of any additional issues that need to be considered. At this time they have no plans to use any land outside the existing right-of way. He stated that traffic on Route 109, as a state highway, needs to be moving as much as possible.

Referring to Alternative 1, Mr. Diaz briefly explained the dotted lines, green and yellow shades areas (island and sidewalks), proposed crosswalks, and right of way boundary.

Referring to Alternative 2, Mr. Diaz noted the island bump-out forces drivers to slow down as they enter Highland Street. It does not impede access to the church and still has a pedestrian crossing. Mr. Paul

Yorkis asked how far the sidewalk will be extended, regardless of design. Mr. Howie responded that the grant allows for 100 feet west on Highland Street, but that they will try to continue to a spot that makes sense.

Referring to Alternative 3 with two islands, allowing traffic only onto highland, making it a one-way at the intersection but two-way through the neighborhood, Mr. Diaz stated this option would eliminates cut-through traffic using Highland to get to Route 126. He stated that his preference is Alternative 2 as it is pedestrian friendly, and maintains the two-way access.

Mr. Yorkis cautioned residents that the committee has not endorsed any design concepts yet, clarifying that the committee's function is to listen to comments and process what will work based on input.

Mr. Diaz stated that no matter how the intersection is changed, there will still be a lot of traffic. It is their job to try to find a balance so that no one side is continually queuing up in long lines.

Resident Comments:

Mr. Peter Simmons, 5 Daffodil Lane, stated his comments center around the traffic flow from the church. There are 300-plus members, most of whom exit onto Slocumb, then turn right or left onto Main. A police detail is present every Sunday morning. He suggested that eliminating the left-hand turn out of the church entrance onto Highland Street could be problematic as that entrance is used as both an entrance and exit. He stated Alternative 3 could impact the nursery school and cut-through traffic would be a safety issue.

Ms. Karen Grossman, 15 Slocumb Place, stated that high school drivers cut through the church property, usually behind the church, to Slocumb Place to avoid the traffic light at Main and Route 109.

Ms. Joy Smith Dahl, 1 Highland Street, agreed, stating that when there are more than three cars at the stop sign on Highland, drivers will cut through the church property to head around the light.

Mr. Matt Buckley, 201 Main Street, stated the area behind the church is a parking lot and suggested closing it or modifying its usage with appropriate signage.

Ms. Karen Grossman, 15 Slocumb Place, stated she has seen them go up Slocumb Place, behind the church, then right onto Highland, just to avoid the light.

Mr. Vladimir Atrizek, 179 Main Street, expressed concern about right turns out of Highland onto Route 109 and the potential impact on accidents.

Ms. Barbara Schneider, 187 Main Street, expressed concern that the right hand turn lane off of Highland will impact traffic coming up from Main Street.

A Milford Street resident stated he liked Alternative 2 with the bump-out slowing traffic.

At this time, Mr. Yorkis stated that one suggestion was to make Highland Street one-way going toward Route 126 and asked what people thought about that.

Mr. Brian Adams, 2 Milford Street, suggested that Alternatives 2 and 3 were the best options, noting that Alternative 3 will eliminate all cars heading from Highland onto Route 109. Otherwise drivers will creep out into the intersection trying to enter the traffic flow. He suggested further than Route 126 isn't that far away and people can just go around.

Ms. Karen Grossman, 15 Slocumb Place, asked if the one-way designation would be the entire length of the Street. Mr. Diaz responded that there would likely be a Do Not Enter sign at the entrance to Highland. Ms. Grossman stated she would not prefer that option because of the impact to the church.

Mr. Yorkis reiterated earlier comments of Mr. Howie and Mr. Diaz that any traffic mediation measure will shift traffic to other places, so careful thought must be given to any changes.

Mr. David Blackwell, 2 Milford Street, suggested signage allowing entrance during specific hours in order to protect the church entrance, yet cut-through traffic might be eliminated.

Ms. Barbara Schneider, 187 Main Street, reported that the church serves a meal on Thursdays at 5 PM during rush hour so impeding the entrance might be problematic.

