



October 21, 2010

To: William Clark
Director of Planning & Community Development
Town of Milton

Through: Keri Pyke, P.E., PTOE
Howard/Stein-Hudson
Project Manager

From: Nathaniel Curtis
Howard/Stein-Hudson
Public Involvement Specialist

RE: **East Milton Square Parking and Access Study**
Meeting of the Business & Citizens Advisory Council (BCAC)¹
Meeting Notes of October 20, 2010

William (Bill) Clark (Director of Planning & Community Development for the Town of Milton) opened the meeting by welcoming the members of the BCAC and thanking them for their attendance. He noted that the first of three community meetings for the East Milton Square will take place on November 3, 2010 at 6:30 PM. This meeting will be held at the Council on Aging located at 10 Walnut Street in Milton. The next BCAC meeting is scheduled for December 15th. Members of the BCAC are requested to save this date.

Highlights of the Presentation

Following his opening remarks, Bill turned the meeting over to Keri Pyke (HSH) who briefed the audience on the current status of the project with a short PowerPoint presentation. Keri noted that for some of the information contained in the presentation would be a recapitulation of materials presented at the September 28, 2010 public officials' briefing. She also requested that audience members who had not yet seen the evaluation criteria take a copy from the table at the back of the room. Highlights of the presentation included the following:

- Topics for discussion in the presentation included the following:
 - Study area and project goals;
 - Project schedule and work accomplished to date;
 - Evaluation criteria; and,
 - Next steps.
- The study area for the East Milton Square Parking and Access Study is relatively large extending to:²
 - The Milton/Boston line at the Neponset River Greenway;
 - The Milton/Quincy line on Bryant Street and Granite Avenue;
 - Pleasant Street in Milton; and,
 - The intersection of Centre Street and Adams Street in Milton.

¹ Meeting attendance sheets are reproduced in Appendix 1.

² For a copy of the graphic referenced by Keri during this part of her remarks, please see:
<http://www.eastmiltonsquarestudy.com/documents.html>

- The goal for the study is to develop three to five options for the improvement of East Milton Square. The option or combination of options will ultimately be selected by the Board of Selectmen with significant input from the residents of Milton and the BCAC.
 - The option selected could be a single, stand-alone option, a blended option, or a phased plan in which different options build on each other. If this is the case, the plan will be phased so that one step does not need to be undone to accomplish the next.
- At the previous meeting of the BCAC, July 14, 2010, the group had agreed to suspend data collection due to the presence of an MWRA project on Adams Street west of I-93. At this time, two major field work items remain undone:
 - The parking turnover study.
 - The recount of turning movement volumes at the intersection of Adams Street and Centre Street. This intersection is currently heavily influence by MWRA work and counts taken there would not show normal volumes.
- HSH is in contact with the project manager for the MWRA project and it is currently expected that the work will be suspended for the winter by November 29, 2010. It is possible that the recount at Adams Street and Centre Street could happen earlier in the month of November and MWRA will keep HSH updated with regard to their project's progress. It is currently anticipated that by the BCAC's next scheduled meeting on December 15, HSH will be able to share results of the turnover study and some preliminary traffic data.
- Since the suspension of data collection in July, HSH has reduced the parking data that it had gathered, continued community outreach through both electronic and face-to-face methods, and developed the evaluation criteria.
- With regard to on-street parking³ there are approximately 360 parking spaces in East Milton Square and the residential areas immediately surrounding in. HSH does not advocate that all of this parking be made available to drivers looking to access destinations in East Milton Square, protecting residential neighborhoods from "spillover" parking is a goal of the study, however by inventorying parking outside of "East Milton Square proper," the project team will be better able to understand parking patterns in those areas and how to insulate them from non-resident use.
- HSH already has some anecdotal data regarding parking in the Square and is aware that there is a widely shared perception that the supply is inadequate. The parking turnover study will determine if this perception is reality and will ensure that the range of solutions, both short and long-term, developed to address parking are based on sound data.
- The goal of discussing the evaluation criteria is to give the BCAC an opportunity to review them and request any changes prior to sharing the criteria with the community at the first public meeting on November 3. The criteria will help both the BCAC and Town evaluate the options for improving East Milton Square in both quantitative and qualitative terms. It is worth noting that many of the individual criteria reflect each other and are mutually supporting. Evaluation criteria include the following:
 - Provide demonstrable transportation benefits:
 - Any option should improve the operation of vehicular traffic in and around the Square; however mobility improvements for bicycles and pedestrians should also be included. This could be achieved through bicycle lanes, better bicycle connections to the Neponset Greenway bicycle path, wider, more comfortable

