



# NEWTON CORNER

## LONG-TERM PLANNING STUDY

### MassDOT Newton Corner Long-Term Planning Study

#### Public Information Meeting #2

Tuesday, February 25, 2025 at 6:30 p.m.

Virtual on Zoom

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#### Summary:

On Tuesday, February 25, 2025, MassDOT held the second Public Information Meeting for the Newton Corner Long-Term Planning Study. At this meeting, the study team presented a summary of Public Information Meeting #1 comments; future conditions; issues, opportunities, and constraints; preliminary alternatives development; and schedule and next steps. Members of the public participated in breakout room sessions and provided feedback.

#### Attendees:

Name	Title	Affiliation
Dan Fielding	Legislative Liaison	MassDOT Highway Division
Sandy Johnston	Deputy Director of Regional Transit Planning	MBTA
Julia Malakie	Ward Councilor, Ward 3	Newton City Council
Pam Wright	Councilor-at-Large, Ward 3	Newton City Council
Maria Greenberg	Ward Councilor, Ward 1	Newton City Council
Amy Sangiolo	State Representative	Massachusetts House of Representatives (11 <sup>th</sup> Middlesex)
Matt Costas	Chief of Staff	Office of Boston City Councilor Liz Breadon (District 9)
David Koses	Transportation Coordinator	City of Newton Department of Public Works
Ned Codd	Director of Transportation	City of Newton Department of Public Works
Jenn Martin	Director of Transportation Planning	City of Newton Department of Planning and Development
Jini Fairley	ADA Coordinator	City of Newton

Lucia Dolan	Member	Safe Routes to School
Robin Boger	President	Newton Corner Neighborhood Association
Wenzheng Wang	Transportation Program Planner	Boston Transportation Department on behalf of the City of Boston Mayor's Office
Zeke Mermell	Senior Transportation Planner	City of Watertown on behalf of the City Manager's Office
Jacquelyn Goddard	MassDOT Communications	MassDOT
John Goggin	MassDOT Communications	MassDOT
Nate Gibson	Not Listed	Attendee
Schuyler Larrabee	Not Listed	Attendee
Madelyn Sorensen	Not Listed	Attendee
Alina Duckham	Not Listed	Attendee
Anabelle Gutlay	Not Listed	Attendee
Andrew Hochberg	Not Listed	Attendee
Andy Gluck	Not Listed	Attendee
Annette Kaplan	Not Listed	Attendee
Anthony Carr	Not Listed	Attendee
Bill McBeath	Not Listed	Attendee
Brennan Guldner	Not Listed	Attendee
Chris Chiotasso	Not Listed	Attendee
Daniel Campbell	Not Listed	Attendee
Daniel Scales	Not Listed	Attendee
Debashree Basu	Not Listed	Attendee
Debora Jackson	Not Listed	Attendee
Doug Knotts	Not Listed	Attendee
Ellen McCrave	Not Listed	Attendee
Gavi Bogin-Farber	Not Listed	Attendee
Gavin McLearn	Not Listed	Attendee
Harvey Schorr	Not Listed	Attendee

Jim Ridge	Not Listed	Attendee
Judith Siporin	Not Listed	Attendee
Kimberly Benzan	Not Listed	Attendee
Laura Johnson	Not Listed	Attendee
Lourdes Connolly	Not Listed	Attendee
Marianne Burke	Not Listed	Attendee
Martin Greenwald	Not Listed	Attendee
Matthew Doeringer	Not Listed	Attendee
Michael Sinisi	Not Listed	Attendee
Myra Ferree	Not Listed	Attendee
Nancy Kelley	Not Listed	Attendee
Patty Adair	Not Listed	Attendee
Quach Hai	Not Listed	Attendee
Richard Belkin	Not Listed	Attendee
Robert Haywood	Not Listed	Attendee
Rosalind Williams	Not Listed	Attendee
Sandeep Kumar	Not Listed	Attendee
Sara Harbison	Not Listed	Attendee
Srdjan Nedeljkovic	Not Listed	Attendee
Suzanne Loughlin	Not Listed	Attendee
Tom Coan	Not Listed	Attendee
Victoria Zissman	Not Listed	Attendee
Patrick Snyder	Study Project Manager	MassDOT
Rachel Kelly	Study Team Member	MassDOT
Christine Trearchis	Study Team Member	VHB
Niki Hastings	Study Team Member	VHB
Matt Duranleau	Study Team Member	VHB
Zoe Temco	Study Team Member	VHB
Michael Ahillen	Study Team Member	FHI Studio / IMEG

## Presentation

The following sections are copied from the presentation slides. A summary of discussions from the breakout rooms and comment period is provided below.

## Introduction

### *Agenda*

1. Welcome
2. Public Information Meeting #1 Summary
3. Future Conditions
4. Issues, Opportunities & Constraints
5. Alternatives Development
6. Schedule and Next Steps
7. Open Discussion

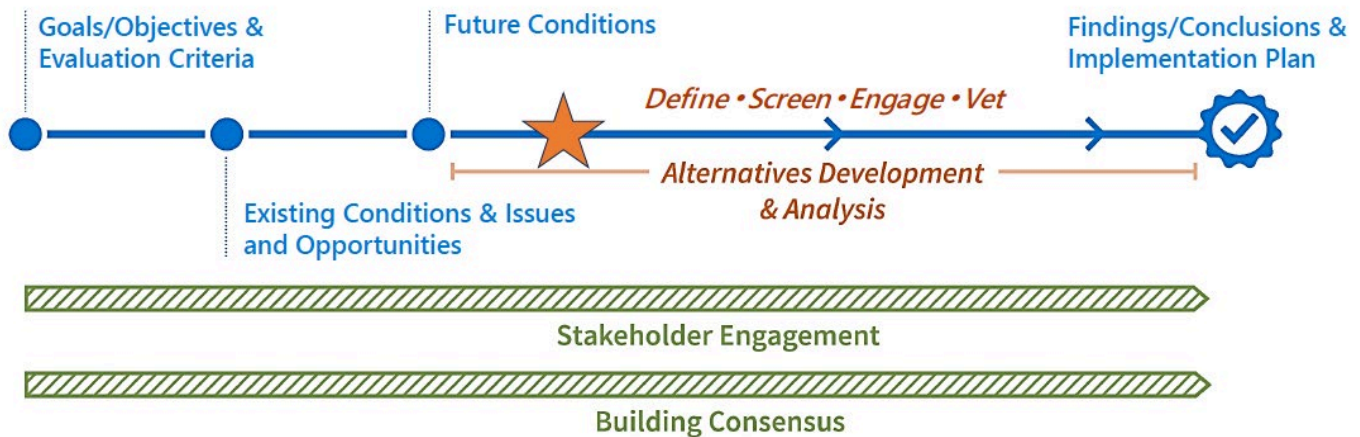
### *Previous and Ongoing Projects / Studies*

