



November 10, 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
First Community Meeting¹
Meeting Notes of November 3, 2010**

William (Bill) Clark (Director of Planning & Community Development for the Town of Milton) opened the meeting by welcoming the audience and thanking them for their attendance. He explained that per the contract the Town has with the East Milton Square Parking & Access Study project team there will be three community meetings associated with the project. The first of these meetings is summarized herein. Bill then introduced Keri Pyke (Howard/Stein-Hudson) the project manager for the study and Nathaniel Cabral-Curtis (Howard/Stein-Hudson) the study's public involvement specialist.

Bill concluded his opening remarks by reminding attending members of the Business and Citizens Advisory Committee (BCAC) that their next meeting will be December 15, 2010. While this meeting is open to members of the public, it constitutes a working session of the BCAC and as such committee business will take precedence over public comment.

Highlights of the Presentation

Following Bill's introduction, he turned the meeting over to Keri Pyke who briefed the audience on the current status of the project with a short PowerPoint presentation.² Highlights of the presentation included the following:

- Topics for discussion in the presentation included the followed:
 - Composition of the project team.
 - Study area and goals.
 - Project timeline and work completed to date.
 - Evaluation criteria.
 - Next steps.
- The Town of Milton provides oversight and leadership for the Parking & Access Study. The Town will also determine and implement the preferred alternative at the end of the study process. MassDOT Highway Division also plays a role in the process both by providing oversight and serving as the conduit for the federal earmark funding obtained by Congressman Stephen Lynch. The Town's selected project team consists of:
 - Howard/Stein-Hudson (HSH) – the prime, leads the consulting team, acts as liaison among the sub-consultants, the Town, and involved agencies. HSH is also addressing traffic, parking, and public involvement.
 - ICON Architecture – responsible for land use and zoning.

¹ Meeting attendance sheets are reproduced in Appendix 1.

² As the meeting was televised by Milton Public Access Television, Keri requested that audience members hold their questions to the end of the presentation and make use of the microphone provided to amplify their remarks.

- ICON Parks – responsible for open space, particularly determining how best to activate the Manning Community Park, and streetscape improvements.
- Todreas-Hanley – responsible for retail consulting and projections regarding future land-use.
- Gill Engineering – responsible for structural analysis of the deck supporting the Manning Community Park if changes to this structure are recommended as part of the study.
- The project's study area includes:³
 - The area considered as East Milton Square proper and its immediately surrounding neighborhoods for parking.
 - For access and circulation, a much broader area that stretches from the Boston/Milton line at the Neponset River in the north, to the Milton/Quincy line on Granite and Bryant Avenues in the South, to the intersection of Centre Street and Adams Street in the west and to the intersection of Adams Street and Beale Street in the west.
 - The project team is sensitive to the needs of cyclists and pedestrians and considers improving access to the Neponset River Greenway at the northern end of the study area to be part of its charge to improve access.
- The project is basing its efforts on the following generally agreed upon assumptions:
 - East Milton Square is generally healthy. It has an array of retail, service, and office uses and is surrounded by stable residential neighborhoods.
 - The Square is bisected by I-93. The Manning Community Park represents an effort to knit the area back together, but is generally seen as not as successful as the community might like.
 - There is widespread concern over the supply of parking in the Square; addressing this concern is one of the primary goals of the study.
 - There is also widespread concern over the volume and speed of cut-through traffic moving through several residential streets around the Square.
- The goal of the Parking and Access Study is to develop 3-5 options for the improvement of the Square. The option or combination of options chosen will be selected by the Town. While the project team will make a technical recommendation regarding the chosen option, input from the BCAC and community will substantially influence that recommendation.
 - The project team also seeks to provide the Town with an option which can be phased in over time with both easy, short-term and more complex, long-term steps towards improvement. These steps will be phased so that accomplishing a longer-term step will not require the undoing of a previously implemented short-term improvement.
- The study is expected to run for approximately 1 year, from May 2010 to May 2011.
 - As of November, 2010, the project team has gathered much of its baseline data but still needs to recount the Adams Street/Centre Street intersection and conduct a parking turnover study once the MWRA work has been suspended for the winter.
 - Over the summer the project team has continued its outreach efforts and has developed a set of evaluation criteria to help rate the improvement options as they are developed.
 - Over the winter of 2010-2011, the project team will begin alternative development and preliminary engineering. The evolution of the options will be shared with the community at meetings in February and April.
 - By April 2011, a preferred option will be chosen and in May, the project team will assist the Town of Milton with next steps such as early implementation and finding additional funding sources.
- Public involvement, through both electronic and face-to-face means, will continue throughout the project. While HSH will provide the Town with the technical expertise required to make an informed judgment, its goal is to help the Town determine what it wants to do, not tell it how to move forward.
- Parking is a major focus of this project. To date:

