



HARVARD TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES

JULY 15, 2021

Gabriel Medianis called the meeting to order at 7:30pm virtually in accordance with the Governor's Executive Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, under M.G.L. Chapter 40A and Code of the Town of Harvard Chapter 125

Members Present: Stacia Donahue, Bruce Leicher, Beth Williams, Gabriel Medjanis, Jim Lee, Rene Turnheim, Kara Minar

Others Present: Christopher Ryan (Director of Community and Economic Development); Tim Kilhart (DPW), Lori Aho (TEC), Jon Rockwell (TEC), Mike Molinaro, Larry/Pam Doe, Rebecca Kelly

Special Meeting to review the 25% design review comments from MassDOT to TEC.

Summary

We are at the 25% design phase with review by MassDOT ongoing. This phase is likely going to last until mid-August. When this phase is done, there will be a 25% design review meeting for the public sponsored by MassDOT.

Review of specific comments

The TAC asked about what possible traffic calming measures could be used for this project. TEC noted that rumble strips are being proposed along the center of Ayer Road as part of 25% design. Due to Ayer Road's size, many other more extreme traffic calming measures are not allowed or will require land acquisitions to get more width.

Bruce Leicher noted that a project currently under construction in Boxboro has 'road diet' size to limit width. BL asked if this was something we review for Harvard. TEC noted that as of 2020 MassDOT has revised their requirements and 11' lanes and 4' shoulders was the narrowest that TEC felt like they could convince MassDOT to allow. BL noted that our local Senator would be willing to step in and help if we need to push back with MassDOT to get them to consider a narrower shoulder. TEC noted that the width currently proposed is not that much wider than the existing and with the volume of truck traffic counted on 111, having it be narrower was not recommended by TEC.

Kara Minar echoed Bruce's concern that more needs to be done to slow or reduce the truck traffic and provide traffic calming measures to slow traffic in general. Bruce asked if this was TAC's job or Select Board's job to push on the design, but no clear answer was given.

A few members noted that when Devens was first developed for commercial use, there was an understanding that truck traffic would use Jackson Road, however, no signage exists today to indicate this. Several agreed that Jackson Road was better for trucks. TEC noted there is no way to restrict truck traffic on Ayer Road as it's considered a Major Arterial roadway as part of the Highway Transportation System.

Bruce Leicher noted that MassDOT had concerns in their review comments to TEC about the removal of habitat and trees in the design. BL wanted to know if planting alternatives could be used in lieu of grass. TEC noted that when meeting with MassDOT they are going to propose alternate plantings.

Jim Lee noted that having the plans posted for public review would be helpful. The technical plans might be too much for the general public, so he suggested that cleaner, easier to read set for general use. Jim Lee would like to have more people be able to have more information. He feels this will help alleviate some of the concerns that the public has since they will then have a better understanding of the project.

Kara Minar expressed concern about utility poles as we've had projects in Town that ended with utility poles right in the middle of the sidewalk. TEC noted that since it's a Federally funded project it must abide by Federal standards which required a 2' off set from the shared use path (SUP). The utility will be involved before the 25% is completed so that the coordination and relocation of the utility poles is coordinated early in the process. Chris Ryan asked if utilities could go underground. TEC said that it likely wouldn't happen because the cost/benefit for the utility just isn't there in most cases.

Tim Kilhart noted that we're currently slated for funding in 2026. This is later than he would have hoped. Tim tried to get the project slotted into 2024, but other towns are further along in the design of their projects to are ahead of us in line. There's a possibility that a Leominster project slated for 2024 could get delayed and if that happens, Harvard's TIP could possibly be bumped up in the list.

Doe Orchards expressed concerns about disruption to their business during the construction phase. TEC noted that MassDOT works very hard to keep access to all businesses during the construction. TEC noted that they hoped the construction of the SUP will actually help to increase businesses to Doe Orchards once the project is completed.

Several attendees had concerns about the curve and entrances to homes and businesses in the Myrick Lane area. TEC noted that consideration will be given to management of traffic in the Myrick Lane and Doe Orchards entrances with respect to the curve in that area. TEC noted that the road will be shifted 3' over to help ease the tight curve that currently exists in that area.

Rebecca Kelly noted that she prefers the wider road and the wider gap between the road and the SUP. Feels that a better solution for speeding would be more enforcement of the speed limit instead of reducing the width of the road and shoulder. Kara Minar noted that the Police don't have the staff necessary to monitor more frequently and that the Select Board is looking into possible ticket cameras and a Town Wide speed limit.

Adjournment:

Kara Minar motioned to adjourn. Beth Williams seconded. Meeting adjourned at 8:45pm.

Next meeting will be September 1.

Signed: Stacia Donahue
Stacia Donahue, Clerk