



March 16, 2011

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  
2nd Briefing for Local Officials<sup>1</sup>  
Meeting Notes of March 9, 2011**

William (Bill) Clark (Director of Planning & Community Development for the Town of Milton) opened the meeting by welcoming the members of the audience and thanking them for their attendance. He then introduced the two attending members of the East Milton Square Parking & Access Study: Keri Pyke, the project manager, and Nathaniel Cabral-Curtis, the public involvement specialist.

## Highlights of the Presentation<sup>2</sup>

Following his opening remarks, Bill turned the meeting over to Keri who briefed the audience on the current status of the project with a short PowerPoint presentation. Highlights of the presentation included the following:

- The purpose of the East Milton Square Parking and Access Study is to provide the Town with a set of options for the redesign of the Square. Any option should address the following evaluation criteria developed by the project's working group, known as the Business and Citizen's Advisory Committee or BCAC. Criteria include:
  - Providing demonstrable transportation benefits. This includes ensuring that cut-through traffic in residential areas around the Square is improved or at least does not worsen.
  - Addressing parking concerns.
  - Improving safety for all users: vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists.
  - Providing environmental benefits.
  - Improving the aesthetics of the Square.
  - Providing favorable conditions for local business
  - Protecting residential neighborhoods, both from cut-through traffic and parking by patrons of Square businesses.
  - Balancing cost with benefit; ensuring that the Town receives a good value for the option or set of options chosen.
  - Offering a phased approach to construction to ensure that businesses in the Square can operate successfully during construction and that none of the suggested early action steps preclude more long-term steps.

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<sup>1</sup> Meeting attendance sheets are reproduced in Appendix 1.

<sup>2</sup> Much of the presentation consisted of graphics and users may find it helpful to have these at hand when reading these minutes. The presentation can be downloaded at: <http://www.eastmiltonsquarestudy.com/documents.html>

- The study remains on track to be concluded at the end of May, 2011. The 2<sup>nd</sup> community meeting will be held on March 22<sup>nd</sup> and will help to gauge public opinion regarding the options currently under discussion by the BCAC. On April 13, the BCAC will meet again and, informed by the comments of the community meeting, settle on a preferred alternative. The study will conclude with a final report and presentation to the Selectmen of Milton who will decide on the option or package of options which will go into construction.
- The project team has modeled current traffic conditions in and around East Milton Square. This is accomplished by taking counts at the study intersections, obtaining key intersection dimensions such as number and width of lanes, and signal timings and feeding them into a computer program. The computer program then provides a Level of Service (LOS) or grade, letters A-F including E, which shows how the intersection is operating. Based on this modeling, the project team has determined that in the a.m., p.m. and Saturday midday peak hours:
  - Most of the intersections in and around East Milton Square operate at acceptable LOS for built-up areas, D or better, and including some A's and B's.
  - The only intersection which is not functioning well is that of Granite Avenue and Boulevard Street. This is in part due to the intentionally timed delay on the Granite Avenue northbound approach.
- The project team has also analyzed the past three years of MassDOT crash data. Most of the intersections in the Square don't experience a lot of crashes; however, the intersection of Granite Avenue and Adams Street has an elevated crash rate, above the MassDOT district average crash rate for signalized intersections. It has experienced between 35-40 crashes over the past three years. Crashes at this location are primarily rear-ending crashes, attributable in part to the long light cycle on the Granite Avenue approach. There are also some side-swipe crashes at this location, possibly due to the quick narrowing of Adams Street eastbound from two lanes to one next to the fire station.
- To develop an understanding of how parking in the Square operates, HSH conducted both an inventory of parking, or how much parking is present and how it is regulated, and a parking turnover study, which addresses how long vehicles occupy parking spaces. This study showed that:
  - Parking in East Milton Square falls into three zones: west of I-93; east of I-93 low desire, those areas of parking south of Adams Street and north of Bassett Street; and east of I-93 high desire, those areas of parking including Adams Street east of I-93, Granite Avenue between Adams Street and Bassett Street and Bassett Street from Granite Avenue to Franklin Street.
    - Parking in the east of I-93 high desire zone is often full while the other areas tend to have lower usage.
  - All of these areas are characterized by low parking turnover; cars stay in one parking space for a long time. This is generally considered to be disadvantageous for a business district such as the Square.
  - Parking in the Square is adequate for current businesses, but low turnover in the high desire areas combined with frequent illegal parking in crosswalks and driveways, contribute to a sense that the parking supply is stretched beyond demand.
  - Short-term steps to address this perception include: parking signage improvements, standardizing the times of day when parking regulations are in effect, improving recirculation patterns for traffic, providing uniform enforcement of parking regulations, and improving wayfinding and pedestrian comfort so that people will feel comfortable walking from the less proximate spaces to their destinations.
    - Parking meters are a useful measure to encourage parking turnover and aid in enforcement of parking regulations. They are one possible option for the Square. The project team is still developing a cost/benefit analysis to see if they are appropriate for this location. Solar powered "smart meters," where a single pay station provides metered parking for 8-10 spaces can lower the operating costs for metered parking compared to traditional coin-operated meters at every parking space.

