

Lee Area Traffic Study
Summary of Fifth Working Group Meeting
Tuesday, December 11, 2007, 3:30 PM.
Lee Library Gallery, 100 Main Street, Lee, MA

Attendees:

Name	Organization
Alison Church	Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
Peter Frieri	MassHighway District 1
Robert Gorden	Becket Historical Commission
Nat Karns	Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
Anuja Koirala	Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
Steven LaBelle	Becket Representative
Mark Moore	MassHighway District 1
Christine Neumann	Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
George Shippey	Stockbridge Selectboard

1. Introductions

Mr. Karns welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Members introduced themselves, including Steven LaBelle, a new representative from Becket who is a commercial truck driver.

2. Summary of 11-06-07 Working Group Meeting

The group reviewed the summary of the November 6th meeting.

3. Finalize Criteria for Evaluation of Alternatives

Mr. Karns noted that there will probably be another round of discussion before the criteria are finalized.

The evaluation criteria has been updated to include a “coarse screening” approach and a “fine screening” approach. BRPC Staff provided a handout illustrating the quadrant methodology used for the “coarse screening.” “Impacts on existing highway businesses” were added to the list of Business and Economic Development Impacts to account for impacts to the “travel services” including motels, restaurants and gas stations along the turnpike. “Impacts to Areas of Critical Environmental Concern” were added to the list of Environmental Impacts. “Effect on Transit Operations” was also added, this criterion will evaluate the effect on through travel time for buses or the functionality of the street to accommodate buses. No other significant changes were made to the evaluation criteria.

Ms. Church commented that an “origin-destination” analysis would be needed if an accurate determination of (1) the side street truck volume, (2) the downtown circulation of local truck traffic and (3) how many trucks are actually local to Lee proved necessary.

Mr. LaBelle described the experience of truckers trying to make a turn from Main onto Park or from Center and Main and suggested that traffic lights would help. He also suggested a traffic light going west on Route 102 from Route 20. Mr. Karns took these comments into consideration for the TSM alternative or the alternative involving the installation of traffic light(s). A traffic signal would adversely affect the level of service of the main road, but as Mr. LaBelle was describing, a traffic signal would improve the level of service (involving truck traffic) coming from the side streets. Mr. LaBelle also suggested looking at other areas with similar truck traffic issues, such as Corning, NY, to get a sense of what works and what doesn't.

There was a brief discussion on how to identify “cohesive neighborhoods.” BRPC has asked the communities to help identify these areas and will follow up on this.

4. Mapping available subsequent to November 6th Working Group Meeting:

- a. **Land Use** There was some discussion about new developments that have been built since the land use inventory was done. For example, Mr. Shippey noted the new housing developments along the southern section of West Road. Mr. Karns suggested meeting with local officials to identify any development updates. BRPC also provided mapping of the industrial and commercial centers through out the county.
- b. **Historic Resources** The maps include the properties that have official historic status, including local and national historic districts, and properties included in the most recent state and national historic registers.
- c. **Conservation Assessment and Prioritization System (CAPS)** There was some discussion concerning the CAPS maps and what these maps add to the environmental constraints analysis. From the maps, it appears there is not much square footage covered in the CAPS that is not already covered by the constraints identified by BRPC. It was determined that this discussion would be carried over to the next working group meeting, due to the absence of Bryan Emmett from BNRC.

5. In-depth Identification of Alternatives

Mr. Karns briefly described each of the following alternatives.

1. Install traffic lights at Park/Main and at Center/Main; possibly eliminate or configure parking on Main Street; intersection modifications (Transportation Systems Management)
2. One-way pairs – High Street/Main Street or Main Street/Canal Street
3. Bypass on west side of River – from Park Street to Laurel Street
4. West Road MassPike interchange, with widened West Road north to Rte. 7
5. Extension of West Road MassPike interchange to Rte. 102
6. Rte. 7 MassPike interchange (Where MassPike crosses Rte. 7)
7. Bypass east side of Lee, along powerline right-of-way, to Lenoxdale or to Rte. 7/20
8. Becket/Otis/Blandford MassPike interchange – Rte.20; Algeria Road; or Chester Road
9. Full Interchange at MassPike Exit 1

The group reviewed the alternatives map. The majority of the discussion among the Working Group was focused on the following four alternatives.

1) Quarry Road: Mr. LaBelle suggested extending Quarry Road through the Quarry Hill Industrial Park to join with Route 7 on the west side of Lee right before it crosses into the Town of Stockbridge.

2) Canal Street: Mr. Gordon suggested extending Canal Street and making a one way pair with the west side of Main Street. Mr. LaBelle also suggested using the west side of the railroad tracks but that would create the same problem with turns that currently exists at Main and Park. He agreed that using Canal Street is a good idea, but trucks would still face the grade of Laurel Hill. Mr. Gordon also agreed that the Canal Street and Main Street one way pair would be a good alternative to consider because it wouldn't be too much to extend Canal Street and would provide long term benefits if Lee continues to develop.

3) East Street: The group agreed that the East Street alternative should be considered at least through the coarse screening. The group agreed that the solution should be kept within the Town of Lee's boundaries.

4) Algerie Road Off Ramp: Mr. LaBelle suggested that if an off ramp at Algeria Road was created, it could have advisory signage to discourage trucks from using Bonnie Rigg Road. Mr. Gorden agreed that an exit into Becket that was only for cars would be more easily accepted by Becket than if Becket received all the truck traffic. Ms. Church noted that this would not reduce the truck traffic in Lee. This led to a reinforcement of the need to perform an origin-destination study for the truck traffic.

6. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting will be held on February 26th at 3:30 pm at the Lee Library. By February BRPC hopes to finalize the criteria and start going through the coarse screening.