



# Meeting Notes

Date and Time: Tuesday March 15, 2022  
6:00-8:00 PM

Notes Taken By: Project Team

Place: Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Project No.: 15403.00

Re: Route 128/I-95 Land Use and Transportation Study  
Public Informational Meeting #1

## Meeting Summary

On March 15, 2022, MassDOT held the first virtual Public Informational Meeting for the Route 128/I-95 Land Use and Transportation Study. At this meeting, the study team introduced the project as well as reviewed and solicited information about existing transportation, economic, demographic, and land use trends in the study area. The study team also introduced the Virtual Room for the public to review content and provide feedback within the study area. Public attendees were given the opportunity to share comments and ask the team questions at the end of the meeting.

## Meeting Notes

Welcome and Zoom Overview by Makaela Niles, MassDOT

Makaela provided an overview of zoom and a notification of recording. She also went over how to use closed captioning and how to raise hands and ask questions. Participants were asked to state their names prior to saying question/comment and asked to share only one question/comment at a time.

Makaela presented two polls asking participants how they heard about the public meeting and how clear was the information provided on when and how to join the meeting. The results of each are attached at the end of the document.

Agenda and Project Team by Liz Williams, MassDOT Project Manager

Liz provided an overview of the agenda for the meeting, which is included below:

- › Project Overview
- › Goals, Objectives, & Evaluation Criteria
- › Existing Conditions
- › Next Steps
- › Public Comments

Liz also introduced the Project team, which includes VHB, Karp Strategies, FHI Studios, and City Point Partners.

Project Overview by Rob Nagi and Niki Hastings, VHB Project Consultants

Rob presented the project overview, which will establish the future land use, housing, and economic development assumptions along the corridor. The project will also develop and analyze alternatives, present recommendations, and develop an implementation plan.

Place: Virtual Meeting via Zoom  
Date: 6:00-8:00 PM  
Ref: 15403.00  
Page 2

Niki provided an overview of the study process and outreach phases. The study process is as follows:

- › Task 1: Study Area Goals and Objectives, Evaluation Criteria, Public Participation Plan
- › Task 2: Existing Conditions & Documenting Relevant Efforts
- › Task 3: Future Year No-Build Conditions & Issues Identification
- › Task 4: Alternatives Development
- › Task 5: Alternative Analysis
- › Task 6: Recommendations & Implementation Plan
- › Task 7: Draft and Final Report

The outreach phases are categorized as Reflect (Tasks 1, 2, and 3), Explore (Tasks 4 and 5), and Confirm (Tasks 6 and 7). Niki stated that the project is currently in Task 2 (Existing Conditions and Documenting Relevant Efforts), which corresponds to the Reflect phase of outreach.

Niki discussed that there will be six working group meetings and three public meetings. This is the first of three public meetings.

Niki also presented the MassDOT Project Website that includes study updates and general project information and the Virtual Room for online engagement. The Virtual Room can be accessed at any time and includes online comment forms and project information, documents, and materials.

Niki then presented the land use and environmental project study area and the transportation study area. The land use and environmental study area extends approximately ½ mile in each direction from Route 128/I-95 with additional development captured along Winter Street in Waltham. The transportation study area includes the mainline and all ramps on Route 128/I-95 between Route 16 and Route 2A, 42 study area intersections, transit accommodations, active transportation facilities, and safety.

Goals, Objectives & Evaluation Criteria by Niki Hastings, VHB Project Consultant

Niki presented the goals, objectives, and evaluation criteria. The five study area goals are:

- › Improve access, safety, and mobility for all
- › Support strategic land use and economic vitality
- › Advance social equity throughout
- › Contribute environmental and health benefits
- › Develop recommendations with lasting benefits

Niki presented participants with a poll asking which study goals are the most important to them. The top answer (with about half of all responses) was to improve access, safety, and mobility for all. The results of the poll are attached at the end of the document.

Existing Conditions Review by Niki Hastings, Luke Mitchell & Katheen Keen, VHB Project Consultants

Niki discussed the previous planning documents that have been conducted to date and what defines the baseline for existing conditions.

