



**Wellington Circle Study Working Group Meeting #1**  
**Wednesday, September 16, 2020 1:00 – 2:30 PM**  
**Held Virtually via Zoom**

### **Meeting Summary**

September 16, 2020 marked the first meeting of the Wellington Circle Study Working Group. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the Study and solicit feedback on the preliminary goals, objectives and evaluation criteria set forth by the Study Team.

There were several key takeaways from members of the Working Group. It was noted that the redesign of Wellington Circle must be considered a regional effort. Improvements to the Circle will have larger implications on abutting roads and connecting routes. The Working Group identified pedestrian and bicycle connections as the two most important areas of improving mobility and access, noting that intersection complexity and confusion was among the most important safety issues at the Circle. It was widely agreed that enhanced connectivity among transportation modes and improved safety would make Wellington Circle more attractive for residents and visitors.

There was a discussion of the study area and it was noted that Working Group members would be provided the opportunity for additional input on the study areas.

### **Meeting Notes**

1. *Welcome by Makaela Niles, MassDOT Project Manager*

All meeting attendees are welcomed and notified of recording.

2. *Ground Rules by Natalie Raffol, McMahon Associates (Project Consultant)*

Natalie goes through the ground rules and expectations for this Working Group meeting. For technical difficulties, all attendees should email Leah Epstein (Project Consultant). Natalie explains that there will be designated periods for discussion for Working Group members. She reviews how to participate in the discussion on Zoom and notes that all public questions will be addressed at the end of the meeting as time allows.

3. *Welcome by Mayor Breanna Lungo-Koehn, City of Medford*

Mayor Lungo-Koehn acknowledges there's a general consensus that improvements are needed at Wellington Circle, a large and busy intersection with important connections. She appreciates the willingness of residents and businesses to provide input that will be incorporated into the project and will make the community safer and more accessible.

4. *Introductions by Project Team and Working Group Membership (see Attachment A for list of attendees)*

Makaela provides the agenda for the meeting, introduces the Project Team, and allows each Working Group member in attendance introduce themselves. She then discusses the role of the Working Group, which is to:

- Provide local knowledge, perspective, and expertise
- Share information with the respective institutions/organizations represented
- Review information and provide feedback

5. *Study Background, Process, and Overview of Public Involvement by Makaela Niles, MassDOT Project Manager*

- Study Background: Makaela explains how the Section 61 finding for the Encore Boston Harbor Casino made funding available to study transportation improvements at Wellington Circle. The study will evaluate existing and future conditions and develop recommendations to better provide local and regional connectivity as documented in the Final Report.
- Process: The study process will include several tasks that will build on one another, with the foundational tasks (or study milestones) being:
  - Public participation
  - Analysis of existing and future conditions
  - Alternatives development
  - Alternatives analysis
  - Recommendations
  - Final Report
- Overview of Public Involvement: Public involvement will include eight Working Group meetings, and four public meetings and pop up community events if, and when, possible. In today's environment, online engagement will be a primary tool for outreach. The MassDOT webpage will house information, documentation, and a link to PIMA, which provides a comment form and allow users to sign up for email updates.

6. *Study Area, Goals & Objectives and Evaluation Criteria by Gary McNaughton, McMahon Associates (Project Consultant)*

