

Portland – South Portland Smart Corridor Plan
South Portland Public Input Meeting
Summary Notes and Public Comments
November 2, 2017, South Portland Public Library

Introduction

Charles “Tex” Haeuser, City of South Portland Planning Director – Welcome and introduction to Smart Corridor Plan process

- This is the third public input meeting on this topic
- This is a joint study between Portland and South Portland from Morrill’s Corner to Bug Light Park
- Tonight we plan to look at some actual proposals and gather your feedback
- Thanks for coming, everyone

Presentation by Ned Codd, WSP USA Consultant Team Project Manager

- This study is being done jointly by Portland, South Portland, and PACTS
- We are trying to build off of previous planning efforts
- We are looking at three major segments of the corridor:
 - Morrill’s Corner to Woodford’s Corner
 - Woodford’s Corner through Deering Oaks Park
 - Casco Bay Bridge to the end of Broadway
- This is a multi-modal study that takes into account land use issues and future development
- Goals of the study
 - Encourage high quality development
 - Improve safety in all modes
 - Improve vehicle access and reduce congestion
 - Improve multi-modal access
- We are getting to the end of the study and want to share with you some preliminary recommendations
- We are trying to increase safety and reduce crashes
- We are also looking to improve transit
- We are also trying to improve pedestrian access and safety
- We are also looking to improve bicycle access
- We want to make the corridor a complete street – safe and functional for all users, including drivers as well as pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, the young and the old, disabled
- To address safety issues, the following are some “proven safety countermeasures” we are considering
 - Pedestrian crossings – Median refuges and flashing beacons
 - Road diets – Potentially reducing lanes where they are not be needed
 - Roundabouts – We are considering at a couple locations
 - Leading pedestrian intervals – Give pedestrians a head start when crossing with parallel traffic

Broadway Corridor

Traffic Issues and Potential Improvements

- Current traffic conditions
 - Heavy traffic congestion in the Mill Creek segment of the corridor
 - Traffic volumes are high, and several intersections operate with high levels of congestion and delay
 - Congestion is much lower east of Mill Creek – the traffic lessens but the road narrows
- Traffic safety
 - High crash rates in Mill Creek
 - Much lower incidence of reported crashes east of Mill Creek
- Development and traffic demand
 - Reviewed development proposals, South Portland Comprehensive Plan, consulted with City staff
 - There is potential for development in Mill Creek, Mussey Neighborhood Center, Broadway/Sawyer, and on Cacoulidis Property (this is the largest potential development)
 - Developed traffic projections expected as a result of these potential developments,
 - Intersection level of service could worsen at Mill Creek and at Broadway/Sawyer Street
- Potential Traffic Improvements
 - Broadway/Cottage Road
 - We reviewed proposal to signalize the right turn eastbound on Broadway at Cottage Road
 - Would have a minor effect on congestion, but congestion for this movement would still be minimal
 - Signalizing the right turn could be implementing without significant negative effects
 - Broadway/Sawyer Street
 - Traffic signal warrant analysis
 - Maine Department of Transportation (MEDOT) has jurisdiction over installation of new traffic signals
 - MEDOT follows federal guidelines for “traffic signals warrants”
 - In general, MEDOT requires that at least two of nine signal warrants be met in order to install a new traffic signal
 - Because we knew this would be an issue, we collected 12 hours of data at this location in order to conduct a full traffic signal warrant analysis
 - We found that none of the 9 warrants at this intersection are met
 - We have passed this information and analysis along to the City of South Portland and MEDOT
 - Roundabout analysis
 - A single-lane modern roundabout here would function fairly well at this location

- Both northbound and southbound level of service along Broadway would significantly improve
- Advantages of a roundabout at this location
 - Improves traffic operations by slowing traffic down, creating more gaps for entering traffic
 - All traffic essentially takes a “right turn” to enter the roundabout, only needs to yield to traffic in the circle
 - Improves pedestrian access by slowing traffic, enabling pedestrians to cross half one lane at a time
 - Improves bicycle access by narrowing roadway approach, providing more space for bike lanes
- Disadvantages of a roundabout at this location
 - Property impacts – space requirements for roundabout would have impacts on northwest and southeast corners of intersection
 - Though traffic slows down, it is not required to stop upon entry – can be intimidating for pedestrians and bicyclists (though much better for a single lane roundabout than a double lane roundabout)
- Breakwater and Pickett
 - This intersection currently operates fairly well as an all-way stop control intersection
 - Experiences brief periods of moderate congestion at SMCC class peaks, but congestion quickly dissipates
 - There are crosswalks missing and sidewalks are in poor conditions – these should be improved
 - A single-lane modern roundabout here would function well, but it may not be necessary since existing all-way stop control also works adequately

