

Portland – South Portland Smart Corridor Plan
Portland – Forest Avenue North / Morrill’s Corner
Public Input Meeting
Summary Notes and Public Comments
September 19, 2017, USM Wishcamper Center

Introductory Comments from Bruce Hyman, City of Portland Transportation Program Manager

- Welcome to the second round of neighborhood meetings for the Portland – South Portland Smart Corridor project
- At the first round of meetings, the consultants presented their analysis of existing conditions and gathered reactions about issues and opportunities
 - At those meetings we heard a lot about safety
 - Pedestrians
 - Drivers
 - Heard from business owners about parking
 - Heard about the appearance of the street
- Tonight we are going to present conceptual ideas for roadway improvements and get your feedback
- We are going to present information on the Portland segment of the corridor in three sections and gather your feedback after each presentation
- The City of Portland conducted a previous study in 2012, the Transforming Forest Avenue study
- We made some progress since that study
 - Forest Avenue – Reconfiguration of Forest Avenue from Walton Street to Morrill’s Corner, including elimination of some under-utilized on-street parking and creation of a two-way center turn lane to reduce rear end crashes
 - I-295 Exit 6 Interchange – Implementation of improvements to pedestrian crossings, bike lanes, safety and access through the interchange
 - Woodfords Corner improvement project
- In this study, we are revisiting some things, and will be focusing on other improvement opportunities
- Introductions
 - John Duncan, PACTS
 - Hugh Coxe, MEDOT
 - Tim Soucy, Regional Traffic Engineer

Presentation from Ned Codd, WSP USA Consultant Team Project Manager

- Overview of the Study
 - Bug Light Park all the way to Morrill's Corner
 - The corridor serves as a connector but also as a main street for several neighborhoods
 - We are focusing on a few key segments
 - Forest Avenue from Morrill's Corner to Woodfords Corner
 - Forest Avenue from Woodfords Corner to Deering Oaks Park
 - Broadway in South Portland, from Mill Creek to Bug Light Park and Southern Maine Community College
 - In addition to providing feedback tonight, you can also provide feedback at MaineSmartCorridor.com
 - Goals
 - Encourage high quality development
 - Improve safety in all modes
 - Improve vehicle access and traffic congestion
 - Improve multi-model access
- Corridor Improvement Objectives
 - Safety
 - Target high-crash locations for improvements
 - Implement safety counter-measures
 - Traffic
 - Identify and improve traffic bottlenecks
 - Reconfigure roadways and intersections to improve access for all modes
 - Public Transit
 - Improving operations through signal improvements and giving buses priority in traffic
 - Provide enhanced amenities – improved shelters, transfer hubs, benches, traveler info
 - Pedestrian
 - Improve crossings – provide new or improved crosswalks to reduce gaps in crossing opportunities
 - Provide better pedestrian access at intersections
 - Bicycle
 - Extending the network
 - Fill system gaps and obstacles
 - Implementation
 - Identify opportunities that are cost effective
 - Enable phased implementation

- Corridor Improvement Alternatives
 - Focus in tonight’s meeting is on specific intersection redesign and improvements
 - In all proposed improvements, ensure that we are taking a “Complete Streets” approach to accommodating all roadway users – make the corridor safe and functional for all users, including drivers as well as pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, the young and the old, disabled
- As Bruce noted, the presentation is divided into three parts, each addressing one of the three segments of Forest Avenue that we will be focusing on tonight:
 - Forest Avenue North, from the Morrill’s Corner area to Woodfords Corner
 - Forest Avenue from Woodfords Corner to USM
 - Forest Avenue through the I-295 Exit 6 interchange and Deering Oaks Park
- As we go through the presentation and the review of alternatives, please consider the following questions for the discussion to follow:
 - What are your priorities for improving the corridor?
 - What ideas or alternatives do you like?
 - What ideas or alternatives do you not like, or would you change?
 - What other ideas or suggestions would you make?

Morrill’s Corner and Forest Avenue to Woodfords Corner

See meeting presentation for issues and alternatives.

