

Portland – South Portland Smart Corridor Plan
South Portland Public Input Meeting
Summary Notes and Public Comments

September 20, 2017, Southern Maine Community College, SEA Center

Introduction

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

Presentation by Ned Codd, WSP USA Consultant Team Project Manager

- Overview of the Study
 - Bug Light Park all the way to Morrill’s Corner
 - The corridor serves as a connector but also as a main street for several neighborhoods
 - We are focusing on a few key segments
 - Forest Avenue from Morrill’s Corner to Woodfords Corner
 - Forest Avenue from Woodfords Corner to Deering Oaks Park
 - Broadway in South Portland, from Mill Creek to Bug Light Park and Southern Maine Community College
 - In addition to providing feedback tonight you can also provide feedback at MaineSmartCorridor.com
 - Goals
 - Encourage high quality development
 - Improve safety in all modes
 - Improve vehicle access and traffic congestion
 - Improve multi-modal 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
 - Corridor Improvement Objectives
 - Safety
 - Target high-crash locations for improvements
 - Implement safety counter-measures
 - Traffic
 - Identify and improve traffic bottlenecks

- Reconfigure roadways and intersections to improve access for all modes
 - Public Transit
 - Improving operations through signal improvements and giving buses priority in traffic
 - Provide enhanced amenities – improved shelters, transfer hubs, benches, traveler info
 - Pedestrian
 - Improve crossings – provide new or improved crosswalks to reduce gaps in crossing opportunities
 - Provide better pedestrian access at intersections
 - Bicycle
 - Extending the network
 - Fill system gaps and obstacles
- As we go through the presentation and the review of alternatives, please consider the following questions for the discussion to follow:
 - What are your priorities for improving the corridor?
 - What ideas or alternatives do you like?
 - What ideas or alternatives do you not like, or would you change?
 - What other ideas or suggestions would you make?

Broadway Corridor

- Current Conditions
 - Traffic operations
 - The heaviest traffic congestion is in the Mill Creek segment of the corridor
 - Traffic volumes are high, and several intersections operate with high levels of congestion and delay
 - Corridor generally more congested in the afternoon peak period
 - Congestion is worst at Broadway/Waterman Drive
 - Congestion is much less at the Southern Maine Community College (SMCC) end of Broadway – the traffic lessens but the road narrows
 - Transit
 - South Portland Bus serves the corridor
 - Route 21 is a loop route that serves Broadway inbound toward Mill Creek, downtown Portland
 - Pedestrian
 - There are several pedestrian crossings on Broadway – some are signal-protected (e.g. at Mussey Street), have rapid rectangular

- flashing beacons (RRFB, e.g. at Preble Street), or have flush medians to provide some refuge for pedestrians (e.g. at Pine Street)
 - There are also some wide gaps between pedestrian crossings
 - Bicycle
 - There are no bike lanes in Mill Creek – heavy congestion and queuing in Mill Creek makes Broadway difficult for bicycle access
 - There are bicycle lanes on Broadway east of Cottage Street, but there is a gap in the network between Sawyer Street and
 - South Portland Greenbelt Trail provides good bicycle connections parallel to Broadway and through Mill Creek
 - Away from main Broadway corridor
 - Fairly narrow (generally 8’ wide)
 - Access to Casco Bay Bridge and Portland via bike lanes on bridge or separated walkway on east side of bridge
 - Very high traffic speeds on bridge
 - Bicycle transitions on the ramps to the bridge are not that great

Improvements Alternatives Under Consideration

- Transit alternatives
 - Transit Signal Priority
 - A system where the bus communicates with the traffic signal, which can extend green time to let a bus get through rather than waiting for next cycle
 - Has greatest benefit in congested locations such as Mill Creek intersections
 - Queue jump was considered but we haven’t identified any opportunities for this in the South Portland section of the corridor
 - Enables the bus to get in front of other traffic
- Pedestrian access
 - Mill Creek intersections
 - Wide with high traffic volumes and congestion
 - Signalized, with signal protection for most crossings
 - Eastern Broadway past Mill Creek
 - In most locations, Broadway is very wide
 - Some crossings with signals, flush medians, or RRFBs
 - Several wide gaps with no marked crossings or no enhanced safety measures

- Destinations along Broadway corridor that would benefit from pedestrian improvements across Broadway include Ferry Village neighborhood, South Portland Boys and Girls Club, Small Elementary School
 - Key destinations that call for crosswalk improvements
 - Sawyer Street – major intersection with marked crosswalk, could benefit from RRFB
 - Stanford Street – along connection between Small Elementary School and South Portland Boys and Girls Club, no marked crosswalk
 - We are considering upgrading the cross walks and provide RRFB protection at Sawyer and Stanford Street
- Traffic and intersection alternatives
 - Congestion is worst at Mill Creek intersections: Broadway at Waterman Drive, Ocean Street, and Cottage Street
 - The City of South Portland is evaluating plans to implement traffic and pedestrian crossing improvements in Mill Creek, including a proposal to at Broadway and Ocean Street to signalize the existing uncontrolled right turn from Broadway outbound to Cottage Street southbound – need to evaluate impacts of that
 - Broadway/Sawyer Street
 - Have heard about the neighborhood’s many concerns at this location – heavy Broadway traffic, speeding, difficulty for Sawyer Street traffic and pedestrians crossing Broadway
 - Desire among some in neighborhood for installation of traffic signal, which requires that traffic volumes and other parameters meet federally defined thresholds (aka “traffic signal warrants”)
 - Took all day traffic counts, reviewed traffic signal warrants
 - Intersection still does not meet any traffic signal warrants
 - Have also investigated potential for roundabout – potential advantages
 - Reduce traffic congestion for Sawyer Street traffic
 - Slow Broadway traffic
 - Create gaps
 - Reduce conflicts (all movements become “right turns” into roundabout)
 - Improve safety
 - Slow traffic, reduce crash severity
 - Improve pedestrian and bicycle access
 - Reduce approaches to only one lane (don’t need turn lanes)