- Study Area: Gary first explains how design factors will be evaluated using a local and/or regional study area as appropriate. For instance, Level of Service and alternative modes of transportation will be evaluated using the local study area, while the regional network will be evaluated using the regional study area. Specifically, the CTPS model will be used as a basis to determine how travel patterns will change, starting with 2019 volumes to represent existing conditions. Future projections will be complicated by the uncertainty of travel patterns due to COVID, which will continue to be monitored.
- Draft Goals and Objectives: Gary asks the Working Group members to review and weigh in on the draft goals and objectives and provide feedback. The draft list includes:
  - Goal to improve mobility and connectivity for all transportation modes in Wellington Circle area. Objectives to meet the goal include:
    - Mitigate traffic congestion within Wellington Circle
    - Provide facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users (e.g., dedicated bus lanes for transit users, particularly users dependent on those systems)
    - Improve connectivity to Wellington Station and other local destination for pedestrians and bicyclists
  - Goal to improve safety conditions for all transportation modes and users in the Wellington Circle area. Objectives to meet the goal include:
    - Reduce vehicular speeds
    - Reduce number of conflict points between modes
    - Provide dedicated space for pedestrians, bicyclists through and across Wellington Circle
  - Goal to improve quality of life for residents in the Wellington Circle area. Objectives to meet the goal include:
    - Provide opportunities for enhancing attractiveness of wellington circle (e.g., reconfiguring roadway to open up areas for open space and other areas for landscaping)
    - Minimize public health and environmental impacts
    - Provide fair and equitable treatment for Environmental Justice (EJ) populations
  - Goal to improve local & regional connectivity to support businesses and future development. Objectives to meet the goal include:
    - Reduce travel delays (vehicle hours traveled and queuing)
    - Improve access and circulation within and between parcels for all modes
    - Promote active transportation through improved connections between modes

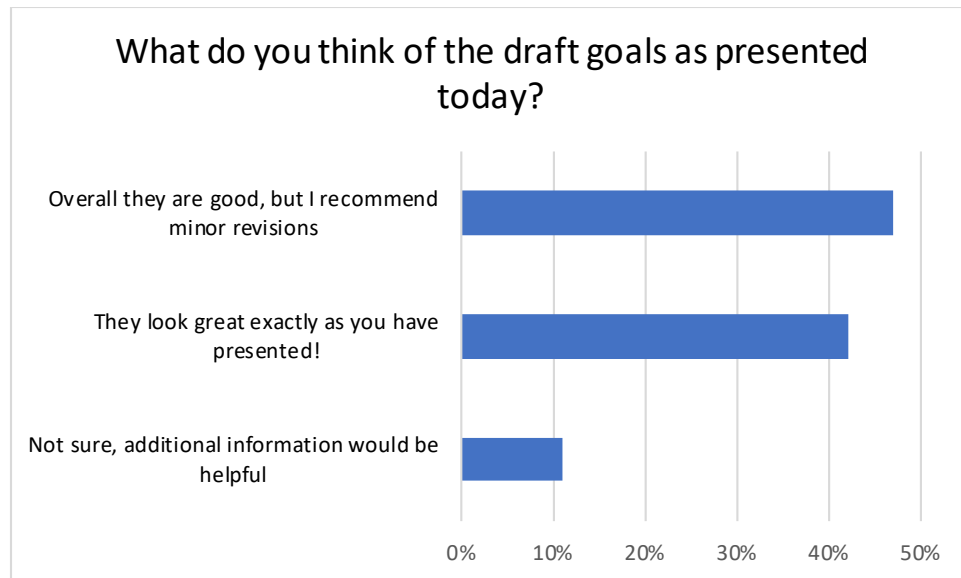
- Reduce the sense of a barrier created by Wellington Circle (e.g., users have said they will not cross Wellington Circle to go get lunch or run an errand, for instance)
- Evaluation Criteria: In order to measure the ability of each alternative to meet the desired goals, evaluation criteria are developed. Examples of how to measure how well goals are met include:
  - Multimodal Mobility: mode split, travel times, transit reliability, miles of dedicated facilities
  - Safety: number of crashes, number of conflict points, predictive measures
  - Land Use and Economic Development: vacancy rate, rent prices, land use mix
  - Environmental Effects: Emissions/air quality, acres of open space
  - Community, Health and Social Equity: impact to EJ populations, public health indicators
  - Constructability
  - Cost