³ For a copy of the graphic referenced by Keri during this part of her remarks, please see: <http://www.eastmiltonsquarestudy.com/documents.html>

- sidewalks and shorter crosswalks. All options should encourage people to get out of their cars.
- Public transportation also plays an important role. HSH will analyze the current functioning of bus service in East Milton Square and determine how to best integrate it into the options for improvement.
- Address local concerns regarding parking:
 - The option(s) under consideration should meet current and future parking demand, taking into account buildings that may redevelop and land uses that may change over the next 10-20 years.
 - Shared parking, whether valet-operated or self-serve, should be taken advantage of as a short-term solution for providing additional parking if required.⁴
 - The option should manage existing parking better through coordinated signage and improved wayfinding to help users get from parking to their destination.
 - Improve safety in East Milton Square for all users:
 - Reduce the frequency and severity of crashes.
 - Reduce conflict between vehicle movements and modes.
 - Incorporate appropriate traffic calming measures within the Square itself to improve pedestrian conditions and where possible in the surrounding neighborhoods to slow or reroute cut-through traffic?
 - Does the concept include an ongoing outreach component to help all users understand how to safely coexist in a redesigned East Milton Square?
 - Protect surrounding residential areas:
 - In terms of traffic patterns, HSH has analyzed a broader area than people are likely to park in for destinations in the Square. This will help the project team understand traffic patterns in the areas around the Square and protect these neighborhoods from cut-through traffic. HSH is in possession of the Governor's Road petition and data from the Town regarding cut-through traffic and a goal of the study will be to generate options which keep automobile traffic on arterial roads.
 - Improve aesthetics and activate opening spaces:
 - Aesthetics can impact the way drivers, and other users, interact with a space. A more visually rich public realm prompts users to slow down and enjoy an area and the project team views improving East Milton Square's already strong sense of place as part of its charge. The project team will generate a palette of options that contribute to aesthetics, traffic calming, and possibly public art.
 - Provide demonstrable environmental benefits:
 - Part of this goal ties back to the one addressing transportation. Reducing congestion will lead to improvements in air quality and noise.
 - Improvements to the pedestrian and bicycling environment such as expanding sidewalks or adding buffers between sidewalks and moving traffic can also contribute to reductions in noise and positive changes to air quality.
 - Currently, there is substantial paved area in the Square and an effort will be made replace some of it with new green space. This is a quantifiable environmental criterion since the amount of green space in the current configuration and in any potential option can be compared.
 - Where possible, options should make use of sustainable materials and practices.
 - Improve aesthetics and activate open spaces:
 - Ensure that East Milton Square is a pleasant place that allows people to move through it easily while encouraging them to sit and stay a while.

⁴ Shared parking is an arrangement whereby a private parking lot is shared by users who require it at different times. For example, an office building might turn over its parking lot to use by patrons of a nearby restaurant after 5:00 PM when most office workers have left for the day.