Place: Virtual Meeting via Zoom  
Date: 6:00-8:00 PM  
Ref: 15403.00  
Page 3

Luke presented the existing conditions from a planning context. This includes population and housing, educational attainment and income, environmental justice, land use and economic conditions, and employment.

Niki presented the remaining existing conditions context, including mode share and vehicle ownership, existing travel patterns, public health, and environmental conditions.

Kathleen presented the existing transportation conditions. This includes traffic volumes along the Route 128/I-95 corridor and variability in existing travel times, traffic operations and level of service at the study area intersections, an overview of existing public transit options within the study area (rail and bus), active transportation accommodations, and a review of safety deficiencies. Kathleen noted that the existing volumes and operations analysis represent a pre-COVID condition.

Kathleen presented a poll that asked participants what the biggest challenge is to travel in this area. The top answer was lack of pedestrian/bicycle facilities followed by traffic congestion on the local roads/ramps to the highway. The results of the poll are attached at the end of the document.

Next Steps by Niki Hastings, VHB Project Consultant and Liz Williams, MassDOT Project Manager

Niki discussed the next steps for the Project, including incorporating stakeholder input, advancing future conditions analyses, the third working group meeting, future conditions review and alternatives development, and summarizing issues, opportunities, and constraints. For the Future Conditions, the study will focus on a future year 2040 that is based on the statewide travel demand model employment and population projections, known developments in the pipeline, and planned infrastructure improvements.

Liz discussed the schedule looking ahead for the project, including the next public meeting in a few months on the development of the alternatives. Following that will be an analysis of alternatives and recommendations. The project report will be published about a year from now.

## Public Comments

Makaela opened the meeting for public comments. Makaela provided an overview of how to share questions and comments on the zoom platform and tells attendees that they can share questions either in the chat or virtually raise their hands to verbally ask a question.

› Councilor Paul Katz: I am the city councilor for Ward 7 in Waltham. I have heard several issues from constituents in this area:

1. The primary concern is regarding noise abatement north and south of the Route 20 interchange. There is a neighborhood to the north that is very close to the highway.
2. Will there be planting and sustainable greenspace in the study area, or all concrete and cement?
3. There is a concern in the neighborhood about the new process for how to get onto Route 128 northbound from Route 20. People are worried they will have to go up to Route 117 to access the highway.
4. There is an intersection close to the Route 20 interchange (Cedarwood Avenue / Tavern Street). Is that included in the study area?
5. The Route 20 rotary is known as the death circle. It is kind of dangerous and scary. I personally find other ways of crossing the highway instead of using Route 20.

Place: Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Date: 6:00-8:00 PM

Ref: 15403.00

Page 4

- Liz Williams: Thank you for participating, we will follow up and get back to you with some of those questions. I can say that the Cedarwood intersection is included in the study area.
- › Barbara Gruenthal: How many development projects are in the pipeline within the corridor and how many of those is a project for which VHB has been retained by the developer?
  - Liz Williams: We are trying to cast a very wide net in how many projects have been filed and are about to be filed. There are about 20 to 30 developments in the pipeline that we've identified working with municipalities and pulling our own records here at MassDOT. I can't speak for how many projects VHB is currently working on.
- › George Kirby: Given the limited number of active transportation corridors, I wanted to highlight an additional one. To the south of the study area is the Lower Falls Greenway in Newton and the Bay Colony Rail Trail in Needham. A study is currently in the works looking at connecting these two pathways over Route 128 and the Charles River.
- › Barbara Gruenthal: Who are the Newton representatives who have been involved in the community participation process to date?
  - Liz Williams: We reached out to the chief executive officers for the City of Newton to ask who should be included in the working group. We are happy to have Nicole Freedman, the Director of Transportation Planning in the working group.
- › Katie Mead: How does this study work in connection with the proposed roadway improvements promised by developers in Waltham, such as the improvements along Route 117 and Route 20?
  - Liz Williams: The working group includes several developers, including the developer of the 1265 Main Street project, who paid into a mitigation funds study. Mayor McCarthy is also an active member of our working group. The working group gives developers and local municipalities opportunities to make sure we are incorporating their plans into our analyses.
  - Rob Nagi: One part of this study is looking at future roadway improvements for the region. We are including proposed roadway improvements as part of our future analyses. Another piece of this project is looking at the potential of a commuter rail station along the Fitchburg Line. This study is in a good position schedule wise as it should be wrapped up before construction is started on the 1265 Main Street mitigation items.
- › Mark Rudnick: We know there is a need and interest in including dedicated bike lanes in the reworking of the Route 117 bridge over I-95. But an even more significant biking connection is the Wayside Rail Bridge just south of the Route 117 location. Opening this bridge to bikes and other trail users is essential to the completion of the Mass Central Rail Trail and specifically the connection between Waltham and Weston. We know that the DCR supports the use of this connection as well. Is this bridge in the plan and will it be opened to MCRT users?
  - Kathleen Keen: We have identified the MCRT in our slides and highlighted the gap over Route 128. We are also working with the developers and the City of Waltham to incorporate the mitigation improvements in the future conditions for this study. DCR is currently looking for consultants to start a study that will look at filling in that final gap in the path network.
- › Bruce Green: As a Waltham resident, I travel this area often. On I-95 SB, there is a dedicated exit lane onto I-90. Adding a second exit lane would help operations in that area. In addition, our mayor has requested an additional exit to be added in the Market Basket area.