#### *7. Clarifying Working Group Questions on Study Area, Goals & Objectives and Evaluation Criteria*

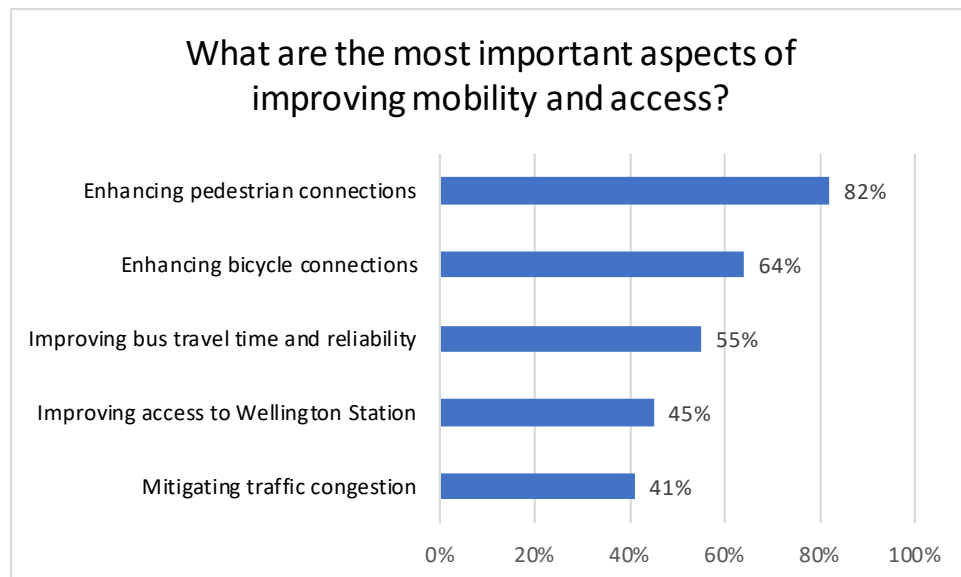
- Julie Wormser, Deputy Director, Mystic River Watershed Association – Is there an opportunity to identify destinations like the park nearby for a deeper dive?
  - Gary McNaughton, Project Manager, McMahon Associates – Yes, we want to know about desirable connections.
- Stephen Winslow, Councilor At Large, City of Malden – Will this consider the Route 28 bridge too? Just south of Wellington Circle? (Comment submitted through Zoom Q&A chat.)
  - Gary McNaughton, Project Manager, McMahon Associates - We fully expect to look south of the intersection. You can see the queue from Wellington Circle spilling all the way back to the Route 28 bridge.
- Todd Blake, Traffic Engineer, City of Medford – We (City of Medford) are going to be adding bike lanes - short term and long terms improvements will tie together.
  - Gary McNaughton, Project Manager, McMahon Associates - Our study area does not have hard boundaries. We want to take a comprehensive look at what is influencing transportation through Wellington Circle.

#### *8. Working Group Goals Input: Polling Questions by Gary McNaughton and Natalie Raffol, McMahon Associates (Project Consultant)*

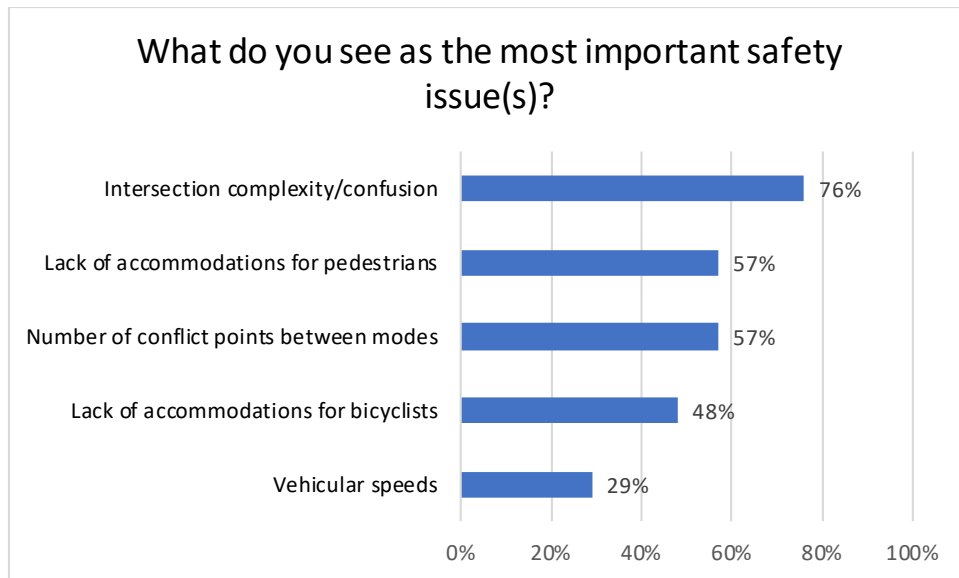
- Natalie releases a series of polling questions to gather input on the presented goals and understand the priorities of the Working Group members, considering also that trade-offs may be required.