- The project team has developed a short-term option for circulation and pedestrian improvements in East Milton Square. This option is designed to be feasible with only moderate changes. It includes the following:
  - Curb extensions at key intersections surrounding the I-93 deck. These will shorten crossing distances and increase pedestrian comfort while helping to define and protect parking lanes.
  - Boulevard Street and Edge Hill Road would be converted into a one-way pair with Boulevard Street coming into the Square and Edge Hill Road leaving it. Angle parking would be placed along both of these streets. This could help to provide additional parking for postal employees or as an expansion of the Square's service zone to relieve the pressure on the "prime" spaces east of I-93.
- Long-term options under discussion by the BCAC include the following:
- **East Milton Square Revitalization Plan:**
  - This plan reconfigures the I-93 deck to provide two parking lots split by a landscaped pedestrian walk-way running east-west between the two lots. The project team is still working to determine the best circulation patterns for these lots.
  - Adams Street over I-93 is closed with all eastbound traffic on Adams Street routed around the new parking lots.
  - In this option, traffic operations improve at Granite Avenue and Boulevard Street, but deteriorate at Bryant Avenue and Boulevard Street.
- **Kurt Fraser's Plan:**
  - This plan covers the entire I-93 deck to 82 parking spaces, but leaves the eastbound slip lane from Adams Street to Granite Avenue northbound. Issues of circulation within the parking area are addressed by this plan.
  - Bicycle accommodations, which will be worked into all of the possible options, are also laid out in this scenario.
  - This option presents advantages from a traffic operations standpoint because of the slip lane and addresses parking lot circulation concerns; however its large central parking lot has been seen as unattractive by the BCAC. As such, the BCAC has directed the project team to merge the Revitalization Plan and the Fraser Plan to create a hybrid that has the traffic advantages of the latter with the green space of the former.
- **Roundabout:**
  - This plan proposes a roundabout on the I-93 deck. A roundabout, unlike a rotary, is a smaller round intersection, 120 feet wide in this case, which acts a traffic calming device. Traffic signals are generally eliminated in this scenario, though some pedestrian signals may be needed, so there may be long-term operational cost savings associated with this plan.
  - The curb outside of the fire house would be flush to allow fire trucks to come directly into the roundabout, while a truck apron at the central island's northwest arc would allow trucks to get through the roundabout.
  - Adams Street over I-93 would be returned to two-way operation requiring that the intersection of Adams Street and the Wood Street Extension be reconfigured as signalized, T-junction.
  - The Shell Station may need a frontage road to allow access for fuel deliveries.
  - In this scenario Edge Hill Road and Boulevard Street become a one-way pair with Boulevard Street westbound and Edge Hill Road eastbound. This opens up opportunities for angle parking. The project team believes that this option can create 37 parking spaces on the deck while addressing parking lot circulation issues.
  - LOS generally improves in this option and 15-mile-per-hour design speed offers traffic calming. Overall, this option addresses many of the BCAC's evaluation criteria.
  - With regard to circulation, vehicles would move through the roundabout as follows:
    - On Granite Avenue northbound, cars could stay in the right lane to access Adams Street eastbound or continue on Granite Avenue going northbound. From the left lane, cars