Mr. Norman Schneider, 187 Main Street, stated that the Police Department has trouble taking care of things now, and suggested it will not be able to adequately police illegal cut-through traffic behind the church. We cannot saddle our police with more responsibility.

Mr. Peter Simmons, 5 Daffodil Lane, stated traffic should remain on main roadways as much as possible. He stated this is a very active church in the community with activities every day of the week and though he does not expect it to get better, he does not want to do anything to make it worse.

Mr. Jeff Watson, 315 Village Street and member of Medway Police Department, stated drivers make three-point turns all over the place. He stated he is not a big proponent of Alternative 3.

Mr. Matt Buckley, 201 Main Street, suggested that, if a one-way is created, the green arrow for people heading west will be longer, thus making a turn onto Highland Street less appealing.

Ms. Joy Dahl Smith, 1 Highland Street, stated she likes the one-way idea even though she would have to drive all the way around. The current situation with the stop sign is a problem; now one has to force someone to let you in.

Mr. David Blackwell, 2 Milford Street, stated the bump-out is necessary regardless of design. It would help route traffic toward the left and eliminate confusion as to what path Route 109 actually takes. He suggested eliminating the left hand turn altogether, but keep it two-way. People will soon realize they cannot turn left from Highland onto Route 109 or they will get cited.

Mr. Diaz responded that a No Left Turn sign could be done. Mr. Howie stated that would allow more time for pedestrians to cross.

Mr. Mark Robinson, 26 Milford Street, stated people will simply make the right turn, then pull into his driveway to reverse direction; they are already doing it.

Mr. Matt Buckley, 201 Main Street, stated the one-way option eliminates the back-up of cars.

Mr. Norman Schneider, 187 Main Street, cautioned that the traffic will go by the park and down into the Oak Street area.

Mr. David Blackwell, 2 Milford Street, suggested the neighbors support the one-way option all the way from Route 109 to Summer Street (Route 126).

Mr. Diaz stated GPI did perform a traffic count at Highland/Route 126 as well as Highland/Route 109.

Mr. Norman Schneider, 187 Street, asked if there were a lot of accidents and wondered why there is so much focus on this area. He stated the street signal was changed about a year ago, and traffic is all screwed up.

Mr. Paul Yorkis stressed the importance of this kind of discussion in order to hear from people living in the area who may know of specific concerns. He asked for a show of hands supporting the one-way designation along Highland Street all the way to Route 126. Several preferred keeping it two-way.

Mr. Peter Simmons, 5 Daffodil Lane, acknowledged that change is often difficult. He stated a partial one-way is problematic, that it should be the entire length or none at all. Mr. Diaz suggested that a one-way designation could be implemented on a trial basis to see how drivers handle it.

Ms. Karen Grossman, 15 Slocumb Place, stated a trial period is a good idea, but suggested it should be done while school is in session, in order to see how students handle it.

Mr. Brian Adams, 2 Milford Street, stated that Highland Street is ideal as a one-way the entire length due to its narrow width. People drive it too fast and a one-way would improve safety.

Mr. Matt Buckley, 201 Main Street, stated a one-way designation all the way eliminates Oak Street as a cut-through option. He stated further that eliminating the left-hand turn off Highland Street onto Route 109 eliminates a bottleneck there as well.

Mr. Peter Simmons, 5 Daffodil Lane, stated that a one-way modification on a trial basis is a good idea.

At this time Mr. Yorkis asked Mr. David D'Amico, Deputy Director of the Department of Public Services and Sgt. Watson about the procedure for a one-way designation. Sgt. Watson responded that the Town would have to go through the state for a permanent change. Mr. D'Amico stated the Town may not need to do that for a trial basis, but that we have to be careful how it's implemented. Mr. Yorkis asked the two to figure out a procedure for implementing a trial. Mr. D'Amico stated the cost would be small, use of barriers already owned by the Town, etc. Sgt. Watson stated the Police Department has equipment to monitor the usage.