- Activate the Manning Community Park so that it is utilized more fully. Currently, the park has a low level of usage based on observations during field work, but could be much more heavily used.
- Develop, if possible, additional open spaces for civic functions such as the annual Christmas tree lighting.
- Improve East Milton Square's sense of place by developing "gateways" for the area. These could be signs or other aesthetic elements.
- Foster local business:
 - East Milton Square has a strong local business climate with only a few vacant store fronts.
 - This goal has strong ties to aesthetics since a more visually pleasing area can prompt people to linger in it and make use of a local business.
 - Changes to zoning may be useful both to ensure that zoning maps match reality and to guide future development in the Square.
 - Improvements to wayfinding for all modes can also boost business conditions.
 - Todreas-Hanley, the retail consultant of the project team, will address diversity in retail and how to attract the right mix of businesses to the Square while avoiding the "catch 22" of requiring additional parking for each new business.
- All options to be considered should take into account current and projected land-uses.
- Balance cost with benefit:
 - Any solution considered should be a good value for what it offers.
 - In part, the evaluation criteria as a whole exist to determine the value of an option under consideration.
- Offer options that lend themselves to a phased approach:
 - Any option considered should lend itself to a phased approach that can be quickly begun with small, relatively inexpensive steps. The project team is aware of how long the community has been waiting for this study and wants to provide options which can be implemented sooner rather than later.
 - Options should be cumulative in that an inexpensive early step should not have to be undone to implement a later step.
 - Solutions should also be considered in terms of constructability. Does the option under consideration allow businesses to continue operating and traffic to keep flowing?
 - Towards the end of the project, when a locally preferred option has emerged, the project team will assist the Town in locating additional funding for longer-term, more expensive elements of this solution.
- Upcoming work includes the following:
 - In November:
 - Initial community meeting (11/3)
 - Recount of Adams Street/Centre Street intersection
 - Parking turnover study.
 - In December and into 2011:
 - Next BCAC meeting (12/15) including a presentation of traffic and parking turnover results.
 - Preliminary engineering and alternatives development.

Question & Answer Session

Q: Lesley Will (LW): Do you use Google maps at all for this? I know they show data on there about traffic speeds.

A: Keri Pyke (KP): I hadn't thought about using that for this project although I have used it personally to plan my route if I'm driving somewhere. We can look at it for you to see how it works although short of having Nate look at it every day, I think the data we would gain would be anecdotal.

C: Pat Desmond (PD): I don't believe it is up to date. If you look at it, you won't see the MWRA construction.

A: Paul Nelson (PN): The map might not be up to date, but the speed data is real time because it comes from tracking the cell phones of people driving cars.

C: Meryl Manin (MM): I really don't think you should count those parking spaces in front of people's homes as being part of the supply.

A: KP: I agree. We counted those spaces so that when we do the turnover study we can determine if there are people there who shouldn't be; for example someone who parks in front of a local residence all day and then catches the bus into Boston.

C: Ruth McDermott (RD): The cars that really don't seem to move are in the upper section of the Milton Marketplace lot. That section is supposed to be for merchants and you'll see cars just sitting there all day. My experience for being in the square for a number of years is that if people have to look for a parking space as far away as Pierce Street, they just go on to somewhere else.

A: KP: All right, thank you for noting that. That area will be part of our turnover study.

C: John Virgona (JV): I want to caution you about using that number of 360+ on street parking spaces with the community. I was recently discussing the project with someone and I could see that that they were looking up and down Adams Street trying to figure out how there were 360+ spaces.

A: KP: I think one thing we can do is to show some kind of breakdown between all of the parking spaces in and around East Milton Square and those which are just in the area that most people consider "the Square proper."

Q: PD: Do you know how many people work in the Square? Look at the Jesson Building; I would bet there are 50 people in there alone each one of whom probably needs a parking space.

A: KP: We can get Todreas-Hanley to look into that. I think one of our goals is to avoid having employees taking up the prime spots directly in front of businesses which is something the Town has started on with the service zone parking. Going back to the issue John raised, I'd say it's a point well taken about how we frame this for the community.

Q: Kurt Frasier (KF): Did you create the area you studied for parking by looking at a 2-3 minute locus around each business?