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

- The project team is aware of a widely held perception that the parking supply is inadequate in East Milton Square. The term perception is important since at present HSH still does not have the data, which will come from the turnover study, to definitively say whether or not the supply is in fact inadequate.
- HSH understands that parking needs to be provided for a range of users including: employees of local businesses, the post office, and customers of businesses in the Square.
- The study will contain both short and long-term recommendations with regard to parking, but any solutions put forward will be driven both by anecdotal data from community input *and* hard data gathered through the turnover study.

- HSH has also inventoried the on-street parking.⁴ Parking has been inventoried for a zone much larger than most people would consider “East Milton Square proper,” and includes many residential areas. The project team is not advocating that these areas be used as parking for the Square, but it is important to see if these areas are being used this way and determine how to best protect them.
 - The inventory revealed that there are approximately ten different parking types⁵ in the Square. More uniform regulations may be of assistance in addressing the perception of inadequate parking.
 - Improving recirculation patterns⁶ may also help to address the parking issue.

- The parking inventory determined that within the study area there are, not counting large private lots with shared parking arrangements:
 - Approximately 244 public parking spaces. This includes 198 on-street or curbside spaces and 46 spaces in municipal parking lots.
 - The 244 does not include the 34 service zone parking spaces or approximately 185 spaces that the project team considers to be residential.

- The purpose of the evaluation criteria is two-fold. The criteria, which are both qualitative and quantitative, serve to help the BCAC and community to envision “what success would look like” and to grade the improvement options for the Square. Criteria⁷ include the following:
 - **Address local concerns regarding parking:**
 - Does the supply of parking meet current and future demand, especially when thinking of possible redevelopment of vacant sites in the square?
 - Does the option put parking where it is needed most?
 - Is creative use, such as shared parking, made of existing parking?⁸
 - Are the recommendations regarding parking in alignment with the findings of the turnover study.

 - **Provide demonstrable transportation benefits:**
 - Ensure that the traffic model shows less queuing and improved vehicle operations, understanding that there is little that can be done to address traffic coming from the Expressway exit ramp into the square.
 - Does the option make the pedestrian environment more comfortable with shorter crosswalks and broader sidewalks?
 - Does the option provide better options for cyclists, such as a more bike-friendly Square with improved connections via Granite Avenue to the Neponset River Greenway?
 - Ensure that the option integrates existing MBTA bus routes to encourage transit use.

 - **Protect surrounding residential neighborhoods:**
 - Prevent patrons of businesses in the Square from parking in the neighborhoods around it.
 - Address the speed and volume of cut-through traffic by both improving the flow of arterial roadways and implementing traffic calming measures on residential streets. Any option should avoid solving one area's traffic issue by simply moving it to another.

⁴ To see the graphic referenced by Keri during this part of her remarks, please see: <http://www.eastmiltonsquarestudy.com/documents.html>

⁵ Such as time limitations or use limitations

⁶ The patterns by which people can travel through the square looking for a parking spot

⁷ A full-length version of the evaluation criteria can be seen at: <http://www.eastmiltonsquarestudy.com/documents.html>

⁸ Shared parking is a process whereby a business, such as an office, with a dedicated lot that is generally empty by the early evening, reaches an agreement with another business such as a restaurant to use the lot once it has been vacated for the day by office users.