- could access Adams Street westbound, Granite Avenue northbound or even make a u-turn around the center island to Bryant Avenue.
  - On Adams Street eastbound, cars would use the left lane to continue east on Adams Street, and to access Granite Avenue northbound or Bryant Avenue southbound. The right lane would provide access to Boulevard Street westbound or Bryant Avenue southbound.
  - Westbound vehicles on Adams Street could use both lanes to access Granite Avenue northbound, and the left lane to access Bryant Avenue, Boulevard Street or continue on Adams Street.
- **Reconnection of Adams Street:**
  - Of the long-term options, this one probably requires the least amount of new construction, though some new signals would be required.
  - Like the roundabout option, this scenario also assumes that the intersection of Adams Street and the Wood Street Extension would be reconfigured as a signalized T-junction.
  - The intersection of Adams Street/Bryant Avenue next to the post office would also have to be signalized. The project team is still working out whether to keep or eliminate the crosswalk that crosses Adams Street directly at the post office.
  - Like the roundabout option, this scenario converts Edge Hill Road and Boulevard Street to a one-way pair with angle parking on both.
  - This option also provides for some improvement in LOS at all of the intersections surrounding the I-93 deck.
- The project team is also considering two long-term parking options for parking along Bassett Street. They are being considered separately since they could be combined with any of the options for the I-93 deck. Both options are expensive and the costs/benefits are still being evaluated. These include:
- **Bassett Street South Side:**
  - This option involves acquiring four properties, one on Adams Court, and the other three on Bassett Street between Adams Court and Franklin Street.
  - Acquiring these properties would cost the Town \$1.2 million, based on the assessed value of these properties, and create 43 new parking spaces. The project team is developing an accurate cost per space, including land acquisition and construction.
- **Bassett Street North Side:**
  - This option adds spaces to the parking lot currently leased by the Town on the north side of Bassett Street, as well as acquiring one home on the north side of Bassett Street and two homes on the corner of Bassett and Franklin Streets.
  - Acquiring these properties would cost the Town \$1.04 million, based on assessed value, and create 49 new parking spaces. The project team does not currently have an understanding of how much it would cost to acquire the currently leased parking area and is working to develop one. This may dramatically raise the cost of this option.
- The BCAC requested that the project team determine what it would cost to provide a single parking deck over both of these options. In a parking structure, it costs between \$10,000 - \$20,000 to construct each parking space after land acquisition costs. Ramping to connect the levels results in a 20-25% drop in the number of parking spaces to provide space for the ramps. Ramps would be a requirement in the north side option, but could possibly be dispensed with in the south side option since the upper deck could be accessed via Franklin Street.
- The project team is aware of issues regarding cut-through traffic on Governors Road and Belcher Circle. Directly addressing these problems is not within this study's scope, however, the project team will not recommend options that negatively impact cut-through traffic. In the final report submitted to the Selectmen, a menu of traffic calming options for the neighborhoods surrounding the Square will be presented including:

- Curb extensions or bump-outs.
  - Speed humps – a wider version of a speed bump.
  - Raised crosswalks – the crosswalk is raised to the level of the sidewalk.
  - Raised intersections – also known as tabled intersections, these traffic calming options bring the whole intersection up to the level of the sidewalk.
  - Chicanes – a horizontal feature which moves the road back and forth to force drivers to drive more slowly.
- Another potential option for the Square is reverse angle parking. This method of parking has been used in several cities in the eastern United States including Frederick, Maryland, Philadelphia, and New York City. Instead of driving into a space head-in, a vehicle backs into an angle parking space. Several areas in Boston will have this style of parking soon. Before implementing this style of parking, signage and an education campaign would be required. Reverse angle parking presents several safety advantages:
- 3 steps to park a vehicle as opposed to the 5 associated with traditional parallel parking.
  - Increased visibility for motorists when leaving the parking space.
  - Increased safety for passengers, particularly children, who are directed towards the curb by the open car doors.
  - Increased safety for cyclists who can be more easily seen by motorists.
  - Loading and unloading of a car can be done directly from the sidewalk instead of adjacent to a live travel lane.
  - Handicapped spaces can be placed at the end of a section of parking facilitating access to handicapped ramps.

## Question & Answer Session

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Q: Kevin Mearn (KM): Did you take your traffic counts before the MWRA work last summer?

A: Keri Pyke (KP): We did our counts in June, before the MWRA work and before school let out. The timing of those counts was important to get an accurate picture of the volumes around here without summer vacation or the construction lowering them.

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Q: John Shields (JS): Would the new angle parking spaces you mentioned be paid parking?

A: KP: They could be. We know that meters are an added expense and the committee has pushed back about installing them. We are working to provide cost/benefit data for meters so you can make an informed decision about them. We need to weigh whether it's worth the cost to the Town. I think that if you install meters in one section of the Square, you probably need them throughout the area to ensure that people use all the available parking and don't spend hours looking for the free spots.

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Q: KM: In your short-term circulation option, on Adams Street over I-93, would that still be two lanes?

A: KP: Yes, we would keep the two lanes and get a few more parking spots. This short term option can be done relatively easily. You could test the circulation changes with paint and barriers and remove it all if you don't like it. The bulb-outs are a bit more formal and difficult to remove.