A: KP: Something like that, yes. You'll notice there is less coverage on the west side of the highway because it's less likely for someone to park there and then make their way over the highway into the middle of the Square. The park doesn't connect the two halves of the Square as tightly as it could and we think that's stopping people from walking from one side to the other. This brings me to another point which is wayfinding. As we look to improve that one thing we should try to do is to use signs to help strengthen the connections between existing parking and destinations within the Square.

C: Arthur Doyle (AD): One thing you have to consider is the respect that people have to Al Thomas' Funeral Home. Generally speaking, when there is a funeral the cars for it park on Wood Street and with one notable exception, the residents up there try not to park on the street so that it's freed up for funerals. I think that's definitely an area that you might want to deduct from the parking total.

Q: PN: Is paid parking being considered? I noticed there aren't any meters out there right now.

A: PD: The chamber of commerce has opposed it several times in the past few years.

A: MM: Paid parking will only make things worse around here. If we make people pay for parking they'll either go up into the residential streets or go to the Plaza. People will do anything to save a nickel.

C: AD: There's also the issue of enforcement; you have to pay someone to service the meters and hand out tickets if people have overstayed their pre-paid time.

C: MM: I think employees should just use the service zones. Patrons of local businesses don't want those spots.

A: KP: I would agree with you and go one step further. I think it's fine and that people should even expect to have to walk five minutes from their parking spot to their destination; everyone should be willing to walk a little.

Q: LW: What are the advantages of paid parking and why has the chamber of commerce been unwilling to support it?

A: RM: I think if you look at communities that have paid parking it's because they had a growing business district and needed more parking to accommodate the people coming to it so they put in a garage or a lot. We are starting from ground zero. If we make people pay to park, they won't come.

A: KP: I don't think we're talking about a garage here, I think for the moment we are discussing meters.

C: AD: Meters also require an investment in human capital in the form of meter maids. I think before we could consider this we'd need to know the difference between that investment and the revenue you would collect.

A: JV: There's also the issue of taking care of the meters. We're not Boston, I don't think we can charge 15 minutes per quarter.

A: KP: Those points are valid but now there are some new solutions which can supplant the traditional coin-op meter. You can use a solar-powered central pay facility like some of the ones used by the City of Boston in the Back Bay although you would still need a person somewhere toting up the

receipts. The flipside of that is that those solar-powered central pay facilities are good for about eight spaces and the start-up costs are high \$10,000 per unit although there is a saving in terms of utility hookup and electricity supply. I think we should not dismiss paid parking before we see data.

- C: PN: To go back to Lesley's earlier question, the idea behind paid parking is to drive turnover, people don't stay as long.
- C: KP: And to Meryl's point, if we think paid parking will drive people into the neighborhoods, you may need some sort of resident parking permit of a funeral home permit for Woods Street.
- C: Bernard Lynch (BL): Of course with a meter, if your nickel or dime runs out you get a ticket. That ticket has to be handed out by a person.
- A: KP: That's actually another advantage of the automated central pay units. They can generate a ticket without a human being around. I think the issue is this: if you have signed two-hour parking and you want to try to stay there for three hours, sometimes you get a ticket and sometimes you might not, so you risk it. With a meter if you overstay your time you're getting that ticket. Right now we don't know if someone is parking in East Milton Square all day and going to catch a bus to Boston. The turnover study will figure that out for us.
- C: JV: I'd be very surprised if that were happening here.
- A: KP: We might not find it, you're right, but we don't know yet. I think you would be surprised at where that can happen.
- C: LW: There could be park-and-ride carpool traffic.
- A: JV: There's a park-and-ride lot a little north of the Square. Why park down here and risk the ticket?
- A: LW: I wasn't even aware of that lot being a park-and-ride facility until you said it was. Maybe other people don't know about it either.
- Q: KF: Will you do a license plate study with the parking turnover study?
- A: KP: No, we'll just use the license plates to determine duration of parking.
- C: JV: One more thing: if you have meters, people can just keep feeding them all day.
- A: KP: That depends on your policies. Both Boston and Cambridge will ticket people who "meter-feed" beyond the meter's time limit.
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- C: JV: On the first goal, I think we need a word that isn't transportation, because it has the connotation of being just cars.
- A: PN: We often use the term mobility. Would that work for you?
- A: JV: I think it's better. I think also reflecting on the history of this study, it began with parking and expanded out to address access, that we should reverse the order of the first two goals.
- A: Nathaniel Cabral-Curtis (NCC): That's not a problem. I will make those amendments and re-post the criteria to the website tomorrow.
- C: AD: I think under parking you should call out business and residential concerns separately.