Place: Virtual Meeting via Zoom  
Date: 6:00-8:00 PM  
Ref: 15403.00  
Page 5

- › Mark Rudnick: The 40B's underway and planned in the corridor in Waltham are setting the stage for huge changes in housing penetration into this zone. Hope you are tracking that.
  - Liz Williams: Yes, these projects are in the development pipeline.
- › Darla Earl: Could commercial zones be rezoned to mixed use to allow housing options close to retail.
  - Luke Mitchell: In the past, the trend was to separate zoning by uses. In the past 20 years or so, the newer trend has been to increase the number of mixed-use developments. This has many benefits to transportation and traffic and for community building and quality of life in general. It is up to the municipalities to change zoning laws and it can be a lengthy process, as it affects all buildings in the zone. In addition, there has been neighborhood pushback in the past in Eastern Massachusetts with large multi-family proposals, which can be as powerful as zoning.
- › Darla Earl: Why was this corridor chosen? Seems like route 117 could use more focus. Also wondering how other housing option changes closer to the city could pull residents currently in the area.
  - Liz Williams: This corridor was selected because it has been the site of significant development in the past and is a place where lots of people live, work, and travel through on a daily basis. Given the density of development that has happened in a short period of time, it is important to ensure that people can travel through the area safely.
- › Barbara Gruenthal: How did you determine what commuting mode people use?
  - Niki Hastings: The data is based on information from the US Census bureau from the American Community Survey 2019 estimates.
- › Karen Walz: In terms of safety, Exit 41 southbound into Waltham (Route 20) is an absolute disaster. I'm frankly surprised that no one's been killed there yet, and that's no joke. I use that exit at least four days a week. It needs re-thinking or a flyover, but as it is, to say it was poorly executed is an understatement. I honestly think this is about the FIRST thing that should be considered in any planning, re-design, whatever's to be done. There are accidents, car damage, and personal injuries (if not deaths) waiting to happen. Who is going to deal with this?
  - Niki Hastings: Safety is a really important aspect of this study and it's built into our goals and objectives. That area specifically was part of our existing conditions safety analysis where we reviewed crash data for the last five years and were able to dive into trends.
  - Kathleen Keen: Improvements at the Route 20 rotary are planned as mitigation from the 1265 Main Street project.
- › Martha Creedon: 650 daily boardings at Riverside? Is that hourly?
  - Kathleen Keen: The 650 boardings are daily. That is a total at both Riverside and Woodland stations within the study area. It includes all people boarding including residents, workers, and anyone else accessing the station.
- › George Kirby: On the environmental impacts, have you considered air pollution resulting from congestion on Route 128? Have you considered the conversion to electric vehicles by the future year of 2040 and how autonomous vehicles may impact air pollution in the future?
  - Niki Hastings: One of our goals for this study is to improve the environment and certainly reducing air pollution via a reduction in vehicle miles traveled and a mode shift is something that the alternatives will hopefully drive towards and the recommendations will realize that. Technology is also a big part of this, looking at how technology will impact future travel trends and environmental issues as well.
- › Judi Burten: Was the study done before or during the pandemic?