- **Foster local business:**
 - Avoid negative impacts to business during construction.
 - Create conditions which support the broadest possible mix of businesses. This is one of the reasons the project team has retained a land use planner. The land use planner may make recommendations regarding zoning and will also determine what impact zoning changes will have on parking and circulation.
 - Improve wayfinding for all transportation modes and ensure that East Milton Square is a pleasant place to walk.

- **Provide demonstrable environmental benefits:**
 - Improve the pedestrian environment by placing a buffer between walkers and vehicles.
 - Seek to improve air quality and lower noise levels. Air quality improvements can be seen in the traffic modeling software, whereas noise levels will have to be looked at more qualitatively since an official noise study will not be performed.

- **Improve aesthetics and activate open spaces:**
 - Capitalize on the Square's existing open spaces and figure out how to make them even more attractive so that they will receive heavier use.
 - Create new open space if possible.
 - Contribute to a sense of place. This could be accomplished by something as simple as a sign reading "welcome to East Milton Square," but what should such a sign look like and where should it be placed?
 - Develop if possible a space for civic functions such as the Christmas tree lighting.
 - Respect the war memorial currently in the Manning Community Park; if it needs to be moved, make sure it stays centrally located.

- **Take into account future land uses:**
 - Ensure that any option addresses possible future land use including adaptive reuse of the library site.

- **Balance cost with benefit:**
 - Ensure that any option provides a good value for the money spent. For example, is it worth it to elongate the I-93 deck to provide more parking?

- **Provide a phased approach:**
 - So that this plan does not "sit on the shelf waiting for the right moment for funding," HSH will provide the Town with a plan that can be phased in over time beginning with quick, inexpensive fixes which can accumulate towards larger, more complex improvements.

- Next steps in the project will include:
 - November:
 - Integration of commentary received at the meeting summarized herein so that it can inform the project team's efforts.
 - Recount of Adams Street/Centre Street intersection.
 - Parking turnover study.
 - December (and into 2011):
 - Development of alternatives.
 - Preliminary engineering.
 - Next BCAC meeting on December 15th.

Question & Answer Session

Q: Marjorie Jeffries (MJ): I'm here on behalf of our bicycle advisory committee and I want to thank you for mentioning bicycles. It's currently very difficult to go through the Square in either direction. Granite Avenue is very hard for us

and it's even more difficult to make a left onto Adams Street. The way in which cars take that turn make it very dangerous for cyclists. It would be nice if you could include some way for bicyclists to get through the square.

A: Keri Pyke (KP): Bicycle accommodations and connectivity are definitely on our radar screen. We realize that you have to build a bicycle network in pieces, but we want to think about ensuring that bikes can move through the Square and safely connect to bicycle infrastructure elements like the Neponset River Greenway.

C: Ken Caldwell (KC): I live on Saint Agatha's Road and I'm also a member of the BCAC. You mentioned that you would take your counts during the last week of November right after Thanksgiving. I think you need to wait longer than that, because motorists will still be avoiding the Square. They need to know their old pathway is open for a while before you take the count.

A: KP: So do you think possibly after the holidays? We definitely don't want to count during Christmas because that will not show you what "normal" traffic looks like.

C: KC: Yes, and then I would come back and reconfirm it in the spring.

Q: Name not Given (NNG): First of all, I want to know if I understand you right. Your product here is a report to the selectmen?

A: KP: Yes, we will prepare a written document for them.

Q: NNG: So you won't try out any of these ideas before you hand in your report?

A: KP: Well, there could be some short-term items we could implement before handing in the report, but generally our method is to provide the report and let the town implement the parts it wants to do.

C: NNG: Then I am concerned because there are a lot of reports out there. There's a great report on Granite Avenue as "gateway to the city," but I'm sure you've seen that Granite Avenue doesn't look like a gateway at all. If you don't try out ideas before you hand in your report, it will just sit on the shelf.

A: KP: In the past, on other projects, we have done trials of early, easy-to-do items. We could certainly talk to Bill and Paul about that. For example, in our Dorchester Avenue project, we tested the shut-down of a right turn lane by placing concrete barriers in it. In that case the impact was negligible so we went ahead with it. There will be some alternatives in your case that we just can't test; for example adding more deck to I-93.