A: NCC: I'll add that to my list of changes.

C: MM: You know, I heard what the people from Governors Road had to say and I think that part of the advantage of living around here is the cut-through street. I think the goal should be to enforce speed limits so that cut-through traffic goes slower. I mean look at all the cars heading into Boston. Without some cut-through traffic nobody would ever make it through the Square!

A: Bill Clark (BC): Did you see our new speed board? It does a whole bunch of things: it gives you messages in addition to your speed versus the posted speed. Since nobody was behind me I wanted to see what it would do at different speeds. At 20 miles per hour, it just flashes 20 at you. Then I went by at 29 and showed my speed and then a message "way too fast." The numbers get bigger as you get closer and it can read license plates and do traffic counts so we'll get some really good data on cut-through traffic volumes and speed.

Q: MM: Does that data go to the police?

A: BC: No, they have to go out and download the data, but they have been taking it around to different streets so we can reality check what people are telling us.

Q: LW: So why does that board work so well, is it because it's entertaining?

A: BC: I think it's because it makes you take note. If you put the board out and figure out where the problems are and that helps the police target their efforts.

C: JV: The roads behind East Milton Square have been calmed by making all of the intersections into four-way stops. I used to know the route through there so I could get the right-of-way each time, but not I have to stop.

A: KP: Well, four-way stops really are not traffic calming measures.

A: BC: A lot of times it just makes people into worse drivers. Tell me honestly, have you started rolling through some of those signs?

A: JV: Funny story: I'm on my 3rd son with a learner's permit and its making me do a better job of driving trying to teach him. I would say that if you make the back roads difficult enough it will force people onto the arterial streets.

C: AD: I got through at least four of the intersections John is mentioning in the morning and I'd say 85% of people make a real stop. People coming through from Quincy tend to respect the signs, but the bandits coming down Belcher Circle are the worst transgressors. On the stretch from Granite Place, they are really flying, it's not just gravity, they are accelerating as they come down the hill.

C: LW: I think within the square itself we should try to put in something of visual interest. I don't know if you see that as traffic calming but if you put in something of visual interest it makes people slow down because there is something to see.

A: KP: I think aesthetic treatments definitely have a role to play in getting people to slow down. If there's something to see it might stop you from having that "tunnel vision, got to get to my destination as quick as I can" attitude.

C: JV: Stepping back and looking at the broader flow of this document, I'd like to put the business goal after the residential one.

A: KP: We can make that change for you. Certainly we were not trying to imply importance with the ordering of these goals, they're in the order you see off the top of our heads.

C: LW: Another thought on this, I think somewhere in this document you need to mention public service facilities such as the post office and fire station. I think there are some federal offices around the Square as well.

A: PD: I'd agree with that. The number of postal employees parking needs to be factored in. Right now the postal workers use on-street parking and the police don't ticket them.

C: BL: You know, there's an awful lot of potential for parking on top of the Expressway. I know you think it's too expensive, but that potential is right there.

A: KP: I didn't say it was too expensive, although it certainly would be, but if you can find the money, it can happen.

C: BL: Ever hear of earmarks? When Congressman Lynch becomes Senator Lynch he'll find us the money to cap the whole thing.

A: KP: This is something to think about in terms of a progression for improvement solutions: you might mandate that someone who wants to build in East Milton Square has to build their own parking deck over the highway.

Q: PD: Is there a part of this plan that looks at political reality?