- ▶ This meeting is for the Newton Corner Long-Term Planning Study
- ▶ MassDOT Short- to Mid-term Improvements project (DOT #609288)
  - Focused on operational and safety improvements within a 10-year horizon
  - Immediate safety improvements implemented in Fall 2024
  - Final Report published in December 2024
  - Project Website: <https://www.mass.gov/newton-corner-improvements-project>
  - For feedback on Short- to Mid-term Improvements project, reach out to MassDOT District 6 at: <https://www.mass.gov/forms/contact-massdot>

### *Study Goals*

- ▶ Improve access, safety, and mobility for all
- ▶ Reconnect Newton's neighborhoods
- ▶ Enhance quality of life
- ▶ Promote sustainable transportation solutions
- ▶ Develop actionable recommendations

## Study Process



## Public Meeting #1 Feedback Summary

### Public Meeting #1 Summary

- ▶ Over 50 attendees
- ▶ Audience asked poll question:
  - If you could envision the future of Newton Corner, what word would you use to describe it?
- ▶ Nearly 30 questions and comments during the Q&A with common themes:
  - Traffic and Infrastructure Improvements
  - Accessibility and Connectivity
  - Environmental and Social Impacts
  - Economic Development

## Future Conditions

### Future Mobility: Growth & Land Use Changes

- ▶ Growth based on both CTPS Statewide Travel Demand Model and pipeline development projects.
- ▶ There are currently 56 known development projects in the local study area, including over 5,000 residential units and 6.3 million square feet of office, lab, and retail space.

### Future Mobility: Transit

- ▶ Planned transit improvements include:
  - Newton Commuter Rail Stations Accessibility Improvements (funding for Newtonville awarded in late 2024)
  - Bus Network Redesign
  - Rail Modernization
- ▶ Up to 42 MBTA buses per hour may serve Newton Corner in the future with Bus Network Redesign.

- ▶ Transit will play an important future role in moving new residents and workers in and around the local study area.

#### *Future Mobility: Infrastructure Investments*

- ▶ Planned roadway improvements include:
  - Newton Corner short-term improvements (implemented in Fall 2024)
  - Leo Birmingham Parkway Reconstruction
  - North Beacon Street at Soldier's Field Road Roadway Realignment
  - Washington Street Pilot
  - Watertown Square Area Plan
  - Allston Multimodal Project
- ▶ Proposed roadway investments primarily focus on safety and improving multimodal accommodations.

#### *Future Mobility: Active Transportation*

- ▶ Proposed/planned bicycle facilities will add new east/west routes on Washington Street, Mt. Auburn Street, Birmingham Parkway, and the Watertown Greenway.
- ▶ In the future, gaps may remain in the network, including missing north-south connections across I-90 and connections to the Charles River pathways.

#### *Future Mobility: Volume Growth*

- ▶ Boston MPO's CTPS Statewide Travel Demand Model was used to estimate volume growth between 2019 and 2050.
- ▶ The 2050 model includes known transit and roadway infrastructure projects and projected land use growth.
- ▶ Output from the model was calibrated based on known development projects.
- ▶ Transit volumes are anticipated to grow quicker than vehicle volumes due improved transit infrastructure and limited capacity on roadway network for additional demand.

#### *Future Mobility: Volumes / Intersections*

- ▶ Future vehicle volume projections have been incorporated into the 2050 mobility analysis models.
- ▶ Known infrastructure projects have been incorporated into the analysis models.
- ▶ By 2050, vehicle operations in the local study area are expected to deteriorate due to projected increases in population and employment.
- ▶ If left unaddressed, this growth will impact reliability potentially leading to increased congestion or further extending commuter peak periods.

#### *Future Environmental Considerations*

- ▶ Newton Corner faces significant risks from extreme temperature fluctuations, increased precipitation, and flooding along the Charles River.
- ▶ By 2050, the area will see significant temperature increases with fewer cold days and more hot days, and rising precipitation levels.

- ▶ Resilience and Mitigation Strategies:
  - Enhance infrastructure with heat-resistant materials.
  - Integrate green infrastructure to manage stormwater.

## Issues, Opportunities & Constraints

### *Sources*

- ▶ Based on a review of:
  - Data
  - Previous studies
  - Input from Working Group
  - Public outreach process
  - Online mapping tool
- ▶ Summarized in site-specific and general themes.

### *Issues, Opportunities, and Constraints Key Takeaways*

- ▶ Roadway Geometry & Safety Issue: Confusing travel patterns with difficult merges and weaves
- ▶ Transit Opportunity: Leverage existing and future MBTA transit services (bus and Commuter Rail).
- ▶ Natural & Historic Resources Constraint: Historic districts are located just south of Newton Corner
- ▶ Climate Issue: Study area is likely to face significant climate risks, including extreme temperatures and flooding
- ▶ Active Transportation Opportunity: Connect to existing Charles River pathways – 10 minute walk or 5 minute bike ride
- ▶ Vehicle Network Constraint: Lack of access points along I-90 required vehicles to funnel through Newton Corner
- ▶ Accessibility Issue: Several intersections are lacking crosswalks or do not meet accessibility requirements
- ▶ Environmental Opportunity: Expanding green infrastructure can help manage stormwater, reduce heat island effects, and improve public health
- ▶ Transportation Infrastructure Constraint: I-90 and the MBTA rail line act as a barrier for north-south mobility

## Alternatives Development

### *Preliminary Alternatives Development*

Three levels of alternative development

- ▶ Supportive Elements
  - Supportive elements that should be considered under all alternatives
  - Examples of Supportive Elements are categorized by Pedestrian / Bicycle, Transit, and Safety
- ▶ Alternative Components

- Individual alternative components that can be layered upon each other to develop full concepts
- First-level screening will be applied to alternative components
- Alternative components relate to vehicle, transit, pedestrian, and bicycle infrastructure
- ▶ Combined Examples
  - Examples of combined alternatives with different alternative components layered together
  - There can be many different combined alternatives depending on which alternative components are layered together