Q: NNG: You mentioned the parking spaces. Are all 417 parking spaces in the Fruit Center available? Selectman McEtrick, do you know anything about that?

A: Selectman Marion McEtrick (MM): The Fruit Center owns that property and does provide some shared parking. The issue there is that people went into the parking lot and then everywhere else in the Square. Now the parking is monitored and there's a time limit, but the deal is that as long as you shop at the Fruit Center you can go to other stores and leave your car in their lot for a certain time. I'm not quite sure what the limit is, but I know the Town lot offers a much longer time you can park.

C: NNG: I'm a taxpayer and I want to see more businesses to support our tax base, but please take care of the residential areas because that's what Milton is about. I have some ideas that I'll mail you because I don't want to take up all your time, but in brief I think Bracket Street should be blocked off and turned into public parking and that the fire station should move to Granite Avenue.

C: Paul Midori (PM): Thank you for doing this, both to the Town and to you, Keri. This job has been needed for a long time and I'm glad it's getting done. Can you study how many employees are in the square?

A: KP: That isn't in our scope specifically, and there might be an easy way of doing it outside of looking at the usage of the service zone parking.

C: PM: I understand that you might never get an accurate count, but I'd say that employees are having an awful time getting parking. The hardworking mom and pop businesses are really struggling. They are creating jobs, which we need, and we need to help them do better, pay their taxes and employ more people. Most employees are local people and they have good jobs here. The mom and pops and the national brands like Dunkin Donuts both need all they help they can get. We need to take the burden off the Fruit Center folks who have been very accommodating. It's a large tax base the merchants pay and based on my experience at the Chamber of Commerce, if we had more parking, we could generate 20-30% more revenue. Remember, with more business, we'll employ more people. I like your idea about the gateway for East Milton Square. I'd like a beautiful sign. Other than that, we've waited a long time for this and I hope it goes well.

C: Jessica Constantino (JC): Thank you for having this meeting. I'm sorry I'm late and I apologize if you covered this already, but I hope you will look at Belcher Circle and Bates Road. Both have lots of cut-through traffic during rush hour.

A: KP: Yes, we've been hearing lots about that and we're thinking about ways to address it. We may not be able to address the volume entirely, but we can at least calm the traffic down.

C: JC: I'd like to see some commuter restrictions, no left turns during certain hours, and additional police enforcement because the current signage is not enforced.

A: KP: I tend to lean towards design based traffic calming measures like speed bumps or raised intersections. These slow down traffic all by themselves and unlike signs and regulations don't need police presence to work. A lot of times, people will look for a police officer and if they don't see one, they will make the illegal move anyway.

C: JC: O.K. that's great and I have one more final point: please look at the speeds people are driving on our residential streets. Many people in the winter wind up on my neighbor's lawn.

Q: Richard Campbell (RC): Is there some part of the website where you can put up the results of your study?

A: KP: The section of the website where we put up things like that is the project documents page of the site. As we develop the draft report we can put it up. Also, if you sign up for Facebook and Twitter, you'll get an alert when new material goes up.

Q: RC: And along the same lines, in anticipation of doing the study, can you put up the published scope?

A: KP: Nate, is that up there right now?

A: Nathaniel Cabral-Curtis (NCC): Our public involvement plan has been posted, but the scope isn't up. I will work with Bill to post something.⁹

Q: Susan Love (SL): I've lived on Bates Road for 20 years now and we've seen a significant increase in traffic. It's not pet or child friendly any more. Can you have a specific meeting for impacted neighborhoods?

A: KP: We have not planned a specific meeting, but certainly it could be part of a larger community session.

A: SL: I think it would be a big help to get input from our neighborhood and hear the changes we've seen as a result of development around here. It's a safety issue for both our children and our pets. I'd really like a neighborhood meeting.

A: KP: As I said it's not really in the scope, but I'll discuss it with Bill.

⁹ The scope has been posted to the project website.

Q: Jim Sheeley (JS): What was the motivation for this study?

A: KP: It really began because of the perception of there being inadequate parking in East Milton Square.