Place: Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Date: 6:00-8:00 PM

Ref: 15403.00

Page 6

- Niki Hastings: The data presented in the Existing Conditions all represent a pre-pandemic condition.
- › Pam Wright: MassDOT will replace and/or rehabilitate 8 bridges at the I-90/I-95 interchange starting 2023. Are you working with them?
  - Liz Williams: In addition to our external working group, we also have a list of internal partners at MassDOT and the MBTA, so we are aware of other projects in the area.
- › Barbara Gruenthal: Because this is a state study and land use is regulated by the cities and towns, what is the purpose(s) and expectation(s) of having land use be a part of this study?
  - Niki Hastings: The connection between different land uses influences travel trends in the area. Projecting the future uses helps us to develop recommendations and improvements. While land use is guided by the cities and town, that's where the partnership and the involvement of the study area municipalities on the Working Group come into play. When we develop recommendations and an implementation plan, we'll be identifying points of contact to help move those recommendations into realities.
- › Bill D: Is there a plan to replace grass on highway medians/interchanges with low maintenance native grasses, flowering plants, etc? If not, why?
  - Liz Williams: I do not know at this point, but I will follow up and get back to you. MassDOT is always looking for sustainable ways to update facilities.
- › Grant Hauber: How does this study integrate with the Rail Vision and Focus 40 MBTA long term plans? It would seem that it would be helpful to have development of 'hub station' at 20/117 and an integrated CR/Greenline station at Riverside to facilitate some sort of North-South access to this prime work/commercial corridor - say, integrated with shuttles.
  - Liz Williams: Both Rail Vision and the Focus 40 MBTA plans were developed here at OTP within MassDOT. We have an active working group working with internal staff members at MassDOT, so everyone is aware of what projects are going on and that any recommendations that we propose as part of this study are consistent with their long-range plans.
- › Lee Toma: In general, I'd like to see safer pedestrian and bike access on all the bridges across the highway. But my top request is that I'd like to see the Mass Central rail trail extended across the Fitchburg line and the highway. Thank you.
- › Paul Katz: Who is in the working group from Waltham, please? Thank you.
  - Liz Williams: We are very happy to have the support of Mayor McCarthy. She has been wonderful to work with and making sure we are aware of projects and developments that are ongoing in Waltham and providing feedback on the analysis and the data we are collecting.
- › Judi Burten: is the development at riverside being considered?
  - Liz Williams: Yes
- › Robert Coleman: Has any type of transit bus acting to circulate passengers throughout the entire study area been considered? Why or why not?
  - Kathleen Keen: We have not yet started our future analyses, but we will be including transition components in the recommendations. To date there is not a single transit service that provides this type of circulator service throughout the corridor. I know the 128 Business Council operates many shuttles in the area and frequently solicits feedback from riders on future routing.