#### *Supportive Elements: Pedestrian / Bicycles*

- ▶ Supportive elements are design features that should be considered in all alternatives
- ▶ Pedestrians / Bicycles
  - Identify opportunities for separated bicycle lanes
  - Create pedestrian and bicycle connections on Centre Street and Galen Street
  - Develop new connections to the Charles River pathways
  - Explore bicycle infrastructure that could bypass Newton Corner, such as on Church Street
- ▶ Placemaking
  - Create a pedestrian environment that emphasizes Newton Corner as a destination and encourages community gathering and support of small businesses

#### *Supportive Elements: Transit*

- ▶ Supportive elements are design features that should be considered in all alternatives
- ▶ Transit
  - Implement transit signal priority at signalized intersections
  - Enhance connections to existing bus services
  - Create dedicated bus lanes
  - Consider creating contraflow bus-only lanes
  - Install wayfinding / signage

#### *Supportive Elements: Safety*

- ▶ Supportive elements are design features that should be considered in all alternatives
- ▶ Safety
  - Employ conventional intersection designs to reduce driver confusion
  - Consider installing roundabouts to reduce the number of conflict points
  - Construct accessible pedestrian accommodations
  - Improve lighting to increase visibility at night
- ▶ These supportive elements were identified as part of Road Safety Audits (RSAs) conducted in the study area



### *Alternative Components*

- ▶ 16 potential Alternative Components are shown for reference
- ▶ Additional Alternative Components are likely to be developed based on feedback from the Working Group and the public
- ▶ Individual alternative components that can be layered upon each other to develop full concepts will be presented at the next meeting

### *Alternative Components 1: Two-Directional Travel in Newton Corner*

- ▶ To minimize weaving and increase safety:
  - Consider providing bi-directional vehicle travel on roads in Newton Corner
  - Maintain the current bridge locations

### *Alternative Components 2: Install Roundabouts*

- ▶ Convert existing intersections to roundabout control
- ▶ Seek opportunities to minimize weaving, increase safety, and simplify intersection operations

### *Alternative Components 3: New Bridge Connecting Centre Street*

- ▶ New bridge with bi-directional travel connecting Centre Street north and south of I-90
- ▶ Can provide multimodal accommodations on the new bridge for vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists
- ▶ Restore historical roadway network of Newton Corner

### *Alternative Components 4: Relocated I-90 Westbound On-Ramp*

- ▶ Construct new I-90 Westbound On-Ramp west of Newton Corner
- ▶ Close the current On-Ramp in Newton Corner, simplifying intersection operations
- ▶ Note: location of new on-ramp shown for graphical purposes. Preferred location could be shifted east or west of location shown

### *Alternative Components 5: Relocated I-90 Eastbound Off-Ramp*

- ▶ Construct new I-90 Eastbound Off-Ramp west of Newton Corner, providing longer queueing space on the ramp
- ▶ Close the current Off-Ramp in Newton Corner, simplifying intersection operations
- ▶ Realign Richardson Street to connect through to Centre Avenue
- ▶ Any potential right-of-way impacts will be evaluated
- ▶ Note: location of new on-ramp shown for graphical purposes. Preferred location could be shifted east or west of location shown.

### *Alternative Components 6: Close or Repurpose Washington Street Westbound Bridge*

- ▶ Close or repurpose the existing Washington Street westbound bridge
- ▶ Simplify operations at the intersections north and south of the existing bridge
- ▶ Potential repurposing could include dedicated transitway or pedestrian-bicycle bridge

- ▶ Likely would need to implement this component with a new bridge connecting Centre Street

*Alternative Components 7: Bus Transit Hub in Newton Corner*

- ▶ New mobility hub providing passengers with a comfortable place to wait and connecting bus service with additional mobility elements (i.e. BlueBikes station, bicycle parking)
- ▶ Provide hubs in each direction by decking over I-90
- ▶ Create a safe pedestrian crossing to connect inbound and outbound platforms
- ▶ Note: This concept shows one potential alternative for a transit hub. There are different layers of options for transit hubs depending on other alternative components.

*Alternative Components 8: Potential Commuter Rail Station in Newton Corner*

- ▶ Potential new Commuter Rail station in Newton Corner
- ▶ Access could be provided on both sides of Newton Corner, with pedestrian and bicycle connections to the neighborhoods north and south of I-90
- ▶ Connections could be provided to local MBTA bus routes
- ▶ Note: location of potential future Commuter Rail station shown for graphical purposes. Preferred potential location could be shifted east or west of location shown

*Alternative Components 9: Air-rights / Decking over I-90*

- ▶ Deck over I-90 to provide space for multimodal uses, bike path, transit bus stop, mobility hub, additional green space, and/or community space
- ▶ Create a Village Center in Newton Corner and provide a more welcoming environment for small businesses

*Alternative Components 10: Close or Repurpose Washington Street Eastbound Bridge*

- ▶ Close or repurpose the existing Washington Street eastbound bridge
- ▶ Removes vehicle weaving and conflict between Washington Street and I-90 Eastbound Off-Ramp
- ▶ Potential repurposing could include pedestrian-bicycle bridge or dedicated transitway
- ▶ Likely would need to implement this component with a new bridge connecting Centre Street

*Alternative Components 11: Pedestrian / Bicycle Bridge over I-90 in Newton Corner*

- ▶ New pedestrian and bicycle bridge over I-90 providing a separated facility connecting the north and south sides of Newton Corner
- ▶ New signalized crosswalks across Washington Street connecting to Centre Street north and south

*Alternative Components 12: Neighborhood Greenway on Charlesbank Road*

- ▶ Create a neighborhood greenway along Charlesbank Road connecting Newton Corner to the Charles River, in close walking and biking distance.

