



Wellington Circle Study Working Group Meeting #6
Thursday, March 2, 2023, 1:00 – 2:30 PM
Held Virtually via Zoom

Meeting Summary

On March 2, 2023, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) conducted the sixth Working Group meeting for the Wellington Circle Study. At this meeting, the Study team reviewed recommendations based on the results of the alternatives evaluation process and solicited feedback. The meeting was also open to members of the public, who were given the chance to share comments and questions at the end of the meeting after the Working Group discussion.

Meeting Notes

1. *Welcome and Ground Rules by Makaela Niles, MassDOT Project Manager*

Attendees are welcomed to the meeting and are informed that the meeting is being recorded. Makaela Niles (MassDOT) explains the Ground Rules for the meeting, including how Working Group members and the public can participate. Members of the public are made aware they can contact Sara Stoja (HNTB) if they require technical assistance. Makaela reviews the agenda for the Working Group meeting.

2. *Study Overview, Project Goals, and Objectives & Study Process by Makaela Niles, MassDOT Project Manager*

Makaela provides a background of the Study, its goals, and the process. She describes that this conceptual planning Study will be used to evaluate existing and future multimodal transportation conditions. The Study aims to redesign Wellington Circle to provide better connectivity and multimodal mobility through the City of Medford and the surrounding region. A draft report with the short-, medium-, and long-term recommendations will be developed and shared for public comment before being finalized in a final report.

- Study Goals: Makaela reviews the Study goals which include the following:
 - Improve safety, mobility/access, and connectivity for all transportation modes and users in the Wellington Circle area
 - Improve quality of life for residents in the Wellington Circle area
 - Improve local and regional connectivity to support businesses and future development

- Study Process: Makaela reviews the steps of the Study process, which build upon each other. This meeting will cover #5: recommendations. The steps of the Study process include:
 1. Public involvement plan, Study area, goals and objectives, evaluation criteria
 2. Existing conditions, future no-build conditions, evaluation of issues and opportunities
 3. Alternatives development
 4. Alternative analysis
 5. Recommendations (this is the main step being discussed during the meeting)
 6. Final report

3. *Alternatives Review by Gary McNaughton, McMahon Associates (Project Consultant)*

Gary provides an overview of the Short/Medium-Term Alternatives and At-Grade Alternatives.

- Short-/Medium-Term Alternative (Option A):
 - Cost: \$6.2M
 - This option eliminates right turn channelization, relocates the Middlesex Avenue connection to open the area north of the parkway, and prohibits eastbound left turns, relocating these to occur in the U-turn to the south.
 - Impacts:
 - Minor improvements to bicycle and pedestrian access and connectivity
 - Increases in open space
 - Degrades right turn operations – the elimination of separated right turns results in less flexibility when operating the signals
- Short-/Medium-Term Alternative (Option B):
 - Cost: \$6.2M
 - This option maintains channelized eastbound (EB) and westbound (WB) turns to accommodate right turn volumes. Further, this option signals right turn lane crosswalks.
 - Impacts:
 - Small improvements to bicycle and pedestrian access and connectivity
 - Increases open space
- Long-Term At-Grade Alternative: Dual Quadrant – Square Concept
 - Cost: \$36.7M
 - Features dual quadrant roadways allowing for connections to and from the east. To connect between Fellsway south of the Parkway and Middlesex Avenue, vehicles would need to use the connector roadway in line with 9th Street. As part of this alternative, eastbound left turns are prohibited, and could occur at Commercial Street to access Fellsway north of the Parkway. This concept lacks a crosswalk on the east side of the quadrant roadway & Revere Beach Parkway intersection due to vehicle volumes.
 - Benefits:
 - Simplifies overall intersection geometry
 - Creates open spaces for multimodal facilities and greenery
 - Provides mostly protected, single-phase crossings for pedestrians