Mr. David D'Amico summarized that, from what he was hearing, no one really liked Alternative 1 and that people seem to be more interested in a combination of Alternatives 2 and 3. Mr. Diaz stated that it sounded like people preferred the one-way designation should be the entire length, all the way to Route 126.

Mr. Chan Rogers, 17 Deerfield Road, stated that people from Franklin drive to Framingham via Route 126. Now that traffic has disappeared from this intersection, they are probably going up Winthrop Street. East-bound Route 109 traffic has also improved. He wants people to know that the Town is receptive to making changes.

Mr. Mark Robinson, 26 Milford Street, stated there is still occasionally a backup west of the intersection, though not nearly as bad as before. The bottleneck is usually people coming out of Highland Street, blocking traffic. If that can be eliminated, the traffic will clear up. He stated his preference for the one-way heading north.

Mr. Norman Schneider, 187 Main Street, stated that eastbound traffic on Route 109 has eased up, but westbound traffic is still high. To avoid the traffic light, they sometimes go east to go west, by going around Choate Park.

Main Street at Franklin Street & Milford Street

Mr. John Diaz advised that any change has to last 20 years from construction start. He noted that a new shopping center in Bellingham will add more traffic to this intersection. The thru traffic will increase substantially after the shopping center is open. He reminded residents that Route 109 is a regional highway and the impact of changes has to be considered for surrounding areas.

Mr. Diaz stated they can only do so much with signal timing, and soon have to add lanes. He noted that 20,000 cars a day already use the intersection. Alternative 1 will have a dedicated left turn lane onto Franklin Street, and traffic can spill into two straight lanes heading from the south to the east. There is space for sidewalk on Main Street and around corner onto Franklin, but it is not being considered at this time as there is no sidewalk to connect with. He briefly reviewed the proposed changes, increase in lanes, turn lanes, signal phasing, etc. Mr. Diaz noted that, due to its narrow width, there is little change to Franklin Street, which must remain one lane each direction. It features a small sidewalk corner to complete crosswalk over Franklin Street. Mr. Geoff Howie stated that it would be helpful if there is commitment from the Town that sidewalk will be continued in the future. Discussion followed.

Alternative 2 adds a right-turn-only lane from Main Street onto Franklin Street. The number of vehicles turning left from Main Street onto Milford Street is minimal.

Mr. Matt Buckley, 201 Main Street, stated sometimes tractor trailers have trouble making that corner, from Main onto Franklin. Mr. Diaz stated a large vehicle such as a fire truck or semi will need both turn lanes to make the corner.

Responding to a question from Mr. Mark Robinson, 26 Milford Street, Mr. Diaz stated he did not think many large trucks/vehicles were reflected in the traffic study.

Responding to a question from Ms. Karen Grossman, 15 Slocumb Place, Mr. Diaz stated if the intersection is designed correctly, it will work fine, as each driver will take his turn to merge. It's a gradual merge so safety issues are minimal.

Mr. Normal Schneider, 187 Main Street, asked how far past High Street the merge would occur. He stated he can step out of his house right now and get hit by a car, noting that his property is hit all the time. He once lost a car because someone hit it.

Mr. Greg Matthews, 195-197 Main Street, expressed concern for closeness of lanes to his home. He stated he has already had cars vandalized if they are close to road. Mr. Howie clarified that construction will be done within right-of-way. Mr. Matthews stated recent snow removal was 10 feet wide and if the road comes closer, they will be snowed into their home. He stated the double turn lanes impact him greatly as using the entire right-of-way would eliminate the ability to open an office in his property. Mr. Howie confirmed that both sides of the road are being used. Mr. Diaz stated that the drainage will be improved with the road construction so the snow issues may be decreased.

Mr. Diaz reiterated that there will be no eminent domain taking involved in this project.

Mr. Howie stated that, in these alternatives, no street parking is planned. Mr. Yorkis suggested that parking could be prohibited during specific hours such as 6 – 9 AM.