A: Bill Clark (BC): The Town got a \$1M earmark from Congressman Lynch to go look at parking and access. The Town wrote a scope to access the money.

Q: So it's got nothing to do with traffic?

A: BC: Well, yes it does. It's how you use the square for parking and how that is impacted by a whole host of other things like circulation, cut-through traffic and so forth. For example, if we were to tell people it's a good idea to ride their bike to the Square to reduce the demand on parking we need to know how bicycles move through the square and what it would take for bicycles to be used.

A: JS: You have two major roads that come to a dead-end in the Square. Adams Street, you can't go through. Granite Avenue, you can't go through. The Expressway creates its own bottleneck. Granite Avenue and Adams Street used to go both ways. My concern is the traffic is the traffic on my street cutting through morning and night.

A: KP: That's part of what this study will look at. It started out with concerns about parking. As we think of circulation the points you raised will be worked out. We've heard comments in other meetings about that very thing. I think one thing we want to make sure of is setting up conditions that encourage people to stay on the main roads.

C: JS: I think we all know there's no parking in the Square and so you need to look at the residents' needs.

Q: KP: Can you tell me what you would like to see?

A: JS: I'm no designer, but I'd like to see Granite Avenue and Adams Street go back to being two-way and then a flyover ramp to keep the traffic out of the square.

Q: Ruth McDermott (RM): Didn't we do a traffic study in Milton in the past few years? These people are unhappy about cut-through traffic, but they should take it up with the traffic commission. We have an office that deals with that. What happened to them?

A: BC: I'm not quite sure what you're talking about. We had a group that came up with reconfigurations for the square, but those were just concepts. It wasn't a study. This study will actually have the hard numbers to back up its concepts.

Q: RM: All right, I understand that, but isn't there a traffic commission?

A: BC: I'm on that commission with the police and fire chiefs, the head of DPW and the town engineer.

Q: RM: So can't all these people go there?

A: BC: Being on that committee, I know we've addressed some of it, but I know they keep coming back. If we can work on circulation patterns it will address some of it.

C: RM: Church Street was made one-way and I think more of the streets over in that area should be made that way.

C: Edward Duffy (ED): I've lived here the longest of anyone and I'm going to make some random comments. First of all, the next meeting needs to be in East Milton, maybe in the East Congregational Church.

A: BC: Ed, we tried for Cunningham Hall for this meeting, but they had baseball sign-ups tonight.

C: ED: I'm a member of the planning board and it was at my urging that cut-through traffic is in the scope. That's how it got there. Not just parking for the merchants, but the cut-through traffic in our neighborhoods which is outrageous.

We should have the police down there and more often than not. Parts of Quincy are configured to avoid speeding, discourage cut-through traffic, and then when they get here they are in heaven, they can do whatever they want.