*Alternative Components 13: Shared-Use Path on St. James Street*

- ▶ Convert St. James Street to one-way

- ▶ Construct a shared-use path along St. James Street to connect Newton Corner to the Charles River
- ▶ Alternative: provide a pedestrian-bicycle connection through St. James Terrace to Nonantum Road
- ▶ Reconstruct intersection of St. James Street at Washington Street with new signalized crossings

*Alternative Components 14: Pedestrian / Bicycle Bridge to Charles River*

- ▶ New pedestrian and bicycle bridge approximately 1/3 mile in length connecting Newton Corner to the Charles River
- ▶ Western end of bridge connect to reconstructed intersection of St. James Street at Washington Street with new signalized crossings
- ▶ Eastern end of bridge connect to Nonantum Road west of Charlesbank Road

*Alternative Components 15: Full Interstate Access at West Newton*

- ▶ Construct full interstate access at West Newton (Eastbound Off-Ramp and Westbound On-Ramp)
- ▶ Provides additional access to/from the west relieving reliance on Newton Corner interchange

*Alternative Components 16: New Interstate Access in Brighton (at DCR Roadway Area)*

- ▶ Construct interstate access at DCR Roadway Area to relieve reliance on Newton Corner interchange
- ▶ Could include full interstate access or partial interstate access
- ▶ Would result in additional traffic on DCR parkways which does not align with DCR's vision for the region's parkways
- ▶ Potential impact to DCR property including protected parkland.

*Combined Examples*

- ▶ 3 potential Combined Examples are shown for reference
- ▶ Additional Combined Examples can be developed layering together different Alternative Components

*Preliminary Combined Examples A: Two-Directional Travel on Existing Roadway Network with Roundabouts*

- ▶ Provide bi-directional travel on all roads in Newton Corner
- ▶ Maintain the current bridge locations
- ▶ Consider roundabouts to minimize weaving, increase safety, and simplify intersection configuration
- ▶ Consider reallocating right of way for non-vehicule modes

*Preliminary Combined Examples B: New Roadway Network with Centre St Bridge + Relocated I-90 On-Ramp*

- ▶ New bridge with bi-directional travel reconnecting Centre Street
- ▶ Close the existing I-90 westbound on-ramp and relocate to the west
- ▶ Repurpose the existing Washington Street eastbound bridge for pedestrians and bicyclists only
- ▶ Repurpose the existing Washington Street westbound bridge as a transitway and bus hub
- ▶ Convert Washington Street north and south of I-90 to two-way travel

- ▶ Create a neighborhood greenway connecting to the Charles River

*Preliminary Combined Examples C: New Network with Centre St Bridge + Potential CR Station + Decking*

- ▶ New bridge with bi-directional travel reconnecting Centre Street
- ▶ Convert Washington Street north and south of I-90 to two-way travel
- ▶ Close the existing I-90 westbound on-ramp and relocate to the west
- ▶ Repurpose the existing Washington Street eastbound bridge for buses
- ▶ Potential new Commuter Rail station
- ▶ Add decking over I-90 with a shared-use path and green space
- ▶ Construct a shared-use path

*Breakout Session*

- ▶ Attendees will be divided into breakout rooms with study team facilitators
- ▶ Each room will discuss the alternative ideas presented
- ▶ Facilitators will take notes
- ▶ Breakout rooms will last up to 30 minutes
- ▶ Everyone will be invited back to the main meeting to discuss work in progress and next steps

*Breakout Room Discussion*

- ▶ Do you have any additional examples from other communities or other Newton villages that you think we should consider?
- ▶ What innovative transportation solutions would you like to consider that we haven't discussed yet?
- ▶ Is there anything else you would like to share about your vision or concerns regarding transportation improvements in Newton?

**Notes from Breakout Rooms follow after an outline of the rest of the meeting.**

## Schedule and Next Steps

### Study Schedule



## Conclusion

### How to Reach Us

- ▶ Study Website / Contact Information: <https://www.mass.gov/newton-corner-long-term-planning-study>
- ▶ Virtual Meeting Room: <https://vmr.vhb.com/v/E118wZWNqOB>
- ▶ Patrick Snyder, Project Manager [patrick.l.snyder@dot.state.ma.us](mailto:patrick.l.snyder@dot.state.ma.us)

## Breakout Room Discussion

The attendees provided the following comments in breakout rooms.

### Breakout Room Moderated by Michael Ahillen

- ▶ Ned Codd (City of Newton) suggested the study team explore recent projects in West Newton and Newtonville as inspiration. These projects were designed to calm traffic and to enhance multimodal safety and access. He expressed appreciation for the alternative components and said that they indicate a desire to stitch the Newton Corner neighborhood back together. He said there is a decent amount of space to enhance access for all modes, but it may take significant reconfiguration of roads.
- ▶ Matt Costas (Boston City Councilor Liz Breadon) said there is a proposed Boston Transportation Department plan for a transitway along Western Avenue. He asked if the study team had considered extending the bus-only facilities to the Charles River. He said he did not know the logistics of a smaller

transitway versus a larger one but lengthening the transitway may be a proactive approach to accommodate new development in the area.

- Sandy Johnston (MBTA) said the Western Avenue busway would primarily benefit Route 70, which runs east-west on Arsenal Street in Watertown and Waltham. He said he appreciates the multimodal planning associated with this study, including improved bus service and the potential Commuter Rail station. He said MBTA has been working with the City of Boston to improve Route 57, which services Newton Corner and Brighton. He noted that, when thinking about improvements to bus operations in a particular area, it is important to think about the full bus corridor. He said sometimes the best way to improve bus operations in a particular area can be to go beyond the immediate area.
- ▶ Anabelle Gutlay said she works for a company that focuses on noise barriers. She said there are many bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure ideas in the presentation, but she asked about technologies that MassDOT is utilizing to focus on the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists. She asked if MassDOT is open to new technologies.
  - Michael Ahillen suggested Anabelle Gutlay ask the question in the main room. He asked Anabelle Gutlay to share technologies she might consider.
  - Anabelle Gutlay said there are a lot of technologies, including dedicated pedestrian signal heads, coordinated intersections, and technology for people with visual and auditory disabilities to utilize the crosswalks.
  - Michael Ahillen said he would add technology to the list of items to consider, particularly technology that would assist people with disabilities.
- ▶ Anabelle Gutlay suggested the study team should consider noise barriers. She said instead of noise barriers that are concrete or solid, the study team could consider transparent walls that would preserve historic and archaeological character. She said transparent barriers are being used on the Betsy Ross Bridge in Philadelphia. She added that green infrastructure could help reduce the heat island effect and improve public health.
- ▶ Ned Codd said there are many good ideas for alternative components and some examples on how to combine them. He said there will be a lot of work to identify the themes and organizing principles, and how the alternative components could flow out of those themes and organizing principles. He noted that it is critical to enhance bicycle and pedestrian access to knit the village together. He also said there will need to be consideration for different approaches to transit and roadway circulation. All of these ideas will need to flow from organizing principles. He encouraged participants and the study team to consider potential impacts to local neighborhood streets. Impacts to neighborhood streets has been a longstanding issue since the Newton Corner interchange was built. He added that it is important to be mindful of where new heavy highway traffic flows are introduced.
  - Michael Ahillen asked for clarification on the comment about neighborhood streets. Ned Codd said his concern is about the impacts of regional traffic on local streets. He said extending the eastbound off ramp makes sense, but this concept needs to be mindful of property impacts. He is concerned about the idea of connecting the ramps to Church Street and suspects Church Street residents would be concerned with this alternative component.
- ▶ Gavi Bogin-Farber said she is a resident of Hunnewell Hill who has seen overflow on Washington Street from Oak Square and Brighton. She said the lack of I-90 access puts significant traffic volume through her neighborhood. She said the Underwood School is a critical village center. She said her hope for Newton Corner is a capping of I-90 similar to the Rose Kennedy Greenway. She hopes to see a true village center that would reconnect Newton Corner. She said she believes there is space for a Commuter