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Q: JS: Have you looked into this at the federal level because I have an email from Congressman Lynch's staff saying you can't build parking on the deck. What they said – and this is similar to something Joe Moakley

told me 20 years ago – is that the Federal Highway law designates the deck as access and egress over a highway. The email is from Bob Fowkes, and I'll send it to you.

A: KP: That would be terrific. We've been talking with FHWA and we have been having difficulty getting a solid answer. We are trying to get to the bottom of this. One of the reasons we wanted to talk with you before going to the community was to make sure that none of our concepts were non-starters. I would really appreciate a copy of that email.

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Q: KM: On the Revitalization Plan how would people get in and out of that parking lot? The traffic on Granite Avenue is non-stop.

A: KP: Granite Avenue is two lanes which gives people coming out some room, but it is tight even though the stop light creates some breaks for them to get out. We are still working out the details of the circulation patterns in these parking lots.

C: KM: Maybe cut out two more parking spaces and make a spot to turn around.

C: JS: Or cut out some of the park segment in the middle and make a turnaround lane.

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Q: Kenneth Caldwell (KC): Have you modeled what the delay on Adams Street by the post office would be under the Revitalization and Kurt's plans? I'm worried that the traffic could back up all the way to Saint Agatha's.

A: KP: These two options help to address congestion on Adams Street west of the Square by reducing the need for vehicles to weave back and forth.

C: KC: My point is that the more we delay traffic going through the Square, the more you will the traffic back on Adams Street and into the neighborhoods. Right now there's already bad congestion on weekdays and if anything it's a little worse on Saturday mornings.

A: KP: Good point. Let's go to the next two options which address that concern.

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Q: KM: So where are the signals in the roundabout plan?

A: KP: We think there really won't need to be signals beyond some pedestrian lights. We think a pedestrian light would be especially helpful where Granite Avenue enters the roundabout since you have told us cars tend to come up that approach at high speeds.

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Q: KC: On the diagram with the roundabout you have 24 spaces currently. What's the net gain or loss of parking if you remove the spaces currently on Adams Street and Bryant Avenue?

A: KP: The diagram you have tonight shows 24 parking spaces to the north of the roundabout for a net gain of 16 spaces. We are working out some permutations of this and think we can get 37 parking spaces in that area which would give you a higher net gain.

Q: KC: If I was driving east along Adams Street and wanted to go to the Expressway, how would I do it with the roundabout?

A: KP: You would bear to the right through the roundabout and then continue south along Bryant Avenue.

Q: KC: O.K. so if I'm going north on Granite Avenue, how do I keep going north?

A: KP: You can pretty much just keep going straight through the roundabout.

Q: BS: But doesn't the right hand lane of Granite Avenue northbound get shunted off to Adams Street?

A: KP: There are two lanes kept all the way through the roundabout at that point so you could keep going straight even if you were in the right lane. It's just that you would need to be in the right hand lane to go right to Adams Street eastbound or in the left hand lane to go to westbound.

Q: Bill Clark (BC): Keri, would you please explain the light gray shading next to the roundabout's central island?

A: KP: That's the truck apron. Truck aprons are generally flush, but made of scored concrete like a rumble strip. This allows large trucks such as tankers for the Shell Station or fire engines to get around the roundabout, but visually narrows the road to slow traffic. Also, by scoring the concrete the riding surface is made uncomfortable for cars so motorists don't treat it as a second lane.

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Q: KM: To go back to what Mr. Shields mentioned, assume that you get told you cannot put parking on the deck, how will you adapt to that? Will the committee need to make more time for its final report?

A: KP: I think the roundabout plan and reconnecting Adams Street plan would adapt readily to having their parking removed. You could even still do Kurt's plan although all you would really get from it is a bigger park.

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Q: JS: That green strip next to the parking lot by the roundabout, what's there?

A: KP: A mis-coloration by our graphics team. That's still on-street parking spaces. We've actually been looking to see if we could get a few more in that location by changing them to angle parking.

C: JS: If you link the new parking on Edge Hill Road and Boulevard to the idea of having metered parking, I think you could use the new spaces on Edge Hill and Boulevard to expand the service zone and then put the meters in the high desire areas on the east side of I-93. I think this would help to ensure that business patrons can find a spot near their destination.

A: KP: That is certainly the idea behind metering and it could work. You might want to put a few meters by the post office for postal customers.

Q: KC: Could you add more parking on Bryant Avenue south of State Street?

