

Kelley's Corner Steering Committee

Public Forum 13 August 2018

On 13 August 2018, members of the Kelley's corner Steering Committee held a public forum in Room 204 of the Acton Town Hall to bring people up to date on the infrastructure improvement project. The specific purpose of this meeting was to present the responses that the town and Greenman-Pedersen (GPI) received from MassDOT on the 25% plan submitted earlier this year.

Attendees

Kelley's Corner Steering Committee (KCSC)

- Andy Brockway
- Jon Benson
- Larry Kenah
- Peter Darlow

Planning Department

- Kristen Guichard

Town of Acton

- John Mangiaratti

Board of Selectmen

- Peter Berry

Greenman-Pedersen, Inc

- Lindsey Barbee

Others

There were approximately 35 people in the room including those already listed. Attendees included the following people.

- Chris Starr, property owner, Kelley's Corner
- Terra Friedrichs
- Danny Factor, Green Acton
- Nancy Tavernier
- Lauren Morton
- Franny Osman

There were a few other people from Green Acton at the meeting but we did not create a list of attendees and so their names are not included in these notes.

Meeting Summary

The meeting was divided into two parts. After a brief introduction by Andy Brockway, Lindsey Barbee from GPI presented some key responses from MassDOT to the 25% plan. There was some interaction with the audience during this part of the meeting.

The second part of the meeting consisted of questions from the audience.

Key Points

During the meeting, some important points were raised about the overall Kelley's Corner Improvement Project.

- Based on next steps in responding to MassDOT's responses and the time required to complete each step, it now looks like the public hearing on the 25% plan will not take place until early next year (2019).
- There will be no Kelley's Corner articles presented at Fall 2018 Town Meeting.

MassDOT Responses

On 6 August 2018, Kristen Guichard sent the MassDOT responses to the 25% plan to the committee. The responses were delivered as a spreadsheet containing eighteen (18) tabs and a PDF document that contained the same information in sixty (60) pages.

Andy Brockway selected key responses from MassDOT that he thought important to bring to the attention of the committee. These responses fit onto two pages that were distributed to everyone who attended the meeting. (These two pages are sent as a separate attachment to the email that contains these notes.)

It is not the purpose of these notes to reproduce the MassDOT responses that appear in either the large documents or the two-page handout. The handout, in particular, should be considered an extension of these notes. These notes instead will expand on the text in the MassDOT responses.

Someone pointed out an ambiguity in some of the responses. In some cases, MassDOT was reacting to the overall plan. In other cases, they were focusing on proposed changes to Mass Ave (aka Route 111). Because Route 111 is a state highway, MassDOT has overall responsibility for the Route 111 changes.

Clarification ("district")

The word "district" appears throughout the responses. This word refers to District 3. Acton is overseen by this section of MassDOT and is the one responsible for Kelley's Corner.

The rest of this section includes key points that were raised about each of the ten discussion areas.

Charter Road Intersection and Signal

"District does not support"

Both GPI and KCSC felt that MassDOT applied some rigid threshold and ignored the safety improvements that this signal would bring to the project.

There was one question that was raised during the discussion that we (KCSC) need to answer.

If a signal is added at the intersection of Charter Road and Route 111, why does Charter Road need to be moved fifty feet or so to the west, more or less aligned with the current Kmart driveway?

Andy pointed out that the intersection would be safer due to the increased line of sight.

Signal at Main Street and Community Lane

“District does not support”

The response “not installed to process only right turns” seems to ignore the left hand turn from Route 27 southbound onto Community Lane. The committee would like further explanation about the elimination of this signal.

Raised Landscape Islands

MassDOT wants to replace raised medians with yellow lines painted on pavement.

Brick

For a variety of reasons, MassDOT is not a big fan of brick crosswalks. Both cost and behavior over several summer/winter cycles were concerns. We heard two comments in support of MassDOT’s position from the audience.

- People from Committee on Disabilities said that brick is difficult to negotiate for people in wheel chairs.
- Chris Starr mentioned that some of his developer colleagues who chose either brick or cobblestone regretted their decisions. (He did not say why.)

Lighting

MassDOT pointed out that they do not pay for lighting. The cost of lighting needs to be assumed by the town.

Widening/Retaining Walls

Utilities

Additional work is required to map out the underground utilities in all of the affected areas.

Abutter Impacts

MassDOT asked whether abutters have been notified about the impact of changes to their properties. As far as we know, this has happened but we and GPI need to clarify the contacts in our response to MassDOT.

Chris Starr asked why the impact on his property did not make the “top ten” list that was discussed at the meeting. Andy explained that this item should have been included in the presentation but was omitted by mistake.