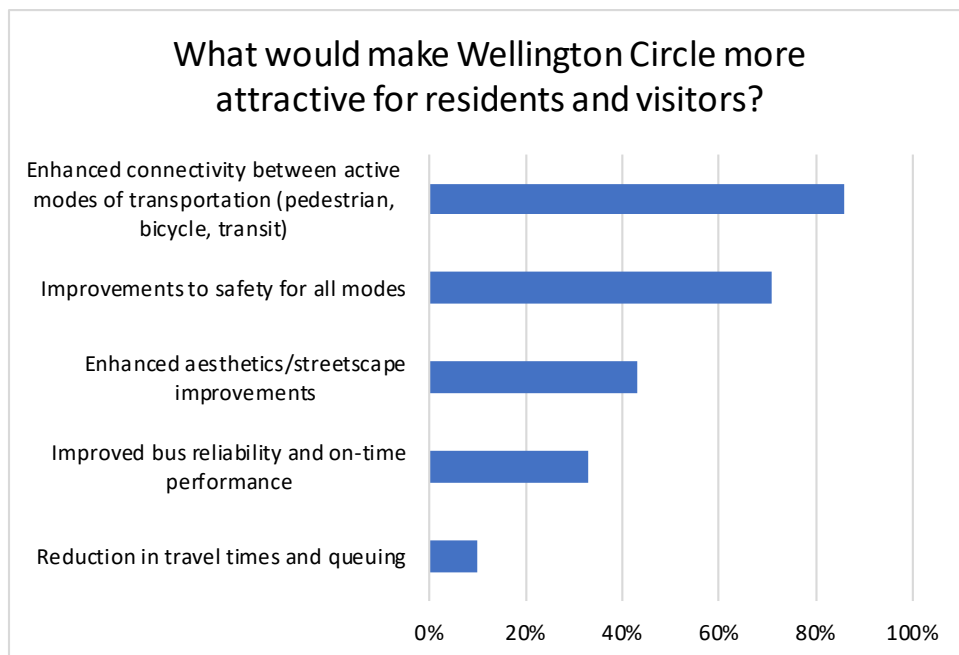
- Gary McNaughton, Project Manager, McMahon Associates – There are certainly some minor revisions getting a lot of votes which we'd expect. If we got that 100% perfect we'd be surprised.



- Comment from Brad Rawson, Director of Transportation and Infrastructure, City of Somerville – This poll is helpful; I would hope that some of the shared learning we do together helps eliminates the fight for Right-of-way. Investing proactively in connectivity will help us meet our key performance indicators.
- Comment from Todd Blake, Traffic Engineer, City of Medford – I hope that everyone involved keeps an open mind and thinks big. This is truly a balancing act – we want to improve all modes of transportation.



- Gary McNaughton, Project Manager, McMahon Associates – It does not surprise me that the complexity/confusion of this intersection would win. You're also seeing leaning towards making sure bikes and pedestrians are safe. Also going back with the conflict points and trying to reduce those. I think the complexity and confusion on the intersection for drivers probably adds to some of the safety concerns for bicyclists and pedestrians.



- Gary McNaughton, Project Manager, McMahon Associates - Certainly the reduction of vehicle times and queuing falling away to the rear on

this poll. And that connectivity, just looking at the circle that kind of the lack of connectivity. There's really glaring and an obvious need. And I think this poll supports that.

*9. Working Group Discussion facilitated by Makaela Niles, MassDOT Project Manager*

Makaela initiates the discussion by asking what additional information would be helpful to determine whether the goals are accurate or need to be improved?