Selectman Andrew Espinosa stated the bump-out in Alternative 3 is a short-term solution, and cautioned that over the course of time, that parking lane may have to be relegated to traffic flow (double left turn from Route 109).

Mr. Mark Robinson, 26 Milford Street, suggested more land be taken from the church.

Mr. Peter Simmons, 5 Daffodil Lane, stated the church prefers not to give up property and would prefer to work within bounds of the existing right-of-way. He stated further the church prefers to maintain parking on the south side as depicted in Alternative 3.

Mr. Diaz stated the through lanes heading south are already lined up with existing right-of-way and cannot be easily shifted.

Mr. Norman Schneider, 187 Main Street, stated a double lane is not necessarily a good thing, especially if they merge into a single lane, noting that drivers will struggle to get into the lane quicker.

Mr. Peter Cooper, 6 Slocumb Place, suggested the slight increase of speed after the turn will keep the traffic moving along. He stated further that this is in the Historic District. He expressed concern that five lanes wide will degrade the district and asked if there was a way to build in some traffic-calming measures for off-peak times. Mr. Yorkis stated there is a difference between design and speed enforcement. Mr. Diaz responded that traffic-calming measures represents an entirely different area of engineering, but they do not really apply to this intersection. He reminded people that the state will have to approve the design, and then build it. Discussion followed.

Mr. Peter Cooper, 5 Slocumb Place, stated he wanted to be sure Historic District issues were raised and suggested they contact the Massachusetts Historical Commission..

Another Historic District resident stated he also has a 200-year-old home and noted that traffic backed up does detract from the historical significance of home.

Mr. Geoff Howie stated that this is an arterial road, and arterials are meant to move traffic along. He stated they will try to maintain the character of the Historic District, noting that traffic calming measures are generally not appropriate.

Mr. Vladimir Atrizek, 179 Main Street, stated that speed is a factor night or day, that trucks are going 50MPH at night. He expressed concern that drivers will go faster if the intersection is cleaned up. Mr. Diaz stated the traffic signals can be programmed to go to all red in early morning hours, usually midnight to 6 AM. Then traffic will have to slow at spaces along the roadway.

Selectman Andrew Espinosa stated the Board of Selectmen just approved surveillance cameras on this intersection, independent of this road design. This will help to identify violators.

Ms. Barbara Schneider, 187 Main Street, stated speeding starts about 3 PM and goes until around 8 PM, not so much in the middle of the night.

Mr. Diaz reviewed the proposed concepts depicted in Alternatives 2 and 3 and utilized an interactive design tool to show movement of traffic at the intersection, showing backup of traffic as each lighting phase cycles through. These showed the increase to perceived 20-year projections.

Mr. Yorkis stated that from the comments on the three lanes (right, through, left) there seems to be support for this part of concept.

Mr. Shaun Montana, 12 Slocumb Place, asked when the three lanes are created. Mr. Diaz responded it will be much as it is now, except three lanes instead of two.

Ms. Karen Grossman, 15 Slocumb Place, asked if Slocumb Place residents will be trapped, if we cannot turn left from Slocumb onto Main Street. She suggested a Stop Line that would not block the intersection.

Mr. David Blackwell, 2 Milford Street, suggested parking on south side and asked what alternatives there were if the parking on the south side is eliminated. Mr. Yorkis replied that parking at the Medway Public Library is public parking for anyone's use and is already being used as such.

Regarding the two left-and lanes from Milford/Highland onto Main Street, Mr. Peter Simmons, 5 Daffodil Lane, stated he finds that individuals have difficulty holding their lane, especially on the right side. He suggested it is probably not preferable if such a chance is not necessary. He stated that maintaining the parking lane helps protect the historic value.

Mr. David Blackwell, 2 Milford Street, stated that two lanes helps eliminate the backup of traffic.

Mr. Brian Adams, 2 Milford Street, stated that Alternative 1 opens it up and alleviates traffic snarls.

Mr. Matt Buckley, 201 Main Street, stated that drivers shouldn't have to jockey for position. He stated that keeping it one lane keeps a steady flow without aggressive driving.