Place: Virtual Meeting via Zoom  
Date: 6:00-8:00 PM  
Ref: 15403.00  
Page 7

- › Robert Coleman: What is the specific timetable and schedule for the Route 117 - Route 20 changes and improvements?
  - Rob Nagi: The current plans are still in design and going through review with MassDOT. The soonest a shovel will be in the ground is late 2023 / early 2024. Since it is a private project, the timeline will also be somewhat decided by the developer.
- › Bob Wolf: Are there north/south bike corridors that are being planned both west and east of 128? Might they require expanding focus beyond the ½ mile wide study corridor?
  - Niki Hastings: The ½ mile is really focused on land use and environmental conditions. From a transportation connectivity perspective, we did look farther out to include active transportation and transit projects beyond the corridor in order to capture regional movements.
- › Eamon Dawes: Where is the traffic coming from? About what percent of trips are by local/corridor/transit connected/area residents?
  - Niki Hastings: For workers in the study area, many trips are originating outside the study area. There is a strong connection to/from Boston and a smattering of regional connections to the north, south, and west. Only about 25% to 30% of drivers travel all the way through the study area without getting on or off, which means about 75% of users are using one of the study area ramps, indicating a pattern of local travel.
- › Lee Toma: When I sit in traffic on Route 128, I wonder if it might be possible to have dedicated transit along the corridor? Maybe we could park at the office park closest to home, walk to a station at the nearest bridge and take a bus rapid transit line to the work office park or to other transit connections? It would offer potential congestion and environmental benefits.
  - Niki Hastings: Considering transit improvements is important as we get into the alternatives development section of the project.
- › Christine Warren: Would MassDOT consider a light rail solution on Route 128 with shuttle buses to/from employers to reduce automobile traffic?
  - Niki Hastings: Everything is on the table at this point. We are looking forward to diving into this during the alternatives development.
- › Robert Coleman: As a result of the Pandemic much of the office space is vacant, have you considered the change of building use to life science/lab use with reduced traffic use?
  - Luke Mitchell: There is a big trend in Boston for converting office space into lab space. As you suggest, there are fewer people working in the same square footage of a lab as there are in an office. There are a number of lab projects in the pipeline that we are aware of in Waltham and Lexington.
- › Barbara Gruenthal: Please explain what is planned for the Mass Pike/I-95 interchange and when that work is planned.
  - Liz Williams: MassDOT is planning to rehabilitate or replace bridges at the I-95/I-90 interchange. There will be a public meeting for that project on March 31 where more information will be provided. A link was just dropped into the chat to find more information and details about that project and so sign up for the meeting (<https://www.mass.gov/event/newtonweston-proposed-bridge-replacement-and-rehabilitation-at-i-90i-95-interchange-2022-03-31t180000-0400-2022-03-31t200000-0400>).

Place: Virtual Meeting via Zoom  
Date: 6:00-8:00 PM  
Ref: 15403.00  
Page 8

- › Mark Rudnick: Since it seems difficult to directly answer questions about the MCRT rail bridge at this time, I'd like to just comment that there is a huge biking constituency for, and intense community support for the use of THIS bridge for the rail trail, whether or not alternate bike connections are provided in the Rte117 interchange plans.
  - Kathleen Keen: The DCR project is looking at that specific rail bridge and we will be coordinating to make sure both projects are aligned.
- › Kathy McMenimen: Is there a document or location created that describes the total cost of this longitudinal project, as well as FY revenue sources from start to finish? Also, is there a document that lists all participants in this project, both public and private?
  - Liz Williams: This is a state-run project, so any information included is a public record. If you want to email me directly, I can try and provide applicable information on project costs and administrative things. The project website should also list all the working group members.
- › Sonja Wadman: Is there a link for that DCR study/request re: MCRT bridge?
  - Kathleen Keen: The project has not yet started so there had not been anything provided to the public to date just yet.
- › Paul Katz: What are the plans for Stow Street at Route 117 - will Stow Street be dead-ended or will it remain a connection from 20 to 117?
  - Rob Nagi: That project is part of the private mitigation associated with the 1265 Main Street off-site improvements. However, the final determination will be made by the city of Waltham. It seems they are leaning towards dead-ending Stow Street.
- › Robert Coleman: Will the questions and answers as part of this presentation be made publicly available, if so when, where and how?
  - Liz Williams: Yes, the presentation and Q+A will be available on our website in a couple days.
- › Darnell Dunn: Going back to the question about conversation of lab space in Waltham, Boston Properties, Inc., has executed three leases totaling 166,000 square feet at 880 Winter Street in Waltham, MA back in December. 115,000 square feet with TScan Therapeutics, Inc, 37,000 square feet with RVAC Medicines, 14,000 square feet with EdiGene
- › Paul Katz: (and final question) will pedestrian bridges be considered for the rail trail to cross over route 117?
  - Kathleen Keen: That again will be part of the DCR study. While that study is just beginning, we can share a link in the chat to the DCR webpage for the Mass Central Rail Trail so people can stay up to date on that project.
- › Judi Burten: how will the interchanges at Grove Street be changed?
  - Kathleen Keen: There are plans that includes a new roundabout that are incorporated in our future analyses.
- › Martha Creedon: As you can see, there really is a lot of interest for getting the MCRT over the highway. It's a huge missing link, urgently needed. Thank you for the heads-up about the DCR planning. Hopefully this will move it along and not let the project get lost in larger highway projects there.