- Enables future separated bicycle connections throughout Circle, to Fellsway and Route 16
 - Drawbacks:
 - Overall geometry maintains high number of vehicle lanes
 - Requires additional signalized intersection at Middlesex Avenue at 9th Street
 - Concurrent or multiple-phase pedestrian crossings at a few locations
- Long Term At-Grade Alternative: Dual Quadrant – Triangle Concept
 - Cost: \$36.7M
 - Features dual quadrant roadway allowing for connections to and from the east. The north south connection is focused on connecting Fellsway north to Revere Beach Parkway. Fellsway through traffic would need to turn at the intersection on the northern point of the triangle. Eastbound left turns are still prohibited in this alternative and could occur at Commercial Street to access Fellsway north of the parkway. This concept also lacks a crosswalk on the east side of the quadrant roadway & Revere Beach Parkway intersection due to vehicle volumes.
 - Benefits:
 - Able to handle existing vehicle volumes
 - Creates open spaces for multimodal facilities and greenery
 - Enables future separated bicycle connections throughout Circle, to Fellsway and Route 16
 - Provides mostly protected, single-phase crossings for pedestrians
 - Drawbacks:
 - Overall geometry is slightly atypical and maintains high number of vehicle lanes
 - Concurrent or multiple-phase pedestrian crossings at a few locations
- Long- Term At-Grade Alternative: Dual Quadrant – Transit Enhanced Concept
 - Cost: \$38.3M
 - Built upon the Triangle concept as the primary bus routes travel along Fellsway, north of the Parkway
 - Features new, dedicated transit lanes in both directions north of the Circle with slightly wider sidewalks
 - Transit concept has been updated since the fifth Working Group meeting based on the Bus Network Redesign (BNRD) plan
 - Maintains the bus stops that exists today up to the northern part of the triangle
 - Benefits:
 - The northbound transit lanes could be extended along Fellsway, if desirable
 - Prioritizes and best serves bus routes along Fellsway to/from Wellington Station with dedicated bus lanes
 - Drawback:
 - Not practical to create an eastbound transit lane on Revere Beach Parkway due to number of turning conflicts
 - Larger roadway cross section to accommodate transit lanes, compared to the Square and Triangle concepts
- Long-Term At-Grade Alternative Option: Pedestrian Bridge
 - Cost: \$35.7M

- The evaluation of this bridge addresses the lack of a crosswalk to the east of the quadrant roadway/across Revere Beach Parkway.
 - Requires a long span and lengthy ramps to meet accessibility requirements and include stairs near the intersection.
 - The pedestrian bridge could be added to any of the Long-Term At-Grade Alternatives but requires an independent assessment.
- The current design is preliminary and needs further evaluation and design development if it were to advance into project development.
- Long-Term Grade-Separated Single Quadrant
 - Cost: \$176.9M
 - Separates the east-west roadway connection, as these were higher volumes than the north-south volumes.
 - While the south to east connection serves the heaviest volume, it does not offer an advantage over the east-west connection for grade-separation as it would have a more complex geometry and structural design.
 - An underpass option did not advance due to significant construction costs, utility impacts, and future flooding risk and operations.
 - Benefits:
 - Removes major movements from surface roadways, limiting the number of lanes required to handle existing volumes.
 - Does not serve the south to east connection but simplifies the at-grade roadway.
 - Drawbacks:
 - Surface roadways still require high number of lanes in some locations.
 - Bridge acts as a visual barrier, bisecting transit station from nearby residents and businesses.

4. *Evaluation & Recommendation by Natalie Press, McMahon Associates (Project Consultant)*

Natalie explains the evaluation criteria framework. The criteria are based on the Study goals presented previously. The framework is based on three questions 1) does this area benefit from the proposed changes, 2) is the change neutral, 3) is this area impacted? A summary of the alternatives analysis is given, and the Long-Term At-Grade Transit Enhanced alternative is selected as the recommended alternative. It provides benefits to all the evaluation criteria, except for vehicle operations, which are slightly worse due to the trade-offs for improved safety and multimodal access and mobility. This option has the same benefits as the other Long-Term At-Grade alternatives and has a measurable benefit to transit operations and access.