Hosmer House

The MassDOT response to Hosmer House went into a lot of detail along the lines of “Have we considered this?” and “Have we considered that?” We have indeed explored some of the proposed

changes but it looks like we have more work to do on the Hosmer House front. It was pointed out that the town has explored seven alternatives.

We learned that AHC and AHS have engaged with a separate engineering firm that is working with GPI.

Bike Boxes

MassDOT does not want to incorporate bike boxes in the design, suggesting that bike boxes present a “false sense of security”.

Next Steps

In addition to the sliding target date for the MassDOT public forum, there were questions about what might happen if we do not make the FY22 TIF.

Questions and Comments from Audience

It was approximately 9:00 when we opened the meeting to general questions.

Trees

Representatives from Green Acton focused on trees, specifically on those trees that would be replaced as a result of implementing either the existing 25% plan or several modified versions of the same plan. All of the conversation about trees was about Mass Ave west of the intersection with Route 27 (school building, tennis courts, and junior high school on one side of the street and Verizon, Baker Oil, and the Kmart parking lot on the other side).

There is little opportunity to move the overall roadway to the south (closer to Verizon and Baker Oil). Between requirements for sidewalks and bike lanes and the existing slope between the roadway and the sidewalk on the north side of the roadway, any implementation of any plan will cause the removal of several trees on that side of the street. Andy and Lindsey tried to make this point several times during this discussion.

In addition, the center line of the roadway (Route 111) cannot shift to the south because it would then not align with the centerline of the same roadway on the other (east) side of Route 27.

Finally, the left turn lane on Route 111 eastbound does not cause the roadway to shift to the north and therefore does not affect the tree line on the north side of the road. Lindsey explained that even without the second left turn lane, the trees would be removed.

Route 27 Realignment

There was a brief discussion about moving Route 27 south of Mass Ave to the west to reduce the impact of the project on the Bueno y Sano parking lot. The town and GPI have responded that movement of the roadway south of Mass Ave has impacts on the alignment of the roadway north of Mass Ave. GPI’s findings contend that any significant shift in Route 27 to the west would create an unsafe condition.

Requests

Danny Factor from Green Acton asked that KCSC provide written responses to its earlier letter to the committee.

As noted in the minutes from the previous meeting (15 May 2018), this letter can be found at

http://doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/Get/Document-65948/2018-05-17%20Public%20Statement%20About%20Kelley_s%20Corner%20Infrastructure%20Project.pdf

Parting Thoughts

John Mangiaratti pointed out that the town and town staff act as resources to KCSC and other interested parties.

Give and Take

Andy Brockway pointed out that the notion of “give and take”, words that we heard several times during this meeting and earlier, involve give and take on both sides of the argument.

Improve Traffic Flow

We heard several times that traffic improvement seems like the committee’s only goal for this project. It was noted that traffic improvement is one of the several goals of the Kelley’s Corner initiative.

Next Steps

Lindsey and her colleagues at GPI will organize responses to each item in the MassDOT response.

There is no next meeting scheduled for Kelley’s Corner Steering Committee.

There will be no articles related to Kelley’s Corner at Fall 2018 Town Meeting.

In Closing

This meeting adjourned at 9:45 pm.

These meeting notes were recorded by Lawrence J Kenah.

- Please verify that the new driveway re-alignment and proposed driveway opening locations allows for the maneuverability of fuel delivery trucks for the Sunoco Gas Station.
- Hosmer House Impacts
 - The Acton Historical Commission (AHC) and Acton Historical Society (AHS) have each submitted two letters to the Massachusetts Historical Commission expressing their opposition to the alterations to the NR-listed Hosmer House at 300 Main Street. As designed, the project will have an Adverse Effect on the property. This will become a problem under 4(f) since MassDOT will need to prove there are 'no feasible and prudent alternatives'. Has the Designer explored all options to avoid impacts to the historic property including do nothing? They need to look into reducing and/or eliminating the size of the traffic island in front of the property, and if it is not prudent/feasible explain why it is not possible. They also need to look into reducing the width of the sidewalks, travel lanes/shoulders, eliminating the decorative brick edging on the sidewalk across the street, taking more land from the shopping plaza across the street, etc. (The Designer needs to explain why these types of options are not prudent/feasible.) It is important for the Designer to look into completely avoiding all impacts to the historic property under 4(f). If it is not possible, then MassDOT is going to have to prove there are 'no feasible and prudent' alternatives.
- Bike Boxes / Green Pavement Markings
 - The District has concerns with the false sense of security for cyclists with the bike box. We also have concerns with the maintenance of green pavement markings. Please remove the bike boxes and green pavement markings from roadways under state jurisdiction.