Closing remarks by Liz Williams.



## Meeting Attendees

### MassDOT

- › Makaan Niles
- › Liz Williams
- › Dan Fielding
- › Charlene Job
- › Hung Pham

### Project Team

- › Niki Hastings
- › Luke Mitchell
- › Kathleen Keen
- › Rob Nagi
- › Matt Duranleau

### Elected Officials

- › Mayor Jeannette McCarthy (Waltham)
- › City Councilor Paul Katz (Waltham, Ward 7)
- › Representative Thomas Stanley (9<sup>th</sup> Middlesex District)

### Working Group Members

- › Mayor Jeannette McCarthy (Waltham)
- › Representative Thomas Stanley (9<sup>th</sup> Middlesex District)

### Attendees

- › Joe Zissman
- › Karen Walz
- › Kelly Morton
- › Marc Rudnick
- › Dee Kricker
- › Robert Coleman
- › Robert Primak
- › Dan Berlin
- › Debra Guttormsen
- › Colleen Bradley-MacArthur
- › Bob Persons
- › Rita Cramer
- › Sonja Wadman
- › Laurel Carpenter
- › Jim O'Connell
- › Alex Wang
- › Kathy McMenimen
- › Richard Field
- › Elena Bychkova
- › Betty Barrer
- › Bruce Green
- › Susan Barrett
- › Tricia Hurley
- › Yigal Agam
- › Matthew Silverstein
- › Bob Seay
- › Joseph Poirier
- › Bob Creech
- › Beth Peterson
- › Monica Gonzalez
- › Joel Angiolillo
- › Bob Wolf

Place: Virtual Meeting via Zoom  
Date: 6:00-8:00 PM  
Ref: 15403.00  
Page 10

## Attendees (cont.)

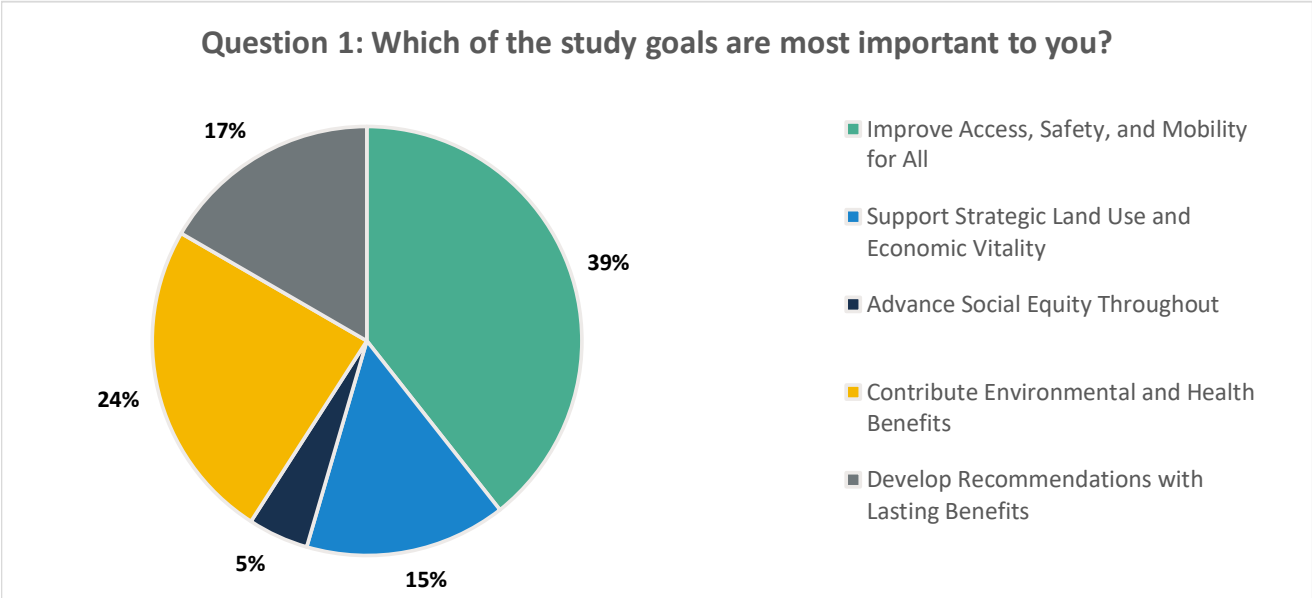
- › Martha Creedon
- › Sam Brobeck
- › Barbara Jacobs
- › Judi Burten
- › Tom Lawrence
- › Nina Siegel
- › Charles Hornig
- › Kip Whitaker
- › Benjamin Muller
- › Darla Earl
- › Pam Wright
- › Barbara Gruenthal
- › Anthony Christakis
- › Eamon DawesLyris Liautaud
- › Grant Hauber
- › Ken Miller
- › Jay Doyle
- › George Kirby
- › Richard Luppy
- › Lillian Astrachan
- › Mark Johnston
- › James Douberley
- › Christine Warren
- › Patrick Allen
- › Victoria Zissman
- › Kethia Nazaire Allien
- › Michael Ardito
- › Leo Keightley
- › Caren Dunn
- › Lee Toma
- › Benjamin Muller
- › Bettina McGimsey
- › Ben Mead
- › Darnell Dunn
- › Marc Zissman
- › Duane Roth
- › Valerie Kilduff
- › Sophie Culpepper
- › Bill D
- › Greg K
- › Michael