- Recommendation Summary – Key Elements
 - Dedicated transit lanes to accommodate MBTA bus routes 100, 108, and 134
 - Dedicated bus phase signals
 - Floating bus stops for additional space for waiting pedestrians and reduced conflicts between bus stops and separated bike lanes
- Recommendation Summary – Next Steps
 - To initiate project development, the following would need to occur:

- Completing survey
- Evaluating feasibility of crossing or pedestrian bridge option on Revere Beach Parkway
- Integrating bus lanes on Mystic Valley Parkway

Gary McNaughton (McMahon Associates) reviews the transit enhanced benefits and how they will impact connectivity.

- Transit Enhanced Benefits
 - Key benefits include:
 - Substantial transit travel time savings compared to other alternatives.
 - Better transit travel time quality of service (QOS) compared to other alternatives.
 - Affected Bus Routes
 - Placement of transit lanes in alternative based on existing routing – serves MBTA routes 100 and 108.
 - Capitalizes on future proposed routing through MBTA's Bus Network Redesign (BNRD) with relocation of Route 134 to Mystic Valley Parkway. Also supports BNRD proposal to increase frequency on routes 100, 108, and 134.
 - Roadway configuration of Transit Enhanced alternative would also provide more direct route for Routes 100/108 inbound to Wellington Station.
 - BNRD implementation starting Summer 2023 over several phases (e.g., optimization for signals, bus priority, etc.)
- Transit Enhanced Benefits – Transit Travel Time
 - Total bus travel time is reduced by approximately 25% from the Future No-Build 2040
 - Estimated savings in round trip transit time to and from Wellington Station is 171 seconds
 - No expected transit travel time savings for other alternatives
 - Travel time savings are most significant in the inbound direction towards Wellington Station, where buses make a left turn between Fellsway and Mystic Valley Parkway

5. *Draft Implementation Plan by Makaela Niles, MassDOT Project Manager*

Makaela reviews the MassDOT project development process. She explains the steps needed to start the design process and potential funding options.

The MassDOT project development process includes the following elements:

1. Project Need Identification
2. Planning
3. Project Initiation
4. Design, Environmental, and Right-of-Way (Design Process Starts)
5. Programming
6. Procurement
7. Construction

Potential funding sources include the following:

- Encore Section 61 Finding
 - Funding for concept design
- Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
 - Managed by the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)
- Federal Discretionary Funds (note: project eligibility and funding are subject to change)
 - Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grant Program
 - Carbon Reduction Program
 - Reconnecting Communities Program
 - Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) Grant Program

6. *Working Group Members Feedback on Evaluation and Recommendation and Public Comment by Makaela Niles, MassDOT Project Manager*

- Bill Carlson (Resident Association 9th Street Coalition) - I like it! This Study has produced a much better result than I expected when it began. I agree with the chosen alternative and the recommended next steps.
- Amanda Linehan (Malden City Council) - This is a very promising design, especially the benefits for the bus riders.
- Amy Ingles (City of Medford) - Has there been any discussion or attempts to quantify mode shift that may occur due to bus improvements, thus reducing motor vehicle volume?
 - Gary McNaughton (McMahon Associates) – There was modeling for future year conditions, and I think the future year showed increased travel in all modes. It's hard to quantify what is mode shift versus new trips because there is a lot of projected growth in this area and surrounding region. It's not a question we can provide a definitive answer for. I believe that if you build it, they will come. Some of the goals of this project were not to improve vehicle operations. It would be great if we could provide some enhancements and improve deficiencies, however that was not a primary goal. We recognized we cannot design our way out of traffic congestion. We need to provide other modes for people to do it, and that's what this is trying to do. Where it doesn't increase capacity for vehicles, you will see a mode shift whether it is to transit, biking, or walking as additional development occurs in the area.
- Alicia Hunt (City of Medford) – Thank you very much. We really appreciate all the work that has gone into this project and everything that everyone has been doing on this and to come up with different options for us to step through all of this has been very helpful and enlightening because this is a very difficult intersection. Everyone knows it. We have been talking to potential developers and I think everyone knows there is a housing project in Mystic Valley Parkway. It is a 40B so it will be approved, and we don't have a choice if it will be approved or not. Some of the conversation that came up during this from the transportation consultant who did a peer review on this commented it is quite close to the Wellington Station but appears to be on a 14-step process to cross from where that