A: KP: There is width for it, but we would have to check the jurisdiction since you can't have parking on a highway ramp. I think any spaces you add that far down would be logical for adding to the service zone.

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C: Lieutenant Foley (Lt. F): I think all your plans are worthwhile to look at, but the roundabout really troubles me. I can't imagine the volumes in East Milton Square without some real traffic lights to control them. The pedestrian lights just are not traffic controls. I think you would have accidents from weaving and increase difficulties for the pedestrians. I really think the roundabout is least attractive in terms of safety.

A: KP: Thank you for that comment. I think that we were thinking of having at least one real traffic control signal where Granite Avenue comes into the roundabout given the volumes there.

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Q: KM: So how long is it going to take for you to get information on the deck? What do you know so far?

- A: KP: What Paul Nelson at MassDOT says is that FHWA won't pay for parking over a federal roadway, but then Paul makes the point to them that the earmark is written to pay for some parking. There's a bit of a catch-22 and thus far Paul hasn't suggested that parking on the deck is totally impossible. We've been trying to get to the source of this issue for months now. One thing Paul suggested was a meeting with FHWA. I think making that happen sooner rather than later is a good idea.
- C: JS: The earmark covers parking in the Square, not on the deck, it's totally different.
- A: Marion McEtrick (MM): That's an issue of terminology. You could argue the deck is the middle of the Square. I think it's time we sat down with FHWA. We've been going around this issue for longer than this study.
- C: KP: I would caution you that we see the park as having some real value. You don't want a Home Depot style parking lot in the middle of your square. It would be great to get to the bottom of this issue.
- A: JS: I will forward you that email in the morning. You could probably go forward with the reconnection of Adams Street or the roundabout without deck parking.
- C: KP: I agree and you could still do the one-way pairing of Edge Hill Road and Boulevard Street and get some parking that way.
- A: JS: And then put meters in the Square to drive turnover.
- A: KP: A lot of the committee members are very nervous about meters. We asked the committee members and local merchants for squares they thought made good benchmarks and several of the ones that were picked including Newton Centre and Wellesley have meters. Newton in particular has a very strict parking regimen; if you're two minutes late feeding the meter, you get a ticket. We are indicating that meters is a layer that you could add to this mix and laying out the costs and benefits for the committee to consider.

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- Q: Robert Sweeney (RS): I can remember when the talk was about putting in the deck and I wound up being shocked that it removed parking spaces. The deck does reunite the Square, but it takes parking. Let's get some clarity about what we can put on it. Is there a way people could see a scaled-down, hands-on model of your options?
- A: KP: Let me think about that. Physical models are very labor intensive and cost a lot. We could maybe do something on the computer, but may not have time between now and May.
- Q: RS: I believe Keri's team has \$150,000 of the earmark. Can the Town use the remainder to address its concerns?
- A: BC: Yes, we can use that money for any of the next steps.
- C: KC: I think it would be helpful to get the road names onto all of the streets, right now some are marked and some are not.
- C: Nathaniel Cabral-Curtis (NCC): Maybe for the public meeting we could put some graphics of cars on the streets to show how the new traffic patterns would work out.

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- C: Jeffrey Mullen (JM): I just want to make a few broad comments here. First of all, thank you for inviting me. I want you to be careful what you call a park. It's a landscaped deck. When you call things a park that means a whole set of things. I also think you want to focus on options which enhance the circulation patterns and ease mobility. I think FHWA and MassDOT would favor those sorts of options.
- A: KP: We definitely have mobility benefits in our evaluation criteria.

C: JM: Good, and my other thought is that wrapping this economic development terms is a good idea because it puts you into a new funding pool. Figure out the deck and go from there.

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## **Next Steps**

The next major public involvement milestone will be the second community meeting on March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2011. The BCAC will next meet on April 13, 2011. The project team will provide the BCAC with a draft report for discussion at that time.

## Appendix 1: Attendees

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation
Nathaniel	Cabral-Curtis	Howard/Stein-Hudson
Kenneth	Caldwell	BCAC
Brian	Cherry	Milton Police Department
Bill	Clark	Town of Milton
[none provided]	Foley	Milton Police Department
John	Grant	Milton Fire Department
Diane	Higgins	Office of Senator Brian Joyce
Emily	Innes	Milton Planning Board
Kim	Kingston	Howard/Stein-Hudson
Marion	McEttrick	Board of Selectman
Kevin	Mearn	Town of Milton
Keri	Pyke	Howard/Stein-Hudson
John	Shields	Board of Selectman
Robert	Sweeney	Board of Selectman