**Route 128/I-95 Public Informational Meeting #1**  
**March 15, 2022**  
**Project Team Poll Questions**



**Question 1: Which of the study goals are most important to you?**

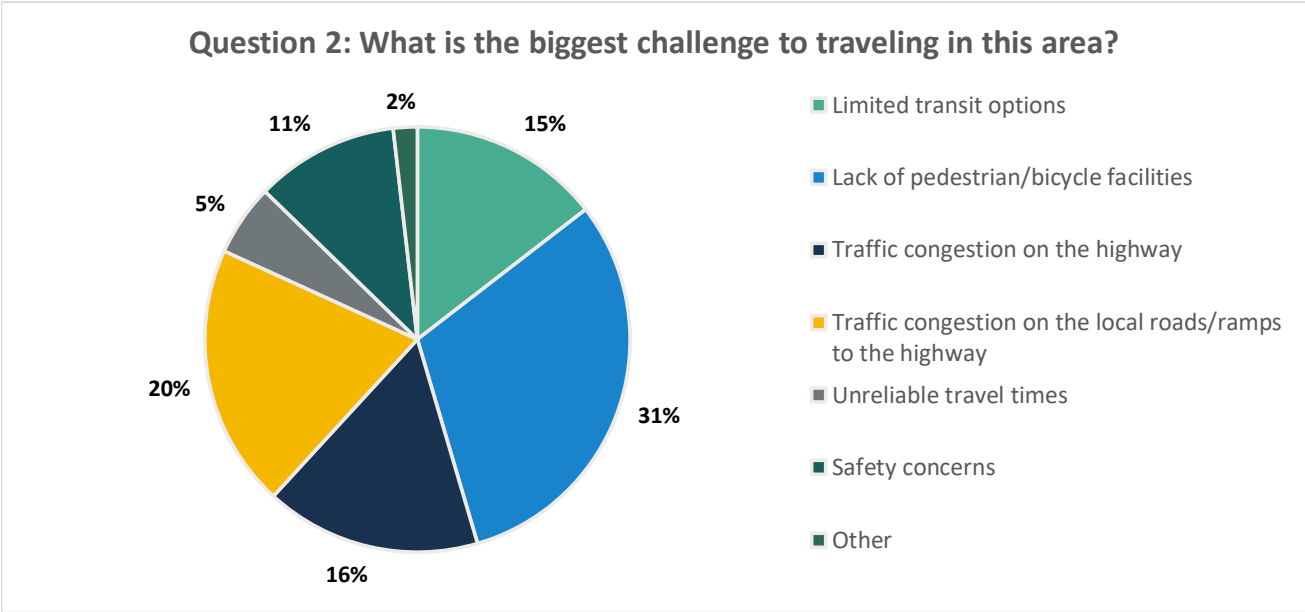
	<b>Responses</b>	<b>Percent of Responses</b>
Improve Access, Safety, and Mobility for All	26	39%
Support Strategic Land Use and Economic Vitality	10	15%
Advance Social Equity Throughout	3	5%
Contribute Environmental and Health Benefits	16	24%
Develop Recommendations with Lasting Benefits	11	17%
	66	