development would be to get to the T. I don't know if he was including every driveway in the whole length, however it is not safe or easy. I have visited establishments and they look at me like I am insane when I say I have tried to cross Wellington Circle on foot. I really would like people to live on one side of this quadrant and get through to the other and use bicycles. The idea of biking through here would blow people's minds. It would be helpful for us to see what cross sections look like because that helps make it real, particularly for people who don't bike. I would like to hear from cycling communities what they think of these improvements and if they would feel safer going through Wellington Circle based on this information.

- Peter Calves (WalkMedford) – I appreciate the process of going through this intersection and the improvements to the bicycle and pedestrian experience. As a local resident of this area who walks and bikes through this intersection on a regular basis, I can tell you it is currently a harrowing experience. Looking at this, there are still more vehicle lanes for my liking, and I understand the process and the limitations on this intersection. I appreciate what you have done with this process under these circumstances.
- Jonah Chiarenza (Bike to the Sea) – My thoughts on this topic are around operational strategies. I think the geometry seems a lot better and I agree with everyone's comments. The provision of continuous bike facilities that are separated is a good solution to get people out of their cars and makes it easier to connect from transit to other places. Pedestrian infrastructure everywhere should be a no brainer and it looks like you have done a good job with that. I want to ask about further geometrical changes to protect intersections and avoid turning conflict crashes. I know we need to move vehicles through and certainly the buses. What opportunities are there to provide some additional space for accommodating the increase of hardening of protections at intersections for pedestrian and bicyclists? Thinking of MassDOT's Protected Bikeway Design Guide and opportunities to incorporate that. A compliment to that is the use of operational strategies and thinking about lane separation, leading pedestrian intervals, and leading bike intervals and signals.
 - Gary McNaughton (McMahon Associates) – As the design develops, that's when those start to get looked at. There are opportunities to implement some of the features you talked about. We have done a lot to restrict turns and keep movements from happening except where they need to. If you look west of the intersection, there are no left turns coming westbound and there are no right turns coming westbound and northbound. This gives the opportunity to create protected areas and crossings. We're mostly doing fully protected and there are some we do concurrent and LPIs will be part of it. We're working off aerial imagery and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping, so the amount of detail we tend to show until you have a real ground survey ends up not having value at this point. These things will be included in the report.
 - Jonah Chiarenza (Bike to the Sea) – Thank you for that feedback. I like the directness of the overall geometry that shows the scale of the routes. I think it's important for bicyclists and pedestrians to have that line-of-sight connectivity and follow it.
- Peter Calves (WalkMedford) - I second the need for physical protection where possible.

