

DRAFT ONLY – NOT APPROVED OR FINAL
Rte. 1 North Advisory Committee
Meeting Notes – MDOT Traffic Engineer meeting with Committee
Tuesday, August 16, 2016
Washington Street Conference Room – Camden, Maine

WHO:

Members Present: Richard Bernhard, Nancy Caudle-Johnson, Bob Falciani, Tony Grassi, Jane LaFleur, Sasha Laurita, Geoff Scott, Jenny Simon

Members excused: n/a

Select Board Liaisons: Don White, Leonard Lookner

Staff: Pat Finnegan

Guests/Others: Steve Landry, MDOT Traffic engineer; David Miramant, Maine State Representative; Deb Dodge, 12 members of public, mostly Route One project abutters (names not noted)

MEETING PURPOSE: discuss how speed limits are factored and set since speed limit is one of the major factors driving this design

COMMENTS FROM PUBLIC: Public commentary reiterated previous opposition to this project with words like “vehemently opposed”.

KEY THINGS DISCUSSED 50 mph noted as a crossover number for design. Committee asked of Landry what can we do to lower speed limit in this isolated area of Route One where the speed set is in stark contrast to all other areas of Route 1 along this stretch of Midcoast (roughly from Thomaston on up past Lincolnville). This area of more vacant raw rural land is now more heavily populated with residences.

Landry offered up a few approaches. First, the Town of Camden could request a speed zone study as they did for the 2006 High Street project. At that time a seasonal speed limit was created with a special deal between the town and MDOT.

Second, if this project is causing a hardship, request a design exception. This way we could keep the speed at 50mph without a speed study but allow design exceptions for areas without accident history. This would allow us to have design standards to a slower speed that would protect trees and preserve historical landscape features, and possibly allow the installation of traffic calming measures, like angled curbs, esplanades, islands, etc.

Third approach could be a combination of these two things.

MDOT uses nine criteria to factor the speed limit. 1) what do the geometrics of the road allow for speed, 2) count the number of public and private access points 3) count the number of intersections, 4) count number of roadside businesses 5) conduct test run for speed comfort 6) radar speed test of 100 free flowing vehicles 7) count total number of accidents 8) count total number of accidents that happen at driveways 9) ?

Criteria data is plotted and speed set at the 85th percentile at which most vehicles travel. You don't post higher than what you have so if it comes in at 44 mph the speed would post at 40.

Landry suggested the introduction of traffic calming measures such as an island, curbs and shoulders to make roadway appear more meandering rather than a wide straight path. The

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Bar Harbor/Route 3 cross section is mentioned as an example of traffic calming collaboration resulting from MDOT listening to the needs of the town.

Landry defined his use of the term “hardship” in several ways: being of great financial cost to the state; rendering a property useless; destroying the character of the community.

Speed study timing will depend on MDOT staff availability. It will be conducted outside of congested hours. Ideally, Landry thinks Lincolnville should be part of the speed study request (the 50mph zone involves 2 miles of Lincolnville and 1.5 miles of Camden).

Questions and concerns raised by committee:

Speed limit increases from 40 to 50 mph less than a 1/4 mile before traffic hits a curving 8% downgrade. This does not make sense, particularly during winter conditions.

How do you get into your analysis all the residences that come off of one Rt. One abutting driveway/road?

The quality of our residential community and our property values don't seem to be addressed within the criteria used to set speed.

This project in the Camden Hills, arguably the most scenic piece of the longest north-south road in the United States. (Route One is 2,369 miles and runs from Fort Kent, Maine, at the Canada-US border down to Key West, Florida.) Taking dips and hills out of the roadway to meet someone's idea of an engineering standard isn't preserving the natural scenic character—these are the rolling hills of Camden Hills – and meets design exception.

Natural environment includes the rolling hills and trees that make the scenic character of the town.

Roads shouldn't be designed for cars only. We shouldn't let this go forward if it doesn't reflect what our community wants.

This is a special piece of road and if its destroyed its forever.

This road encourages commerce and tourism. Our legacy should be to protect this stretch. We could be throwing away our heritage.

Has MDOT ever reduced the speed limit without a study? Landry answered, “No.”

Large existing shade trees are essential to our town. Their protection and preservation is required by our Town Comprehensive Plan. So is the preservation of our scenic corridors and rural beauty. These protections are not optional. These zones are not separate but overlay zones. These protections also bring us back to the issue of speed.

Could some of the areas where the double yellow line breaks to allow passing be closed since they break in front of lodging businesses where tourists, unfamiliar with the road, turn in and out? Landry responded that it is necessary to provide breaks to allow passing but the distance standards have changed and are stricter (sight lines need to be for a minimum of 400 feet) so it could be looked at again. Since newer standards emerged some passing areas have since

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been closed. Businesses could cause a line closing if there are a lot of people coming in and out.

Why is the road in the Rockport – Rockland stretch so wide and yet only posted at 45? This road was built to older, wider standards set in the 90s that have since changed. MDOT believes in the new standard of 11 foot travel lanes with a 5 foot shoulder.

That this most beautiful corridor that is only a three mile stretch should have the fastest speed limit doesn't make sense. The high speed and the proposed design changes presents a hardship to this community as it drastically and negatively impacts our quality of life and our economy which depends on the beauty of the area to draw tourists.

Reducing the limit puts us in line with the rest of the area – we wouldn't be the only stretch in under 50 (including Lincolnville we are the only stretch above 45). Reducing speed would then make us like all the other roads in the area MDOT has designed. This corridor connects three main historic jewels of the area: Lincolnville Beach, Camden Hills and its state park and Camden's downtown and harbor district. We want and need to get this road right the first time. We can't put the trees back.

Going forward the committee will make its recommendations to the Town Board and the Town will contact Landry. Design exceptions will go through Ernie Martin.

Landry asked about the committee's timing for moving forward. The committee would make a decision about the speed study for the Town Select Board to discuss at their upcoming August 23, 2016 meeting. Landry thought a speed study could be set as early as midSeptember. Landry invited the committee chair to be present at the study.

Martin sites Right of Way at 66 feet. Some of the proposed construction is out of the ROW.

Committee Purpose:

A committee set up for the purpose of working with the Maine DOT to insure that any reconstruction of Route 1 in the Town of Camden be designed and built to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan of the Town and the special scenic character of the road and to minimize the environmental impact on the neighboring properties while improving the safety and maintenance of the highway, keeping in mind safe vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian access.