**Route 128/I-95 Public Informational Meeting #1**  
**March 15, 2022**  
**Project Team Poll Questions**



<b>Question 2: What is the biggest challenge to traveling in this area?</b>	<b>Responses</b>	<b>Percent of Responses</b>
Limited transit options	8	15%
Lack of pedestrian/bicycle facilities	17	31%
Traffic congestion on the highway	9	16%
Traffic congestion on the local roads/ramps to the highway	11	20%
Unreliable travel times	3	5%
Safety concerns	6	11%
Other	1	2%
	<b>55</b>	

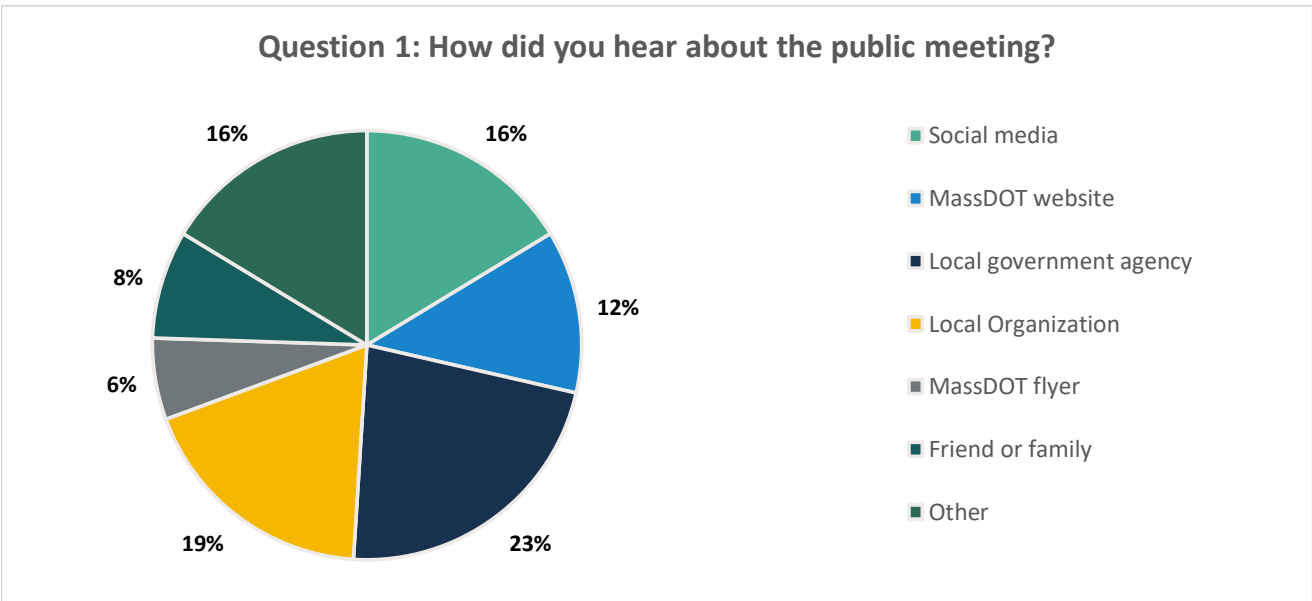


**Route 128/I-95 Public Informational Meeting #1**  
**March 15, 2022**  
**MassDOT Poll Questions**



**Question 1: How did you hear about the public meeting?**

	<b>Responses</b>	<b>Percent of Responses</b>
Social media	8	16%
MassDOT website	6	12%
Local government agency	11	22%
Local Organization	9	18%
MassDOT flyer	3	6%
Friend or family	4	8%
Other	8	16%
	<b>49</b>	



**Route 128/I-95 Public Informational Meeting #1**  
**March 15, 2022**  
**MassDOT Poll Questions**



**Question 2: How clear was the information provided on when and how to join?**

	<b>Responses</b>	<b>Percent of Responses</b>
Clear	33	89%
Somewhat clear	3	8%
Not clear	1	3%
	37	