Mr. Greg Matthews, 195-197 Main Street, stated that Alternative 3 seems more appropriate, with the bump-out, as families with children reside in the area. He stated further that it preserves the character of the neighborhood and prohibits people from flying through.

Mr. Mark Robinson, 26 Milford Street, stated Alternative 1 will move more traffic off Main Street, but acknowledged one lane will move enough without impacting people adversely.

Mr. David Blackwell, 2 Milford Street, stated he can't get out of driveway in the morning now.

Mr. Mark Robinson, 26 Milford Street, stated that Highland Street is causing Mr. Blackwell's dilemma.

Mr. Norman Schneider, 187 Main Street, stated that, for traffic flow, Alternative 1 is the best. Alternative 3 is the best for the neighborhood overall.

Mr. Matt Buckley, 201 Main Street, stated the design could start with Alternative 3 yet end up with Alternative 1 if it is determined the need is there.

The consensus opinion was that Alternative 1 was better for traffic, while Alternative 3 was better from a neighborhood perspective.

Mr. Greg Matthews, 195-197 Main Street, agreed that Alternative 3 is a better place to start.

Mr. Brian Adams, 2 Milford Street, commended GPI and the committee for all the work that has been done thus far.

Fire Chief Paul Trufant expressed concern that the intersection needs to be appropriately outfitted to host signal for fire trucks so that the signal lights all turn red. Mr. D'Amico responded the Department of Public Services is aware of the problem and is looking into it.

Regarding pedestrian traffic, Mr. Yorkis expressed concern for pedestrians going from one side of High Street to another, from one side of Slocumb Place to another, from Slocumb Place to High Street.

Mr. Brian Adams, 2 Milford Street, wondered why people don't just go to the crosswalk where there is a signal and remarked that the church has a police detail on Sundays. He suggested eliminating the non-signalized crosswalk. Mr. Yorkis remarked that it is hard to change people's behavior.

Ms. Karen Grossman, 15 Slocumb Place, stated she got into an accident making a left turn into Slocumb Place.

Mr. Shaun Montana, 13 Slocumb Place, stated the only time it's safe and easy to get in or out is on Sunday when police officer is there. At that time, traffic cones are used that force people to stay in a single lane.

Mr. Brian Adams, 2 Milford Street, asked if, with two lanes, it is possible that the right-turn lane could be started further away from Slocumb Place, and a portion of the second lane be made a left-turn-only onto Slocumb Place. Mr. Diaz responded that there will be a signal at Choate Park, with opportunity to cross. Other signals will stop all traffic when crosswalk button is pushed. Mr. Diaz cautioned that Slocumb Place and High Street is not a good spot for a crosswalk due to high traffic concerns and difficulty with coordinating signals with streets.

Ms. Karen Grossman, 15 Slocumb Place, suggested a Do Not Block Intersection sign, which would give residents an opportunity to get out. Discussion followed.

Mr. Paul Yorkis reminded residents that a goal of the committee is to consider walkability in Town.

Mr. Howie stated keeping the crosswalk at Slocumb Place is not a safe thing to do and that there can be other designated crossing locations.

Mr. David D'Amico suggested GPI look into the possibility of bringing the curb at Slocumb Place out a little further toward the road to slow the traffic a little more.

Mr. Peter Cooper, 6 Slocumb Place, stated that folks in right-turn lane heading west on 109 speed up in anticipation of the right-on- red and ease into the right turn.

Mr. Norman Schneider, 187 Main Street, stated people are driving up onto his land because there is no curb. Mr. Geoff Howie confirmed that there will be vertical curbing with this project.

Ms. Karen Grossman, 15 Slocumb Place, asked if there was any consideration of making High Street a No Left Turn, noting that drivers could go up and around to Franklin Street.

At 8:34 PM the meeting concluded. Mr. Paul Yorkis thanked everyone for coming and briefly summarized the design process.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanette Galliardt
Night Board Secretary