Rail station because there used to be a rail station in Newton Corner. She noted bus service was cut during the pandemic and has not been restored, which has led to more people driving.

- Sandy Johnston said he would be happy to chat about bus service with Gavi Bogin-Farber and provided his contact information. He acknowledged the difficulty of service cuts and the need for agencies to assess needs and community desires for transportation planning. Considering future traffic volumes is integrated with policy decisions that extend to higher levels of government.
  - Michael Ahillen said the study team is working to connect goals and concerns with infrastructure and ideas.
- ▶ Anabelle Gullay suggested using products that support the goals of the study. She suggested the study team seek opportunities for green space and public art. She suggested green walls, which can serve as both a sound barrier and be aesthetically pleasing. She also emphasized green products and sustainability.
    - Michael Ahillen pointed out that the I-90 cap alternative presents a larger opportunity for green space and acknowledged the opportunity for smaller-scale green space and public art improvements.
  - ▶ Matt Costas pointed out that there is a lot of green space and open space at the Charles River, which is not far from the study area even though right now it does not feel close to Newton Corner. He said he was happy to see the alternative with the greenway connecting to the Charles River. He said this connection could change the way green space is integrated with Newton Corner.
  - ▶ Laura Johnson is a former resident of Washington Street. She thanked the study team and noted that the issues that have been raised have been going on for more than 50 years. She said she grew up with traffic on Washington Street and noted that a child was killed on Washington Street when she was younger. She said she was grateful that progress is occurring.
    - Michael Ahillen thanked her for her comment and said prioritizing safety was critical for all alternatives.

#### *Breakout Room Moderated by Christine Trearchis*

- ▶ Representative Amy Sangiolo said she appreciated the opportunity to review the slides. She said she likes how the presentation shows how different alternatives can be layered and enables flexibility for future alternatives development.
- ▶ Zeke Mermell (City of Watertown) thanked the study team and said he is happy to be a communication link with Watertown residents. He said he is encouraged by the study team's work and appreciated opportunities for public and stakeholder input. He noted that layering alternatives is a good planning strategy. He added that as the study team thinks about how to stitch the area back together, connections to Watertown should be considered; the potential Centre Street connection would be positive for Watertown residents traveling to and from the south.
- ▶ Marianne Burke said she is the owner of Burke Funeral Home in West Newton. She said the alternatives showing new ramps in West Newton would travel directly through her business. She stated the new ramps would have a devastating effect on the local community, including her business, churches, and a school.
- ▶ Quach Hai indicated he moved to West Newton recently. He said the community is vibrant, with lots of kids, churches, schools, businesses, and residents. He stated the area has a lot of traffic congestion already, especially at the intersection of Prospect Street at Washington Street. He suggested that adding new on- and off-ramps here would impact the safety of students and buses traveling to school and local businesses. He requested the study team analyze morning traffic patterns at Washington Street and



Prospect Street. He asked why a ramp in West Newton was being considered if the largest growth is in the Allston Brighton area.

- ▶ Representative Amy Sangiolo recommended the study team speak with the West Newton community before moving forward with new ramps as an alternative.
- ▶ Zeke Mermell voiced support for the transitway/bus hub shown in Combined Example B. He said this option would cut down on distance and time for Watertown bus users heading to Boston. He added that this location is an important transfer point for bus routes traveling to Watertown. He also noted the importance of hearing West Newton residents' input. He said he is encouraged to see alternatives that stitch Newton Corner back together.
- ▶ Rosalind Williams said she lives in Newton Corner and has been in the area since the 1940s. She said it might be helpful to consider regional connections, given that Newton Corner is connected to West Newton, Allston Brighton, and Watertown Square. She asked what the study team is trying to accomplish. She noted her vision for Newton is similar to the area in Boston near the esplanade and Mass General Hospital. She said a pedestrian/bicycle bridge could fit in this location.
  - Christine Trearchis (VHB) reviewed the goals of the study and said that there is no one goal that is prioritized over the others.
- ▶ Representative Amy Sangiolo noted that Combined Example A does not feature a pedestrian bridge, which is supported by residents. She asked it to be added if possible. She noted funding might not be available for a Commuter Rail station. She added that Combined Example C shows a ramp closure and that there does not to be public support for this ramp based on the comments. She said she would be interested in an option where the ramp could be relocated further to the east.
  - Christine Trearchis noted that this is just one example and adding a pedestrian/bicycle bridge into an alternative like Combined Example A is possible.
  - Patrick Snyder (MassDOT) noted the study team has heard support for a pedestrian/bicycle bridge to bridge the gap and remove those modes from vehicle traffic. A pedestrian/bicycle bridge may move forward as a distinct alternative.
- ▶ Zeke Mermell asked if it would be beneficial to discuss ideas for locations of low-stress pedestrian and bicycle connections to Watertown Square.
  - Christine Trearchis and Patrick Snyder encouraged Zeke to reach out with detailed feedback.
- ▶ Marianne Burke asked about the timeline for the process and when action plans would be available.
  - Christine Trearchis provided an overview of the schedule until the end of 2025 and noted that it will be presented when the meeting returns to the main room.
- ▶ Rosalind Williams voiced support for reconnecting Newton Corner with the Charles River. She said a Commuter Rail station may not fit well with the study goals and the overall neighborhood.
- ▶ Zeke Mermell suggested the study team consider alternatives that ensure connections between buses and a Commuter Rail station are as safe, direct, and comfortable as possible.
- ▶ Quach Hai and Rosalind Williams thanked the study team for the breakout session.

