

PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

April 2, 2013

Two-Mile Corner Intersection Improvements – Public Hearing

Town Council Chambers

Board members present: Staff Present:

Gladys Lavine, Vice Chair Alison Ring, Principal Planner

Betty Jane Owen Warren Hall, Town Engineer

Audrey Rearick Tom O’Loughlin, Public Works Director

Charlene Rose-Cirillo

John Ciummo

Matthew Sullivan

Pete Marnane

RIDOT Staff and RIDOT Consultants Present:

Lambri Zerva – RIDOT Chief Civil Engineer

Anita Marshall – RIDOT Project Engineer

Susan Howe- RIDOT Property Management

Bob Clinton – VHB Traffic Engineer

Jamie Pisano – VHB Project Engineer

The Planning Board, at the request of the Town Council, hosted a public hearing to solicit comments on the proposed Two Mile Corner Intersection Improvement Project. The meeting was called to order at

6:05pm. RIDOT presented the proposed plans followed by questions and comments. There was significant public attendance including many business owners within the project area. Attached is a summary of the discussion.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Alison Ring, Principal Planner

April 2, 2013 – 6pm - Public Hearing

Two Mile Corner Intersection Improvement Project

Discussion Summary

Mr. Zerva discussed the project boundaries and presented the proposed plans which included diagrams on existing conditions, pavement changes, and proposed conditions. Proposed changes highlighted during the presentation included:

 New left turn lanes northbound and southbound on West Main Rd in front of Bank Newport and at West Main Road / Coddington Hwy intersection

 Maple Avenue Right-In Right-Out only

 Removing islands on West Main Road

 Narrowing Two Mile Corner island

 Shorter pedestrian crossings

 Removing Slip Ramp in front of Walgreens

 Add center turning lane on East Main Rd between West Main Rd and Aquidneck Shopping Center

 Add eastbound and westbound turning lanes by Aquidneck

Shopping Center Driveway

 Consolidate and relocate Rite Aid driveway

 Widening East Main Road into RIDOT's Right of Way (southern side of East Main Road will have more widening than the northern side of East Main Road)

 Right turn slip ramp from West Main Rd to East Main Rd will be narrowed

 Three lanes heading eastbound at Coddington Hwy

 Reduction to one lane at westbound entrance of Coddington Hwy

 Proposed property acquisition of SW corner parcel at West Main Road and Coddington Hwy

 Three traffic signals will be replaced with all new equipment

The project will be put out to construction in 2014.

Opened up public comment and question period – 6:25pm

Maple Avenue / Smythe Street Comments

Comment – What's going to happen to Maple Avenue?

Response – The plan is to restrict left turns out of and in to Maple Avenue. These are the more difficult movements and therefore RIDOT would like to remove them from the equation. It is a safety improvement that is intended to reduce accidents. Data suggests that 14 accidents associated with left turns in or out of Maple Avenue occurred over a five year period. PM peak traffic volumes of 35 cars are making left turns out of Maple Avenue. This restriction will also have an operational improvement benefit.

Comment – Will the Smythe Street signal remain?

Response – Yes.

Comment– The Smythe Street light is the cause of the problems. It backs up traffic.

Response – Fiber optic cable will improve signal communication and timing. Smythe Street signal will also be coordinated and phased with the signal at Bank Newport.

Comment - What will happen to school bus routes on Maple Avenue?

Response - Our recommendations are to ensure increased safety for roadway users. It is not safe for buses filled with school children to cross those traffic lanes at that location.

Comment – If the left turn option is eliminated from Maple Ave where will the traffic go? Smythe St residents are concerned about children playing on the street and noted the speed limit is 15 mph.

Response – We are not promoting that the traffic use Smythe Street, just that they need to go another way.

Comment – Traffic has gotten worse with Smythe Street signal. What about speed bumps?

Response- It is a town road so RIDOT does not have the jurisdiction or authority to add speed bumps or speed humps on Smythe Street. It is not our intention to divert traffic onto Smythe Street. Hopefully people will avoid the neighborhood roads and will utilize the main roads like Coddington Hwy.

Comment – Maple Avenue traffic will be directed through Bank Newport.

Response – Traffic counts are not substantial. Probably some traffic

is thru traffic generated from CCRI trying to avoid Coddington Hwy. Improvements made to Coddington Hwy / West Main Rd intersection may cause less people to use Maple Ave as a cut through.

Comment – Maple Avenue island is not a good idea. People will go through Bank Newport private property. Without the island it would be fine. I have never witnessed any accidents at that location. This design also will restrict plows.

Response – The Town is welcome to make recommendations and/or resolution on this matter

Comment – This is an unacceptable proposal for Maple Avenue. It will divert traffic to Bank Newport which is a good neighbor and employer. It will destroy the neighborhood.

Comment – Concern that left restriction on Maple Avenue will kill businesses and neighborhood.

Comment – I support everything except for Maple Avenue left turn restrictions.

West Main Rd / Coddington Hwy / Rockwood Rd Comments

Comment – People going left from Coddington Hwy to West Main Road do not yield to the traffic exiting Rockwood Road who have the right of way.

Response – Split phasing of the signals will improve the situation.

Comment - Can we implement that change now?

Response – No, it would require substantial rewiring and new signal heads. We also need to add roadway capacity first.

Comment– Concerned about Coddington Hwy two lanes of traffic

moving toward you when at Rockwood Rd?

Response – The signals will not go at the same time anymore so it will be much safer in the future.

Comment – Why widen Rockwood Road? It could encourage more cut through traffic.

Response – Rockwood Road is being widening to align the thru lane.