- Splitter islands at approaches provide median refuge for pedestrians (can cross just one lane at a time)
 - By eliminating need for turn lanes, could provide width for bike lanes on Broadway east of Sawyer Street
- Potential roundabout disadvantages
 - Depending on design, may require more property
 - Though traffic slows at roundabouts, it is not required to stop as it would be at red traffic signal – could present challenges for pedestrian crossing
- Broadway/Breakwater Drive/Pickett Drive
 - Existing all-way stop generally functions adequately – some congestion during morning and evening class-time traffic rush for SMCC
 - Potential for smaller roundabout – would improve traffic capacity and operations, have similar advantages and disadvantages above
- Development Assumptions
 - Worked with City of South Portland to make development forecasts for Broadway corridor, for Cacoulidis property, neighborhood centers at Sawyer Street and Mussey Street, and in Knightville
 - Depending on the actual scale of development and the access routes/design, these impacts could worsen levels of service for the corridor, including the intersections of Broadway/Cottage Street and Broadway/Sawyer
- These are improvement options for public feedback
 - We have not yet proposed any actual recommendations
 - We expect to use the feedback we receive tonight to for our recommendations in collaboration with the City of South Portland, PACTS, and MaineDOT

See meeting presentation for further detail on issues and alternatives.

Public Comments and Questions

- If the goal is to get people out of their cars, bus improvements are imperative
 - Buses could be more on time
 - Express bus service down Broadway
 - Other ideas being considered include
 - Extending the Huskey Line from downtown Portland to SMCC
 - Using TIF funds to increase bus service
 - A two way loop
- There are actually some shelters at the bus stops on Broadway

- On Casco Bay Bridge there is a separated path (shared with pedestrians) that makes the experience a “level of traffic stress” (LTS) 1 rather than a 4 (for the bike lanes, since they are directly adjacent to high-speed traffic)
- To improve cycling on the Casco Bay Bridge, make a route that bypasses the Waterman Drive intersection
- Make the path across the bridge just 6 inches wider
 - It needs to be wide enough for pedestrians, bicycles, and motorized wheelchairs
- Move the bollards outside the bike lane and remove the sidewalk barrier and thus make it a multi-use path
- Consider a bike lane on Waterman Drive – there is a lot of room there
- The greenbelt is a unique resource – it could be improved and better used
 - Widen it for dedicated pedestrian and bicycle lanes
 - Improve connections to the greenbelt, especially to the bridge
- Traffic signal at Sawyer and Broadway is needed
 - This is a much safer solution than a roundabout
 - It might appear that Sawyer and Broadway doesn’t need a traffic light, but that’s because people avoid that intersection and so the traffic counts are artificially low
- Encourage student use of the buses by making them pay a high fee for parking at SMCC and give them free access to the bus
- A shuttle between USM and SMCC is not justified
- Have an express bus service down Broadway
 - Students and workers don’t have time to sit on the bus so long
 - The express bus doesn’t need to be full size buses
- Have a ferry service across to Portland from Sawyer Street
- We need to improve public transportation
 - We need to think outside the box about this – perhaps mini-shuttles or something
- We used to make much more use of public transportation: trolleys
- Getting rid of right hand turns seems like a really easy way to relieve congestion
- Look at adaptive signal control for pedestrian crossings
- Roundabouts are good because they keep traffic moving and they don’t require idling cars
- Significant support for a roundabout at Sawyer Street
- Significant opposition to a roundabout at Sawyer Street
 - The geometry of Sawyer does not argue against a roundabout. It actually supports the proposal for a roundabout
- A traffic signal IS warranted at Sawyer based on eight specific criteria
- Without a traffic signal at Broadway and Sawyer, people avoid that intersection
- The missing bike lane on Broadway is ridiculous

- Sharrows should be moved to the side of the travel lane
- All sharrows need to be maintained
- Clarified that traffic counts at Sawyer were taken on a Thursday in early May on a day when school was in session
 - Best to take traffic counts in the last day in January when the most students are attending classes at SMCC
- Dubious that a roundabout would fit at Breakwater and Broadway
- Move the no parking sign at Broadway and Breakwater
- SMCC faculty could also be encouraged to take the bus –currently, faculty get to park for free on campus
- On or near Mussey Street there is a sign that allows parking in the bike lane