#### *Breakout Room Moderated by Zoe Temco*

- ▶ Nate Gibson commented on the large growth projected for the region. He noted that if this growth occurs as projected, there will be a huge amount of traffic in addition to the current traffic in the area. He said Newton Corner should be a village, reconnected, and walkable. He felt the decking alternative will have the largest impact achieving this.



- ▶ Lourdes Connolly expressed support for Alternative Component 16 due to the traffic between I-90 and the river roads. She supported turning St. James Street into a one-way street to make bicycling feel safer. She mentioned that the cars coming from Allston and Cambridge come down St. James Street and additional I-90 ramps in the Brighton area could make a significant difference.
- ▶ Lucia Dolan asked if implementing a toll was considered.
  - Zoe Temco (VHB) said that a previous study of Newton Corner considered additional tolling, but the 16 Alternatives presented during this meeting do not.
- ▶ Jenn Martin (City of Newton) suggested discussing possible I-90 on/off ramps in West Newton.
- ▶ Nate Gibson voiced support for additional interstate access outside of Newton Corner.
- ▶ Lourdes Connolly said she used to live in West Newton and would drive through Auburndale to access I-90 westbound. She does not see the need for additional ramps in West Newton.
- ▶ Jenn Martin voiced support for additional bus service running west from Centre Street to West Newton and Auburndale. This would connect Newton and help Newton residents travel into and out of Newton Corner.
- ▶ Nate Gibson voiced support for the transit hub.
- ▶ Brennan Guldner voiced support for the transit hub and new Commuter Rail station. He suggested introducing a Commuter Rail station would be a compelling opportunity to restore rail service to Newton Corner.
- ▶ Nate Gibson voiced support for moving the I-90 east on ramp west to Church Street to provide space for a Commuter Rail station.
- ▶ Lourdes Connolly expressed support for decking over I-90. She said pedestrians and bicyclists need a safer way to cross I-90.
- ▶ Nate Gibson agreed that decking is a better alternative than reconnecting Centre St to allow people to cross in the direction they would like to travel.
- ▶ Brennan Guldner agreed that decking would be his preferred comprehensive crossing. He currently crosses through the hotel.
- ▶ Jenn Martin voiced support for Combined Example C. She is concerned that this combination requires I-90 access in Brighton to work well.
- ▶ Brennan Guldner said he supports Combined Example C from a transit and pedestrian perspective.
- ▶ Lourdes Connolly is concerned that Combined Example C will increase traffic as the combination is a zigzag rather than a rotary. She is concerned that the traffic volume from St. James Street would make this a difficult combination.
- ▶ Nate Gibson said that additional I-90 access might be needed in Brighton to relieve congestion for Combined Example C.
- ▶ Jenn Martin voiced support for reconnecting Centre Street and not having to go around the circle to continue on Centre Street when traveling across I-90.
- ▶ Several participants voiced support for a Commuter Rail station.
- ▶ Participants developed a new combined example that would include the Centre Street bridge, a Commuter Rail station, relocating the westbound I-90 ramp, and decking over I-90, especially by Tremont Street and the proposed Commuter Rail station.
- ▶ Nate Gibson emphasized that reconnecting the neighborhood is a priority for him.

*Breakout Room Moderated by Matt Duranleau*

- ▶ Daniel Campbell said that he loved the big ideas in the presentation. He said that decisions ultimately come down to funding but that property values should be considered and the value on people's time. He requested to see the existing volume and speed data that has been collected.
- ▶ Bill McBeath noted there are many different combinations that could be made and asked how the study team will figure out useful combinations of the different possibilities.
  - Matthew Duranleau said that the study team will next review public feedback, do a fatal flaw analysis of the components to see if any are ruled out, and then will conduct an alternatives analysis to determine what could be the most beneficial combined alternatives.
- ▶ Bill McBeath asked if the exclusive pedestrian/bicycle bridge would only connect over I-90 and the train tracks or if it would also go over Centre Avenue. He said the bridge should connect on the south side of Centre Avenue, so pedestrians and bicyclists would not need to cross Centre Avenue.
- ▶ Schuyler Larrabee noted that none of the combined alternatives include a relocated I-90 eastbound off-ramp from the west. He would like to see this alternative component included.
  - Bill McBeath noted that the issue is less about where the I-90 eastbound off-ramp ties in and more about having enough space on the I-90 mainline.
- ▶ Bill McBeath asked for additional details on the potential bus transit hub component. He noted he likes the idea of an improved bus hub.
  - Schuyler Larrabee noted if a bus transit hub is constructed, he would like to see a covered waiting area for passengers.
  - Bill McBeath noted a potential bus transit hub could be constructed with additional green space. Those two components could go together.
- ▶ Bill McBeath expressed appreciation for sharing ambitious plans that could make a difference. He noted Combined Example A has a lower cost and a lower impact. He said he would like to see the study team opt for a more ambitious approach.
  - Schuyler Larrabee agreed with this comment and added he would like to see the two ends of Centre Street connected via a new bridge.
- ▶ Schuyler Larrabee said Combined Example B is beneficial, but the transitway should tie into the Washington Street roundabout. He suggested re-aligning the bridge so that Washington Street north of I-90 would align with Washington Street south of I-90. He said Park Street would become a T-intersection.
- ▶ Daniel Campbell said he is concerned to see two-way traffic on Washington Street south of I-90. He said drivers exceed the 25 mph speed limit and asked the study team to look at existing speeds and traffic volumes.
- ▶ Schuyler Larrabee suggested the study team look at a combined roundabout for Park Street and Washington Street south of I-90. He noted that there are places with two or three roundabouts within a quarter mile.
- ▶ Daniel Campbell suggested looking at dead-ending Washington Street south of I-90 and having all through traffic on Tremont Street, which has a higher speed limit and multi-family housing.
- ▶ Bill McBeath said he likes the idea of decking, as there is not a lot of room for green space. He said the area is relatively dense and green space would be well-utilized.
- ▶ Schuyler Larrabee noted that it would be challenging for drivers traveling eastbound on Washington Street to access the I-90 eastbound on-ramp. Drivers would need to make a sharp right-turn onto the new Centre Street bridge and then make a sharp left-turn onto Washington Street towards I-90 eastbound.