- Amanda Belles (Malden Disability Commission) - The distance when crossing the street at some of the intersections looks far from corner to corner. What is the distance for the cross walks, and can the cross signal be extended if necessary?
 - Gary McNaughton (McMahon Associates) – They do vary. We’ve tried to introduce medians so we can give pedestrians a break even though we’re trying to phase it so they can make those movements in single crossing. We do have some cross sections that are going to end up being in a report. They do show the stark difference from the existing and you really do see a reduction in the overall pavement. Depending on where you are looking, the crossings are two lanes before you reach a median and, in some cases, there are three. I think the longest one we have is in the southwest corner with the triangle where a narrower median is shown. That becomes a design detail, but that crossing isn’t shown there. It is the only one that is that long, and the others are either broken up in fewer lanes or with medians.
- Brad Rawson (City of Somerville) – Thank you and nice work. As always, Somerville’s posture in this Working Group is to support our neighbors to the north so I am so glad to see great, enthusiastic participation from the City of Medford and City of Malden. We are at the planning Study stage and although we have done important due diligence together to date and seem to be landing on a preferred alternative that meets many of our local and regional values, this is the start of the design process. Going through similar projects like this, my experience is that things only get more progressive and economically vibrant and vital as the designs develop. Our partners at MassDOT hosted a community meeting for a 25% design milestone on a similarly complex series of state-controlled intersections just across the river in Somerville. Based on responsive design development and quantitative analysis by MassDOT, we’ve seen dedicated transit facilities, lane drops, shared use paths, and better walking and biking geometries in crossing distances that are being refined for stage-to-stage plan Study and preliminary and advanced design.
- Amy Ingles (City of Medford) - To go along with Brad, we can continue to advocate for bridges.
- Emily O’Brien (Medford Bicycle Advisory Commission) – This is an important priority for us. Most of my comments cannot be answered at this stage of design. As mentioned, there are a lot of potential turning conflicts and there are a lot of places where there are some bike lanes or facilities that cross driveways and intersections. It will ultimately come down to the details of the design, how good or bad that is. Sometimes there are a lot of provisions for bicyclists making trips going straight instead of turning right, but it’s still hard to turn left. They go on all sort of weird ways to avoid making left turns. It is very difficult to cross three lanes to make a left turn. So, the overall speeds when lights are green will be a factor and provisions for people to make the multistage left so not every user has to make the vehicular left. How much advanced anticipation might there be of possible changes to the bus network that don’t exist now and are not part of the Bus Network Redesign Program (BNRD)? Any \$30-60 million project that gets done to this intersection should last for some time. I think it’s important to keep in mind that there will be bus routes that will go through this area even though they may not be planned or exist yet. Thank you.
 - Gary McNaughton (McMahon Associates) – As far as the transit goes, if we include the accommodations to get to the west along Mystic Valley Parkway, then we would

have covered most of this intersection and area. The missing connection would be south along Fellsway. As Brad knows from other projects, as these get into design development, you look at what is possible and see if you can work with the MBTA and if you can provide a high-quality facility for them. They can look at the overall network transit systems and see if that is a benefit and if it is valuable.

- Jonah Chiarenza (Bike to the Sea) - Regarding Tom's question about green space – can there be some stormwater management elements in those spaces, at least in two larger ones along the Fellsway?
 - Gary McNaughton (McMahon Associates) – There is certainly stormwater and environmental areas that could use the space, but if we can shift the roadway in, maybe we can connect some open space that is adjacent to abutting land use.
- Brad Rawson (City of Somerville) – We are at a moment where a long-range, visionary project like this could have a five- or six-year journey instead of a 15- or 16-year journey. Part of the reason is the federal infrastructure investment flowing from Washington to state agencies like MassDOT and the other part of it is state-level focused plans. The Healy administration is quick out of the gate with these first two months of the year in starting to frame up funding and pipeline opportunities. There is a regional body that administers approximately \$100 million of the annual capital funding for both transit and roadway projects serving 100 cities and towns of Metro Boston. It is in the middle of its annual capital investment process right now. If MassDOT and the City of Medford can orchestrate project partners and funding entities, you could all identify a design budget to pivot quickly into design development. Typically, in a project like McGrath Boulevard, we reached this equivalent stage in 2013 and we are now in 2023 at 25% design milestone. We cannot let that happen with Wellington Circle. We have problems to solve, and the community deserves better. We should take these ideas and try to get to the design development.