Public comments and questions

- What ideas or alternatives do you like?
 - Love the idea of improving pedestrian crossing and bike safety
 - Prohibiting left turn onto Bishop Street
 - Roundabout idea
 - Eliminates the need for left turns at Bishop Street
 - Eliminate left turns
- What ideas or alternatives do you not like, or would you change?
 - No left turn at Bishop
 - There is a lot of potential for development on Bishop Street
 - Why not bring even more traffic through Bishop Street instead of cutting it off
 - Seems ridiculous for that business (McDonald’s) to have their own signal
- What other ideas or suggestions would you make?
 - Buy the Wok Inn property to allow extending the existing lane for turning onto Allen Avenue

- Square off Allen Avenue and MacDonald's, possibly by making use of the Wok Inn property – would that improve traffic flow?
 - The problem there is the heavy movement with the heavy left turn
- Take away the dedicated signal for MacDonald's
- Make the bus stops as close to the crosswalks as possible – otherwise, how would people cross Forest Avenue between the two bus hubs
- Get rid of the left hand turns
- Make it safer for bikes – many more people would probably ride bikes if it was safer (and not ride bikes on the sidewalks)
- Divert traffic into the industrial area sooner than Morrill's Corner
- Direct cars heading to Portland down Bell Street instead of Read Street
- Would like to see the comprehensive plan consulted – it doesn't seem like we are taking a big enough step
- Would like more emphasis on place-making in addition to making a conduit

Forest Avenue – Woodfords Corner to University of Southern Maine

See meeting presentation for issues and alternatives.

Public comments and questions

- What ideas or alternatives do you like?
 - Crosswalks with pedestrian refuges at Lincoln Street/Arlington Street, Noyes Street, and Fessenden Street (x 3)
 - Lights at crosswalks
 - One lane inbound on Forest Avenue from Woodfords Corner (x 3)
 - Northbound and southbound bus shelters at Woodfords Corner
- What ideas or alternatives do you not like, or would you change?
 - One lane inbound coming out of Woodfords Corner – we are fixing that outbound at Woodfords Corner, where it is a nightmare – why wouldn't a single lane inbound be creating a new problem?
 - Response – Because the problem at Woodfords Corner is that there is lots of outbound traffic that needs to merge to one lane before the traffic signal. At that outbound merge, there are lots of other streets and lots of other traffic that needs "green time" from that signal. At Woodfords Corner, inbound traffic splits in the new design: one lane for Woodford Street and Deering Avenue, and one lane for Forest Avenue through Revere Street. Beyond Revere Street, there is not another traffic bottleneck until you get to Dartmouth Street. So what we are proposing is not to widen to two lanes where there is really not the need or demand for the additional lane.

- Concerned about no inbound left turns onto Belmont Street – where do those cars go?
 - Response – There are very few cars making those turns (5 per hour in the morning peak, 9 per hour in the evening peak). Those cars could turn onto Arlington Street or Coyle Street, taking advantage of gaps in the traffic from the Ashmont Street/Belmont Street signal.
- What other ideas or suggestions would you make?
 - Don't just throw more money at everything – the problem is that we have too many people and we keep building buildings
 - Needs to be a no right turn on red sign for Bedford Street at Forest Avenue (drivers take that turn too fast, without stopping for pedestrians)
 - Don't make the lanes so much like a slalom course
 - Consider impact on side residential streets
 - Paint the bike lanes
 - Peak hour turn restrictions

Forest Avenue through the I-295 Exit 6 Interchange, Deering Oaks

See meeting presentation for issues and alternatives.

Public comments and questions

- What ideas or alternatives do you like?
 - Elimination of the cloverleaf ramps at Exit 6 interchange
 - Make State Street single lane
 - Improve pedestrian safety at Deering Oaks
 - Realigning High Street to create more contiguous park land (x3)
 - The proposal in general – makes it perceptually more urban
 - Complete Street concept with traffic speeds not being too high
 - Tightens connection to Forest Ave.
 - Improves bike/pedestrian connectivity
- What other ideas or suggestions would you make?
 - Make State and High two way streets
 - Clearer road markings and more clearly delineated roadway space
 - Consider encouraging people to take other routes

General Comments

- We need to discuss how to get more people out of their cars

- To get more people riding the bus, we can't have two bus systems: Portland and South Portland
- We also need a bus system that runs on time
- Clarified that this study will conclude by the end of the calendar year
- Clarified that there currently is no funding available for any of these ideas but we hope to get money for implementation based on viability of proposals, cost-effectiveness, and public support