Transit Issues and Potential Improvements

- This part of South Portland is currently served by Bus 21, which is a counter-clockwise loop
- It’s about 30 minutes between buses during peak periods, 45 minutes off-peak
- It can be delayed when the Casco Bay Bridge drawbridge is raised for shipping
- There are no bus shelters along Broadway and few other amenities
- There is potential for increasing funding for transit due to the Transit TIF that South Portland has
- There is the idea of a ferry from the Cacoulidis property to Portland
- Potential transit improvements for the 21 Bus
 - Transit signal priority
 - Extends the green light as the bus approaches
 - Only needed at congested locations
 - Queue jump
 - Potential for short dedicated lane to enable bus to jump ahead of car queue
 - Exclusive leading signal phase for the bus
 - However, we didn’t see any good opportunities for either of these measures along the Broadway corridor in South Portland

Pedestrian Issues and Potential Improvements

- We looked at the gaps in pedestrian crossings along Broadway and the quality of the crossings
- In general, as you go farther east on Broadway the crossings get farther and farther apart
- Between Walnut Street and Mussey Street, there is gap of 1,125 feet without a crossing
- At Broadway and Mussey Street there is a crosswalk missing
- There is a crossing at Harriet Street but no signal
- Between Pine and Spring there is 1,550 feet between crosswalks with any refuge
 - There is no crosswalk in front of the Boys and Girls Club
- Between Preble Street and Breakwater Drive, there is 1,150 feet without a crossing
- Potential pedestrian improvements
 - Add RRFB protected crosswalks across Broadway at Sawyer Street and at Stanford Street to provide a crossing for the Boys and Girls Club
 - Add the missing crosswalk at the Mussey Street/Broadway intersection

Bicycle Issues and Potential Improvements

- Bike lanes on Casco Bay Bridge, but close to high-speed traffic, conflicts with intersections and ramps
- No bike lanes in Mill Creek, heavy congestion and queuing
- Potential for connection on lower-volume streets through Knightville to Casco Bay Bridge pedestrian/bicycle ramp
- Gap in bike lanes between Sawyer Street and Spring Street
- Continuous South Portland Greenbelt Path goes parallel to Broadway
 - It's narrow, just 8' wide
- Potential improvements
 - Widen the Greenbelt Path – fairly substantial and expensive project
 - Connect the Greenbelt Path with Broadway across narrow gap just east of Mill Creek, near Walnut Street and Clemons Street
 - Shared lane/sharrow markings along Cottage Road from Broadway and Greenbelt Path through Knightville to Knight Park and pedestrian/bicycle ramp to Casco Bay Bridge separated walkway

Public Comments and Questions

- Crosswalks across Broadway
 - At the Boys and Girls Club, we cross Broadway every day with 35 kids at Spring Street
 - Would be great to have a lighted signal to aid in crossing Broadway
 - It would be best to have a crossing right in front of the club
 - Would be best if there were safe crossings at both Stanford Street and Spring Street
 - We need something really aggressive to alert cars
 - Drivers are vicious, or maybe distracted SMCC students
 - There is a culture that cars come first
 - We need a public awareness campaign to improve traffic safety and protect pedestrians
 - The amount of young and old people crossing the streets is being ignored
 - It seems like all we care about is cars