- A: BC: I want to clarify that I do believe that your police force should enforce your traffic regulations, what you want to do is avoid setting up traffic calming arrangements that require a police officer to be there for them to work. As you say, people ignore the signs you have already.
- C: ED: O.K. Keri, I've got that part. I take your point. Maybe two years back, me and some of the people sitting in this room had a well-organized citizens' committee that met several times, but the traffic commission didn't take us seriously. I'm a pedestrian, a cyclist, and a driver and I know how difficult it is. The sidewalks aren't well-defined because they are old and the drivers put out kids in danger. I would ask that we meet in East Milton. Our East Milton Group keeps coming to me and saying we should reorganize. If this isn't taken seriously by the BCAC, we'll reorganize and show that we mean business. We can't risk our kids' well-being with this invasion of disrespectful cut-through traffic. It's in the scope, it's in the agenda, and we want results.
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- C: Steve Driscoll (SD): I'm from Belcher Circle and I really like Seinfeld. As George Costanza says, "it's a show about nothing." We've been very vocal about this issue for 16 years now and it seems like nothing has been done based on what we've asked for. I think there's really some passion behind this issue.
- A: KP: This issue is in the scope, it isn't extra and we've been planning to address it.
- C: SD: I heard you say that you want to make sure there isn't an increase in traffic. It's already unbelievable, please focus on decreasing traffic.
- A: KP: As I said we want to look for creative, self-enforcing things like speed-humps so you don't have to have a police officer there all the time. Those things make cut-through traffic less desirable. At the very least, those can help the speeds you're seeing out there come down.
- C: SD: I'm not an expert, but I can see that people just don't care. They just come zooming through. In my mind, the main street is where the problem should be. This traffic isn't occasional; our streets are parts of their daily commute. They're making time. Respectfully, I want you to look realistically at this issue.
- C: Arthur Doyle (AD): I'm a BCAC member, a Town Meeting Member and I reside on Belcher Circle. I want to reinforce what the residents of the neighborhood said. I've been to meetings on this issue with Steve going back three years and I've attended some of Ed Duffy's committees. I spent most of today in my neighborhood and I observed a near accident at Belcher Circle and Howe Street because of the volume and speed of the traffic. The capacity of the neighborhood roadways is right out at their extreme and if things continue there will be an unavoidable unpleasant situation. We want to avoid this. I want to reinforce the idea of having our next meeting in East Milton wherever it's possible. I want to make sure that we look at this holistically. We should have an agenda item on the BCAC addressing traffic.
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- C: Janet Erwin (JE): I just want to shop and patronize the businesses. Parking is awful all the time. It's constant. I heard a number of 600 parking spaces.
- A: KP: That includes a lot of spaces where we don't want to see shoppers parking.
- C: JE: The Fruit Center is providing all kinds of parking for local businesses. Citizens Bank is providing a lot of parking as well. People are driving around and around. I just won't walk a half mile between my car and my destination. I won't park on Pierce Street. I have a friend who builds bridges and he wants to put parking balconies out over the highway. Can we do that?
- A: KP: We might do that. We might find that it makes sense to expand the deck, but we can only put out so much deck before it turns into a tunnel and requires a vent structure. It's one thing to look at. Certainly, some reconfiguration of the park and the deck will be something we look at.

C: JE: One last thing: I want you to make sure that the businesses in East Milton Square can survive while you implement your solutions. It's no fault with you in particular, but there used to be much greater diversity of businesses down there. Please don't make things any worse.

Next Steps

The next meeting of the East Milton Square Parking & Access Study will be the December BCAC meeting to be held on the 15th of that month. Depending on availability of a venue, this meeting may be held in a location deemed by the community to "be in East Milton."

Throughout the month of November, HSH will stay in contact with MWRA to ensure that collection of the parking turnover data can be addressed during the week of November 29th.

Appendix 1: Attendees

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation
Paul	[illegible]	Milton resident
Alex	[no last name given]	Milton resident
Sophie	[no last name given]	Milton resident
Michael	Boylan	Milton resident
Nathaniel	Cabral-Curtis	Howard/Stein-Hudson
Ken	Caldwell	BCAC member
Richard	Campbell	Milton resident
Bill	Clark	Town of Milton
Pat	Desmond	Milton Times
Arthur	Doyle	BCAC member
Steve	Driscoll	Milton resident
Edward	Duffy	Town of Milton
Eleanor	Foster	Milton resident
Kurt	Fraser	BCAC Member
Cindy	Haigh	Milton resident
James	Horne	Milton resident
Jane	Irwin	Milton resident
Paul	Lane	BCAC member
Ken	Lewandowski	Milton resident
Suzanne	Lombardi	Milton resident
Susan	Love	Milton resident
Scott	Love	Milton resident
Bernie	Lynch	BCAC member
Scott	MacKeen	Milton Times
Marion	McEttrick	Town of Milton
Kevin	Mearn	Town of Milton
Paul	Nelson	MassDOT
Laura	O'Dweyer	Milton resident
Brian	O'Shea	Milton resident
Catherine	O'Toole	Milton resident
Joe	Oronato	Milton resident
Steve	Pepin	Milton resident
Keri	Pyke	Howard/Stein-Hudson
Stephen	Rines	Milton resident
Jim	Sheely	Milton resident
Ann	Sheely	Milton resident
Bob	Sweeney	Town of Milton
Lee	Toma	Milton Bicycle Committee
Jean	Wilkes	Milton resident