- Todd Blake, Traffic Engineer, City of Medford – I support these goals. I hope the group is sensitive to local issues so that as we improve all these things, we don't cause something negative for someone else (ex. 9th Street in Brainard is affected by Wellington Circle).
- Julie Wormser, Deputy Director, Mystic River Watershed Association – This is connectivity among transportation modes. I want to have connectivity to specific destinations. We have large parks in the area; opportunities for active transportation to key destination points would be great.
- Todd Blake, Traffic Engineer, City of Medford – The City of Medford is working on a pedestrian underpass under Route 28 in Medford – this ties into the connectivity piece.
- Charles Hartnett, Sergeant, Medford Police Department – City of Medford uses a notification/issue type website (SeeClickFix). I was able to print up a number of issues we have had with Wellington Circle. These are coming directly from citizens – if you need me to share these, I can provide them to the group
- Fangyun Xi, Traffic and Safety Engineer, MassDOT – I would like to share crash data information. There is a Road Safety Audit report online for this location from January 2011 – December 2013. There was a total of 176 crashes in those three years, about 59 crashes per year. On the MassDOT crash portal, I can see that from Jan 2016 – Sept 2020 there was 530 total crashes, about 108 per year. That is double the earlier crash data.
- Jay Monty, Transportation Planner, City of Everett – I was on a Lower Mystic Working Group, which came out of a desire to fix Sullivan Square. We realized that the issues were not unique to Sullivan – they happen regionally. A lot of the issues in Wellington are broad and bigger than Wellington. It boils down to regional traffic demand and issues.
- Brad Rawson, Director of the Mobility Division, City of Somerville – I think this is going to be a good Working Group. As we dig deeper into crash data, we want to know the severity. Were pedestrians and bicycles involved? City of Somerville has made a commitment to eliminating fatalities and severe injuries on our roadways. The level of traffic stress needs to be considered. User's level of comfort is important. McDonald Park is one of my favorite places to go. DCR has invested in the network

and buffered bikeways north – we need to make sure this progress is being considered.

- Bill Carlson, 9<sup>th</sup> Street Coalition – The term “pedestrian connectivity and mobility” doesn’t seem to really address the issue most important to us (9th St Coalition). People coming off Route 16 are going down 9<sup>th</sup> Street to avoid the circle. When I think of pedestrians, I think of young kids, myself on a morning walk and not paying much attention. Pedestrians and bikes don’t mix much better than pedestrians and cars. I’m in favor of separated bike lanes.
- Todd Blake, Traffic Engineer, City of Medford – Some recent projects have been completed, including the Woods Memorial Bridge Project and short-term improvements as part of the Wynn Casino. These projects had good improvements but there have been some negative side effects – for example, Brainard Avenue.
- Doug Carr, NAACP, Mystic Valley Branch – I’m excited to explore concepts – this intersection feels like it’s been frozen in time. The logo is interesting and reflects the messiness and lack of clarity of the intersection.
- Jay Campbell, Property Manager, McDonough Property Management - Can you send a list of members so we can see who is on it?
  - Makaela Niles, MassDOT Project Manager – Yes, we can circulate a list.

*10. Makaela Niles, MassDOT Project Manager, shares Study schedule slide*

- Todd Blake, Traffic Engineer, City of Medford – Wanted to ask about definition of the study area and hoping to continue that conversation.
  - Makaela Niles, MassDOT Project Manager - This is a continuing conversation.
- Bill Carlson, 9<sup>th</sup> Street Coalition – In my view, Wellington Circle starts with the entrances/exits from Wellington Station, goes to Assembly Square and goes to the west past the shopping center entrances/exits – all that traffic has to be thought of as a single integrated area.
  - Gary McNaughton, Project Manager, McMahon Associates - Yes, those areas are all included.
- Doug Carr, NAACP – I’m sure there have been previous studies on this area. Are those part of this project?
  - Gary McNaughton, Project Manager, McMahon Associates We will review those. They are informative but a lot of times with older studies the methodologies are different as well as priorities.
- Todd Blake, Traffic Engineer, City of Medford – Wanted to make sure that just because there might not be a circle over a specific spot in the study area graphic doesn’t mean it isn’t included. We need to be careful to consider areas that aren’t circled in red (slide 15) – want to improve all areas.
  - Gary McNaughton, Project Manager, McMahon Associates - We are considering all parcels.