- ▶ Bill McBeath noted a Commuter Rail station would be good for people who could walk but thinks that having some parking would make the station more viable for those who do not live in walking distance. He noted parking could make the Commuter Rail station more attractive and cost-effective and suggested additional decking for parking.
- ▶ Schuyler Larrabee suggested building a parking garage over I-90 to the west, which could allow a short walk to the Commuter Rail station.
- ▶ Bill McBeath noted if you had a bus transit hub and strong pedestrian and bicycle connections, it might reduce the need for parking.
- ▶ Schuyler Larrabee said it would be beneficial to remove vehicles from the area, especially those that could be parked for nine hours at a Commuter Rail station.
- ▶ Schuyler Larrabee noted a benefit of the roundabouts would be to slow down traffic.
- ▶ Daniel Campbell asked if the Centre Street bridge would go through the hotel.
  - Matthew Duranleau noted the bridge could likely be constructed to the east of the hotel but that the study team will look closer at bridge location in the alternatives analysis stage.
- ▶ Bill McBeath noted the Centre Street bridge seems like a key decision point and a lot of the other alternatives pivot around that component.
- ▶ Daniel Campbell asked who owns the air rights for the hotel.
  - Matthew Duranleau said he thinks MassDOT owns the air rights to the hotel, but this needs to be confirmed.
- ▶ Schuyler Larrabee noted the eastern end of the hotel block includes office space.

*Breakout Room Moderated by Rachel Kelly*

- ▶ Srdjan Nedeljkovic said he was excited to see some of these concepts moving forward. He said Alternative Components 1, 2, 3, 4, and 8 would be extraordinary for Newton Corner. He said these would help meet goals of the study, which include safety and connectivity. He added they would support economic vitality of the village. He felt some of the other options would not meet the other study goals. He noted the bridge was the key component, and he would like to see the bridge built by 2030. He added he thinks Alternative Component 4 is essential for opening up opportunities for the other components. He also suggested electric Commuter Rail trains every five to ten minutes that could enable fast connections to Boston.
- ▶ Madelyn Sorensen asked where the existing building is for Alternative Component 9. She said she thinks the decking is a great idea and could provide space for business and open space.
  - Patrick Snyder clarified the study team is not proposing removing the building. The decking would extend beyond where the hotel currently is. He said this would be detailed later in the study.
- ▶ Ellen McCrave said she lives in Brighton and has attended meetings regarding Birmingham Parkway. She noted DCR has plans to redo this area. She hopes the new proposal will improve access for everyone. She said she was concerned about the alternative that mentions the Birmingham Parkway because of the amount of work that has already been conducted in the area. She suggested shifting traffic to Birmingham Parkway and transitioning the nearby portion of Soldiers Field Road to parkland.
  - Srdjan Nedeljkovic noted there was historically a raceway and butchery in the area. He added pushing traffic to other places may not solve anything for Newton Corner and could worsen conditions in those communities with new ramps.

- Patrick Snyder noted the study team is actively coordinating with DCR. These concepts are preliminary. MassDOT Highway Division asked the study team to look into this alternative component.
- Ellen McCrave noted noise barriers along I-90 stop at the Newton line and stop and do not extend into Brighton. She noted that these barriers prevent pollution and help reduce asthma rates.
- ▶ Srdjan Nedeljkovic suggested adding the Commuter Rail station to Preliminary Combined Example B.
- ▶ Srdjan Nedeljkovic estimated the cost of the eight bridges over I-90 in the study area as \$230 million, and many of those bridges have longer span.
- ▶ Nancy Kelley said she is a West Newton resident and appreciated how many of the alternatives meet safety and quality of life goals. She asked how far west the ramps would go in West Newton. She said Washington Street in West Newton already experiences a significant amount of traffic.
  - Srdjan Nedeljkovic said the slides suggested the ramp would not be moved too much farther west from its current location.
  - Rachel Kelly said the study website would have a clearer study area map.
- Councilor Julia Malakie (City of Newton) said she attended the Working Group meeting on February 5<sup>th</sup>. She pointed out moving the eastbound ramp would impact the existing YMCA parking lot and land in front of the fire station. She highlighted the new ramps in Alternative Component 15 are located in a neighborhood that was impacted by the construction of I-90. She said the illustration depicts potential impacts to housing, schools, and a funeral home. She said this could have adverse impacts. She noted that there might be ways to utilize existing pavement instead of what is depicted in the illustration.
  - Rachel Kelly thanked Councilor Malakie for her comment.
- Nancy Kelley clarified that one of the ramps is placed well into West Newton, which corrected a previous misunderstanding.
- Srdjan Nedeljkovic said he would not expect West Newton residents to support Alternative Component 15. He said he also does not support Alternative Components 5 and 16. Nancy Kelley said she agreed.
- Harvey Schorr said he disagrees with the remarks on Alternative Component 5. He said traffic queues in a travel lane on I-90 and there is a risk of rear-end crashes. He said if there were more queuing space, which is what Alternative Component 5 provides, this could improve safety.
- Srdjan Nedeljkovic suggested Alternative Component 5 could increase the number of cars and the speed of the cars.
- Harvey Schorr said the number of cars is dependent on the amount of infrastructure provided and alternatives should account for additional vehicle traffic. He said existing back-ups are about a mile. He suggested a shorter ramp may not mean less traffic; it would mean that traffic would back up on the travel lanes.
- ▶ Madelyn Sorensen said she would be interested to learn how alternatives affect traffic distribution. She said she was concerned about how the alternatives might adversely impact traffic in Newton Corner.
- ▶ Councilor Julia Malakie noted the changes on Washington Street near West Newton, which may be extended east. She said Ned Codd from the City of Newton could provide more information.
  - Srdjan Nedeljkovic said the bidirectional Washington Street idea is consistent with the plans for the pilot project.

- ▶ Councilor Julia Malakie asked the study team to post the breakout room recordings.