A: KP: Yes, I hate working on plans that just wind up sitting on a shelf. I want to give you a plan you can actually implement. We don't want to give you a plan that is so expensive it requires some extraordinary planetary alignment just to get built.

C: BL: I'm worried about the low turn-out tonight and especially without any television coverage here. I know we're competing against the school committee which has changed their meeting night to Wednesday nights and then the selectmen have been meeting on Tuesdays and Thursdays. People really like watching those meetings on TV.

A: KP: Does that make Mondays better; would we not be up against another meeting then? Or if we want to keep Wednesday nights should we just make sure the school committee isn't meeting?

A: JV: These are working sessions [in reference to the BCAC meetings] I think the important thing is to get the community meetings on TV.

A: BC: Mike has already guaranteed us TV coverage for the community meeting on November 3rd.

C: BL: If you have the TV at that meeting you could do a call in. People could call in with their questions by phone. I know a lot of people are bashful, they don't want to come out to a meeting and speak, but they'll call in.

A: BC: Let's see how the first meeting goes just face-to-face and then we can try the call in if we need to.

Q: LW: What is the value of all this community outreach?

A: KP: It helps get good ideas, we of course get some crazy ideas, but it's valuable to have people feel as though they have been part of the process through their input. I certainly hope that you feel you are getting a chance to buy into the process when you send us your comments. This money is an earmark your congressman got for you. I want the public involved in what is their public process. I firmly believe community buy-in is important. You will use the project and we want to make sure you get the outcome you want. HSH is big on building consensus. It doesn't mean you can agree all the time, but in general you are happy with or at least understand how everything came out. You can't please all of the people all the time, but the goal is a product that people are generally happy with.

C: PN: Keri and her team are providing technical expertise, but in the end it's your project and you will need to advocate for it through the MPO process. Community involvement is valuable because it gets you to take ownership of the project. There will be a design and environmental permitting process after this study and the community will need to help steer it through.

A: KP: Also, if you go to the state looking for funding to implement your chosen solution, they are going to look to see if the community is behind it.

C: PD: It seems obvious that whatever solution you come up with it will cost more than the money you have at your disposal. Steve Lynch as said that if the community backs a plan he will find the money for it. He won't do that if we're not behind it.

A: KP: Right, the point is to give you the technical expertise you need to determine what it is you want; we don't want to waste your money.

Q: LW: How well balanced do you find your community input to be? Does it really represent the community?

A: KP: Part of the reason we have a BCAC is to get each of you here representing both yourselves as individuals but also your particular segments of the Milton Community. That's also why we are having the community meetings, having the TV coverage, the website, the social media; we want to make sure that someone doesn't pop up at the end and say "I was never told."

C: JV: That's going to happen.

A: KP: Yes, it's going to happen, but hopefully you can minimize it.

Q: LW: So the more input the better?

A: KP: Yes.

Q: LW: Can you send me a meeting flier for the November 3rd meeting? I'd like to hand it out at my garden club.

A: KP: We'll send a version of the meeting flier to the whole BCAC to distribute.

C: MM: I think the merchant fliers have been a good move; I know people are taking them off my counter.

Next Steps

The initial community meeting will be on November 3rd at the Council on Aging. This meeting will introduce the project to Milton residents and give them an opportunity to review the evaluation criteria. The BCAC will meet next on December 15th. HSH will stay in contact with the MWRA throughout November to determine if any remaining field work can be completed sooner than November 29.

Appendix 1: Attendees

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation
Nathaniel	Cabral-Curtis	HSH
William (Bill)	Clark	Town of Milton
Pat	Desmond	Milton Times
Arthur	Doyle	BCAC
Kurt	Fraser	BCAC
Nancy	Jesson	BCAC
Bernard	Lynch	BCAC
Meryl	Manin	BCAC
Ruth	McDermott	Milton Resident
Paul	Nelson	MassDOT Highway Division
Keri	Pyke	HSH
John	Virgona	BCAC