- Favor concurrent pedestrian signal phases (cross along with parallel traffic) – sometimes feel guilty for pushing the walk button where there is an exclusive phase that stops all traffic
 - For many walk buttons, there is not enough time for an elderly person to cross
 - Better to make crosswalk improvements at the Boys and Girls Club than Sawyer Street, Spring Street, and Preble Street
 - Four RRFB's in a row seems a bit excessive
 - Not sure we need on Stanford Street
 - Would be best to have them at Sawyer Street, Spring Street, and Preble Street
 - All for more RRFBs – they are pretty cheap and very effective
 - A lot of students are travelling on Broadway, texting, and going over the speed limits
 - Pedestrian safety is a huge issue on Broadway
 - To help blind and visually impaired
 - Flush refuges are not much use
 - Visually impaired people can't see them
 - Invisible to cars – provide no refuge
 - RRFBs would be more useful if they had tones for blind and visually impaired, at least so a person could know that there is a button to be pushed
 - Response, Tex Haeuser
 - RRFBs do not have audible signals
 - Potential alternative to RRFB would be a High-Intensity Activated crossWalk (HAWK) signal, which has provides visual and audible signals for pedestrian crossing
 - Sawyer Street is not a good place for a crosswalk because there are too many left and right turns
 - Could we slow traffic at times before and after school and/or establish a school zone?
 - We need to do something about the Pine Street crosswalk – too much tanker truck traffic
 - Response, Tex Haeuser – Thank you for coming with ideas like this – crossing Broadway is the number 1 problem of this whole corridor
 - Perhaps we could elevate crosswalks a bit so they are slightly elevated or perhaps paint them yellow instead of white
 - There are traffic accidents all along Broadway, not just at the intersections
 - How about a High Intensity Crosswalk Beacon? This provides a red light for crossing and a tone
 - Perhaps we should narrow the street in order to slow people down
 - The MEDOT accident statistics are car oriented, not pedestrian oriented
 - They are explicit to moving motor vehicles
 - Clarified that the criteria for a reportable crash is any bodily injury or damage to property
 - The Spring Street crosswalk is in the wrong place – let's move that one to the front door of the Boys and Girls Club
 - How about elevate the bike lane so the road is narrowed and the bike lane is preserved
 - How about a barrel or pylon in the middle of the road to slow traffic
 - Bump-outs in Saco are really effective – they provide security for pedestrians
- Sawyer and Broadway
 - Love the idea of a roundabout

- Love the idea of bike lanes
- Concern about a bike lane heading into the roundabout
- The safest way to cross Broadway is a stop light
 - A roundabout is a very weak second choice to a stoplight
 - MEDOT should use its discretion to allow installation of a signal
 - The most important reason for having a light at Broadway is to improve pedestrian crossing safety
- Because the roundabout provides a steady flow of traffic it would reduce opportunities for people on side streets to enter Broadway
- Concern about reducing Broadway to one lane near the roundabout because someone taking a left turn will cause traffic back up
 - How about a Stanford Street left turn lane?
- Roundabouts work well for drivers in non-urban areas, yet as an instructor of blind and impaired people I'm concerned that blind and visually impaired people will not be able to navigate them safely
 - If a roundabout is installed, be very thoughtful about the placement of all elements
- Roundabouts are bad for drivers and pedestrians
- Even if the warrants are not met, engineering judgment should prevail and a traffic signal should be allowed at Sawyer and Broadway
- Rather than install a roundabout, best to do nothing at Sawyer for now and wait until a traffic signal IS warranted
 - A number of people seem to agree with this perspective
- A signal at Sawyer and make it more usable, would take pressure off Cottage and Broadway
- Concern about a bus stop at this intersection – it would block traffic
- Bicycles
 - Would rather that bicycles ride in the travel lane than off to the side
 - Many bicyclists ride on the sidewalks and that's not good
 - Many of those riding bikes on the sidewalks are kids
 - We have the Greenbelt Path – that should properly developed for bicyclists and pedestrians
 - Widen the pavement
 - Two walking lanes and two walking lanes
 - Proper signage
 - Be consistent – follow the European way of doing bike lanes
 - Connect cross streets to the greenbelt
 - There is a lot of support (perhaps unanimous) for improving the green belt
- Other comments
 - Rather than a ferry that would require parking on each side of the harbor, better to have a more frequent bus
 - How about an Uber service to meet the bus stops?
 - That already exists
 - Eliminating the right turn lane to Cottage Road for people going to Cape Elizabeth is a bad idea
 - Make full use of RRFBs before tearing up roads

- Clarified that this is a study and will help us apply to PACTs for funding for actual projects
- Clarified that a new development that generates some sort of pedestrian activity could be asked to contribute to improvement of the greenbelt
- It seems like there is consensus in this group that pedestrian safety is the highest priority
- Many of the things discussed here are not terribly costly improvements and so perhaps could be done relatively quickly
- Perhaps the green belt could be extended through Ferry Village and through the Cacoulidis property
- Thanks to everyone for coming tonight!