7. *Public Comment*

- Joshua Grzegorzewski – For the preferred alternative (Transit Enhanced) it seems that removing the one-way northbound stub for Middlesex Avenue would reduce conflicts all things considered. Is it retained for large vehicles access?
 - Gary McNaughton (McMahon Associates) – That stub or one-way connection that runs along the right side along the smaller triangle to the north is maintained in this design stage to make sure we have flexibility for budding land uses. It does provide a more direct connection and facilitates access up to Middlesex Avenue and 9th Street. As properties redevelop and plans come along, that area will be revisited during the design development. For the purposes and stage of design we are at, we thought it was better to leave it there to provide accommodations and maintain access where it exists today.
- Jessica Boulanger – I can't say this enough, the walkability of this intersection should be prioritized. It has historically been an unsafe area to cross, particularly on Revere Beach Parkway to Wellington Circle. My second comment would be to focus on bike and pedestrian amenities. Bus lanes are wonderful, but without bus lane enforcement we should consider how these are working. I look forward to watching this project progress.

- Makenzie Niles (MassDOT Project Manager) – Thank you, Jessica.
- Joan Liu - Is there an opportunity to extend the project scope to include the bridge over the Mystic River and connect to the 38/28 project area?
 - Gary McNaughton (McMahon Associates) – We haven't looked at that. As planning and design development advances you must look at "where does this go?" We just went with the project limits, and we showed bikes lanes, pedestrian accommodations that connect there, and as it advances you end up with a gap and we find this on all sorts of projects. There are certainly opportunities there, but we are trying to keep our scope within this immediate area, so we don't extend it out.
- Tom Egan - Placing the green space in the center of the intersection, surrounded by three or more lanes on all sides effectively makes the green space unusable. I would much prefer an alternative that improves transit, walking, and biking, and creates usable green space at one of the corners. The current design just creates a grassy highway median with space that could be a park.
 - Gary McNaughton (McMahon Associates) – As you get into the ground survey and you start to lay out the roadways, you look for opportunities to include that open space. There is some inherent nature of the roadway network that is laid out as part of this alternative that leaves some of the open space there, but you can shift the alignments to maximize the open space on the outside.

8. *Next Steps by Makenzie Niles, MassDOT Project Manager*

Makenzie reviews the next steps for the Wellington Circle Study and shares the timeline through the end of the study process. The Study team will finalize the recommendations and share a draft final report in April 2023 for a 30-day public comment period. The next public meeting will be held virtually via Zoom in April 2023, and the final report will be published in May 2023. Information is shared on how to sign up for Study updates and access the Study's comment form.

Wellington Circle Planning Study Working Group Meeting #6 Attendees

MassDOT/Study Team:

- Makaela Niles - MassDOT
- Gary McNaughton – McMahon Associates
- Joanne Haracz – McMahon Associates
- Natalie Press – McMahon Associates
- Mikayla Jerominek – HNTB
- Sara Stoja – HNTB
- Emily Wood – HNTB

Working Group Members & Alternates:

- Alicia Hunt - City of Medford
- Amanda Belles - Malden Disability Commission
- Amanda Linehan – City of Malden
- Amy Ingles – City of Medford
- Bill Carlson – Resident Association 9th Street Coalition
- Brad Rawson – City of Somerville
- Drashti Joshi - Massachusetts Department of Transportation
- John Alessi - City of Malden
- Jonah Chiarenza – Bike to the Sea
- Matt Hartman – Office of Massachusetts Senator Patricia Jehlen
- Melissa Dullea – Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority
- Paul Stedman – Massachusetts Department of Transportation
- Peter Calves – WalkMedford
- Susan Bibbins – Medford Commission for Persons with Disabilities

Public Attendees:

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| • Anthony Timperio | • Joan Liu |
| • Betty Lo | • Joe Zissman |
| • Christian MilNeil | • John Eugene |
| • Dennis Baker | • Josh Levin |
| • Dennis Essa | • Joshua Grzegorzewski |
| • Eduardo Ramos | • Karl Alexander |
| • Emily O'Brien | • Kristin Scalisi |
| • Fayssal Husseini | • Michael McColgan |
| • Frederick Douglass | • Sam Silverman |
| • George Katsoufis | • Sarah McLain |
| • Jack Martin | • Tom Egan |
| • Jason Cluggish | • Trevor Kafka |
| • Jessica Boulanger | |