*Breakout Room Moderated by Niki Hastings*

- ▶ Councilor Maria Greenberg (City of Newton) voiced support for Preliminary Combined Example C because it brings together elements that many have asked to be included, such as the Centre Street north-south connection, dedicated pedestrian and bicycle facilities, a new Commuter Rail station, decking with green space, and the potential for a village feel. In follow-up discussion, she wanted to understand more about the benefits of two-way traffic.
  - Niki Hastings (VHB) replied that the study team would evaluate the benefits and impacts of two-way traffic and present as part of alternatives analysis.
- ▶ Councilor Pam Wright (City of Newton) also expressed support for elements of Preliminary Combined Example C, including two-way traffic and a new Commuter Rail station. She was not supportive of rotaries and noted potential conflicts with bicycles. She also noted the concept may result in longer travel paths for some trips, such as from the east to I-90 westbound.
  - Niki Hastings replied that evaluation of travel patterns or trip lengths would be part of alternatives analysis.
- ▶ Robin Boger sought an explanation of how the complexities of planning, funding, and construction of urban infrastructure projects, particularly considering city streets and highways, relate to decision-making for future developments, and how those complexities are influenced by financial factors and the involvement of multiple agencies.
  - Niki Hastings asked that this question be asked as part of the general Question and Answer portion of the meeting after breakout rooms.
- ▶ Robin Boger said she shared the concern regarding rotaries discussed by Councilor Pam Wright but also noted that it could improve flow for vehicles.
- ▶ Robin Boger then asked to review Preliminary Combined Examples B and C and expressed initial support for Example B because it would be easier to advance. She also noted that a pedestrian and bicycle connection further to the east (such as item 7 in Example C), would improve this option. Councilor Maria Greenberg agreed with this suggestion. Robin Boger also questioned how the transit connections would work under Example C.
- ▶ Robin Boger expressed that she does not support Alternative Component 5: Relocated I-90 Eastbound Off-Ramp because of the residential nature of Church Street and does not support the goal of minimizing impacts on residential neighborhoods from the externalities of I-90 transportation demands.
- ▶ Councilor Maria Greenberg also expressed that she does not support Alternative Component 5.
- ▶ Councilor Greenberg expressed support for Alternative Component 9: Air-Rights/Decking over I-90. Councilor Pam Wright also expressed support for this option.
- ▶ Councilor Pam Wright said that she also does not support Alternative Component 5 and noted additional concerns related to YMCA on-site parking and overflow parking on the adjacent streets.
- ▶ Daniel Scales expressed that he also does not support Alternative Component 5 and noted additional concerns related to access to the nearby fire department
- ▶ Daniel Scales expressed support for the general concept of Preliminary Combined Example C, especially the decking component being critical to improve walking north-south. To enhance the decking option, he referenced retail/restaurant establishments on the Rose Kennedy Greenway in Boston to enliven the area

and would hope that these could be considered to complement green space. He also noted, as a long time MBTA Route 501 bus rider, that he supports a Commuter Rail station in Newton Corner.

- ▶ Robin Boger asked for clarity on pedestrian enhancements, and whether pedestrians would be separated from bicycles, as part of the combination and component alternatives.
  - Niki Hastings stated specific accommodations would be further developed as the project advances. She also explained that vehicle connections shown in blue would also consider inclusion of pedestrian and/or bicycle facilities in accordance with MassDOT's Complete Streets policy.
  - Patrick Snyder added an overarching goal is for improved safety and improved connections. In this context, the study team will consider how to improve pedestrian and bicycle connections throughout the entire study area, as feasible.
  - Niki Hastings walked through the alternatives related to improved pedestrian facilities.
- ▶ Robin Boger expressed that she does not support Alternative Component 13: Shared-Use Path on St. James Street because one-way vehicle traffic could cause impacts. She noted pedestrian and bicycle pathways cannot be considered in isolation.

### Public Comment Period

The following comments were shared in the main room, following the conclusion of the breakout room portion of the meeting.

- ▶ Robin Boger said she opposes Alternative Component 5, which has an exit on Church Street. She said there are concerns about this alternative because Church Street is a residential street, has a fire station, and is the location of the YMCA.
- ▶ Marianne Burke with the Burke Funeral Home in West Newton said she objects to the plan to have an off-ramp cut through the funeral home and impact the school, churches, and neighborhood.
- ▶ Srdjan Nedeljkovic of Newton Highlands voiced support for Alternative Components 1, 2, 3, 4, and 8. He said the new Centre Street bridge will reconnect the neighborhood and improve safety; the two-directional travel will increase vitality in the village center; and the roundabouts will increase safety. He said he is glad to see the relocation of the ramp but does not support pushing the ramp to West Newton. He suggested electric Commuter Rail trains to enable access to Boston. He said he opposes Alternative Components 5, 15, and 16. He has concerns about new traffic and impacts to neighborhoods. He suggested adding the Commuter Rail station into Combined Example B.
  - Patrick Snyder said one of the goals of the study is reconnecting Newton's neighborhoods. He said the study team will strive to minimize impacts.
- ▶ Ned Codd said the study team should be mindful of impacts to local streets and land uses regarding any changes to the ramps. He said combined examples should work to improve bicycle, pedestrian, and transit access is important for all combined alternatives. He added that reconfigured intersections, bridges, and roadway directionality should be configured in optimal ways to address existing traffic flows.
- ▶ Daniel Campbell said he is a resident of Washington Street south of I-90. He said that each Combined Example has Washington Street shown as two-way, which might double traffic. He encouraged the study team to consider speeding on Washington Street, especially if traffic is doubled.
- ▶ Harvey Schorr said the righthand travel lane on I-90 experiences queuing so there is a need for additional storage capacity. He voiced support for a longer eastbound exit ramp.



- ▶ Madelyn Sorensen said she lives in Newton Corner off Centre Street. She advocated for the decking idea. She said it would be lovely to have green space, gathering spaces, or spaces for businesses.
- ▶ Nancy Kelley said she is opposed to Alternative Component 15. She also echoed what Daniel Campbell had mentioned about speeding on Washington Street.
  - Patrick Snyder said safety has been a persistent concern and that Newton Corner is a high-crash location. He noted this is a concern for both drivers and people who use other transportation modes as well.
- ▶ Robin Boger asked about the difference between City streets and State highways. She asked about the layering of responsibilities and how this impacts the decision-making process and timeline.
  - Patrick Snyder said this meeting is intended to get feedback from the public and stakeholders. He noted the Working Group includes state and local partners. He said there will continue to be touchpoints with key stakeholders as the study progresses. He then shared his email address. He said he does not have a timeline for the implementation of long-term improvements, but this will be outlined as the study progresses.
- ▶ Debora Jackson said she opposes Alternative 15 that relocates ramps to West Newton. She noted that the Black community in West Newton was impacted by the I-90 construction, so the ramps would disrupt the same neighborhood.
  - Patrick Snyder noted one of the themes from the night has been to avoid creating or expanding new highways. He said the study team is incorporating public feedback. He noted another theme has been support for pedestrian bridges and pedestrian safety.

*The meeting adjourned at 8:03 p.m.*