- Jay Monty, Transportation Planner, City of Everett – Santilli Circle should be acknowledged – there is certainly connectivity between there and Wellington Circle.
  - Gary McNaughton, Project Manager, McMahon Associates - We will look at users of the Circle through data – we will know information about folks going through the study area.

*11. Makaela Niles, MassDOT Project Manager, Reviews Next Steps*

- Based on the conversation, the next steps will be finalizing some of the items presented today and starting to work on the analyses in the next task. The Working Group is welcome to take time to review the materials presented today and share comments after the meeting. We will reconvene in the fall to share those findings with the group and hear your thoughts. The meeting materials, video recording, and comment form will be available on the study page website. Attendees are encouraged to visit the site and to sign up for the project mailing list.

*12. Public Comment Period facilitated by Makaela Niles, MassDOT Project Manager*

- Amanda Linehan, City Councilor, City of Malden – I wanted to introduce myself. I’m a City Councilor and longtime commuter through Wellington in various modes of transportation. I’m really eager to get started.
- Bill Carlson, 9<sup>th</sup> Street Coalition – I want to be sure dedicated bus lanes are under consideration. Routes that involve Wellington and Sullivan are key to the whole regional transportation system.
- Brad Rawson, Director of the Mobility Division, City of Somerville – thank Bill for raising that issue of dedicated bus lanes. When we did this on Broadway in Winter Hill, we saw a 36% increase of bus ridership (before COVID) because of dedicated bus lanes. This increase is associated with the reliability runtime and dignity benefits of providing the dedicated space for people riding buses in our community. There have also been impressive numbers coming from Jay’s work in the City of Everett. We can share our experience if it is helpful.
- Stephen Winslow, Councilor At Large, City of Malden - Looking at the study area, the Route 28 bridge is a real weak point for safe bike/ped connections both north/south and east/west. There was some study of an underpass on the Medford side that never happened. The narrow sidewalk on the bridge is too small for both peds/bikes and the roadbed is too wide, too high speed and too much volume to be safe for bicycles. (Comment submitted through Zoom Q&A chat.)
  - Todd Blake, Traffic Engineer, City of Medford - There are two existing on-going projects to help improve Route 28 Bridge (over and under) at various stages.

*13. Makaela Niles, MassDOT Project Manager, thanks everyone for attending and adjourns the meeting.*

## Wellington Circle Planning Study Working Group Meeting #1 Attendees

### **MassDOT/Project Team:**

- Makaela Niles - MassDOT
- Ethan Britland - MassDOT
- Gary McNaughton – McMahon Associates
- Joanne Haracz – McMahon Associates
- Natalie Raffol – McMahon Associates
- Jordan van Emmerik – McMahon Associates
- Erica Blonde - HNTB
- Leah Epstein - HNTB

### **Working Group Members & Alternates:**

- Amanda Linehan, Malden City Council
- Andrew Paul, MassDOT
- Bill Carlson, 9<sup>th</sup> Street Coalition
- Brad Rawson, City of Somerville
- Charles Hartnett, Medford Police Department
- Christine P. Barber, State House of Representatives
- Constance Raphael, MassDOT
- Doug Carr, NAACP - Mystic Valley Branch
- Fangyun Xi, MassDOT
- Jay Campbell, Medford Chamber of Commerce
- Jay Monty, City of Everett
- Jeff Buxbaum, WalkMedford
- Jeff Parenti, Department of Conservation and Recreation
- Julie Wormser, Mystic River Watershed Association
- Lisa Schletzbaum, MassDOT
- Matthew Hartman, Office of Senator Patricia Jehlen
- Melissa Dullea, MBTA
- Mayor Breanna Lungo-Koehn, City of Medford
- Olivia Murphy, MassDOT
- Stephen Winslow, Malden City Council
- Yuriy Lojko, Bike to the Sea

### **Attendees:**

- Matt Grew, MassDOT
- Maureen Chlebek, McMahon Associates
- Peter Calves
- Sara Timoner, MassDOT
- Elizabeth Torres, MassDOT