Comment – Road diet was just completed to Coddington Hwy, now back to make additional changes?

Response – The recent road diet project just including striping, this project will now reduce the pavement.

Comment – Only one lane entering Coddington Hwy from West Main Rd could cause more accidents since right on red is allowed. What we currently have works so why change it?

Response – We are proposing only one lane entering at Coddington Hwy because only one vehicle can enter at a time. Right on red traffic from West Main Rd to Coddington Hwy needs to yield. You only need one lane.

Comment – I witness many accidents that go unreported at the West Main Rd / Coddington intersection. I support the idea of one lane entering Coddington from West Main Rd. It will make it easier for pedestrians to cross.

Comment – I hope we don't have to redo the road again when the West Main Road / Coddington Highway Development happens?

Response – The project is designed to accommodate future traffic

conditions. RIDOT and VHB are aware of and have seen the concept plans for the West Main / Coddington Development Center. However, it is just a concept at this point and nobody knows what development will actually occur years from now. It is a good point to plan for the future but at this point we don't know exactly what that future is. We will locate signal improvements out of the way of future development.

Approaches are designed to accommodate future growth but there may need to be some widening in the future.

Two Mile Corner Intersection Comments

Comment – The WMR to EMR right turn slip lane should be eliminated. It is the cause of many near accidents.

Response – RIDOT plans to narrow the slip lane. They do not suggest bringing those vehicles further north into the intersection which would require 5 lanes. The proposed crosswalk will be shorter in distance and will have a yield sign. Each movement (left and right from West Main Rd to East Main Rd) will have its own dedicated lane, eliminating the yield requirement.

Comment – I was in an accident traveling south on West Main Rd taking a left turn to East Main Rd. How will these plans make this intersection safer?

Response – The plans call for a dedicated left turn lane. Fiber optic cable will improve signal communication and timing.

Business Impacts Comments

Pruitt Chiropractor Comment - Supports the left turn into his business. Is concerned about how convenient it will be for customers to take a left out of the business. When roads were being

redone about three years ago it killed the business financially.

Response – We will investigate night time construction for this project. Night time construction works well in location where there are no residents nearby. It can be noisy but will save time.

Hobby House Comment- What is the green on the plans over the business property on the SW corner of Codington and West Main Road?

Response – Land acquisition is being considered for that particular property. The property owners would be paid fair market value and business tenants would be relocated. It is an option rather than trying to design around it.

Watches, Etc Comment – Business suffered three years ago when construction occurred. Portions of parking lot were taken. We won't be able to survive if the parking lot size is reduced further. Also, there is a drainage issue at my location. Brand new sidewalks were just put in, now you are going to rip those up and redo them. Stop signs are continually knocked down by vehicles.

Response – We are not going beyond the State right of way. In regards to sidewalks, we had to tie in to existing conditions. When construction takes place we will then need those sidewalks to tie into the newly created conditions.

Comment – Businesses in this area suffered greatly during previous road construction projects. We need to do work at night and ensure that a clear path is available during the day that will not deter traffic and cause businesses to get killed. People need to know it is ok to travel on that road.

Response – We will pursue night time construction and make sure that lanes are clear during the day. Doing construction at night will assist in getting the project done sooner but some work will need to be done during the daytime.

Pedestrians / Bicycle Comments

Comment – Accommodations for pedestrians?

Response – There is an exclusive phase right now for pedestrians at Smythe Street. There would be grid lock if we added that feature to other intersections.

Comment – What areas will have new sidewalks? How wide will the sidewalks be? Can you work with businesses to reduce curb cuts? How many feet of curb cuts are in the project area?

Response – The entire project area will have sidewalks. The width of the sidewalks will be five and half feet plus a 6 inch curb. We do not have a figure on the total length of curb cuts. Curb access is important to businesses and RIDOT will not suggest eliminating a properties sole curb cut to a state highway. Overly large curb cuts are an issue. Shared access is a good idea but that needs to be agreed upon by the property owners. We are proposing the consolidation and relocation of the Rite Aid / Batik Gardens curb cut.

Comment – Will pedestrian signals have countdown numbers?

Response – Yes, that is the new national standard to have countdown timers at pedestrian crossings.

Comment – Concerned that people take right on red even though

pedestrian light is green.

Comment – What about bicycles?

Response – Coddington Hwy has bicycle lanes. Too difficult to fit bike lanes in the rest of the project area.

General Comments

Comment – Directional signs should be at traffic light.

Response – Placement of signs is critical. All new signage will be installed.

Comment – Consider notifying drivers of alternative routes during construction.

Response – Sometimes that is done but locals may already know the best routes. Electronic messaging boards can be used to provide information to drivers. However, we want to be mindful of not detouring traffic away from businesses.

Comment – People run red lights all the time. Consider installing photo capability to ticket individuals who run red lights. There is a truck only sign however everyone uses that egress and people do not abide by the left turn only sign. The laws need to be enforced.

Response – Road design can help make roads safe and produce a condition that does not encourage people to break the law. Adding capacity to the roadways will also help to keep people from becoming frustrated. The new signal technology will also help. Signals will be able to detect traffic using loops in pavement. We will ensure sensitivity level is correct.

Comment – Who is paying for this project?

Response – Federal funding including earmarked funds dedicated specifically for this project which will account for approximately 80% of project cost.

Comment - How long will construction take?

Response – Two seasons of construction, maybe less depending on the timing of the start. All construction has to be done at one time. Construction professionals will sequence the project out and will provide us with a better idea of how long construction will be expected to last.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Alison Ring, Principal Planner

Warren Hall, Town Engineer