

Meeting Date: Wednesday November 16, 2005

Location: Burlington Public Works Dept., 645 Pine Street , Burlington

Time: 6:30 - 8:30 PM

- Why was the public transportation alternative screened out?
 - A: Alternative 1 was an extensive package of public transportation improvements. It was tested and found to have very little effect in reducing traffic volumes on Rte 2A and would therefore not be effective in meeting purpose and need.

Rte 2A Improvement Alternatives:

- A roundabout could be added now at Paul St/Zephyr Lane, which is slated for a traffic signal– this is an opportunity to test its function.
 - A: This and other roundabouts will be tested through computer modeling.
- What about access management on Rte 2A?
 - A: Will follow state policy on access management. Could explore a median in some of these alternatives, which would restrict/control left turns.
- These alternatives improve Rte 2A but don't limit access to it; therefore a 4-Lane Rte 2A with unrestricted access could generate sprawl in this corridor.
- But is this sprawl (more businesses along Rte 2A)?
- There's no more room for more development on Rte 2A.
- But developed land could be redeveloped at higher intensity.
- IBM has major entrance at South Street/River Rd. The company could add more employment and traffic without any new construction of facilities on its site. It is important to have the capability to serve this possible future activity.
- IBM uses a temporary 3-Lane pattern on a section of Rte 2A during shift change.
- Will Alternatives 2, 3, and 22 look at Exit 12 improvements?
 - A: Yes.

Circ A/B Alternatives:

- What is the difference in volumes between Alternative 16 (Circ Limited Access Highway) and Alternative 17 (Circ Boulevard)? Will access management on Alternative 17 be studied?
 - A: There is some difference which is due to the boulevard alternative having a connection at US Rte 2. Whether to provide access on the boulevard will be an issue considered in the refinement of the alternatives.
- How does a 4-lane Circ A/B connect to the 2-Lane Rte 289?
 - A: This will be examined during design.
- Will you look at Circ A/B plus improvements on Rte 2A?
 - A: Included spot improvements on Rte 2A in these alternatives, but not capacity improvements that would pull some traffic back from A/B to Rte 2A.

Hybrid Alternatives:

- Is future build-out on Rte 2A included in projections?
 - A: Yes
- The screening analysis seems to show some congestion remaining on Rte 2A after building Circ A/B.

- What is meant by Spot Improvements?
 - A: Spot improvements on 2A address remnant congestion; this is addressed by signal timing adjustments that are standard practice when a new roadway changes traffic patterns. Some small scale intersection modifications are also included where they would fit within the right of way.

Other Comments:

- Suggest looking at what happens if fuel price increases, e.g. more than \$6 per gallon.
- Would effects outside Rte 2A corridor include looking at traffic on I-89 in Burlington? –
 - A: It could, although focus is mostly on Susie Wilson Rd., Rte 15, and others closer to Rte 2A corridor.
- The full Circ [to Colchester] was intended in part to reduce traffic on I-89.
- Would need full Circ to affect I-89.
- Did previous analysis show large increase in I-89 traffic?
 - A: It will be checked.
- Wasn't Circ proposed to provide better access to Burlington? U.S. is a mobility-based culture. It is hard to imagine this changing even without fossil fuel availability.
- There is a need for choices. CCTA ridership went up when fuel prices rose (Sept. 2005).
- People are concerned about sprawl issue and new construction encouraging more traffic. Do you look at history of other projects in this respect?
 - A: ICI techniques will be used. These reflect experience elsewhere. Comparisons help people visualize.
- Agree that gas prices need to be considered.
- Remember in doing sprawl analysis that zoning can change, especially under pressure.
- Gas prices were mentioned in Hinesburg in September. Were they considered before Alternative 1 was dropped? Can't predict what will happen – but the whole study is “crystal balling”.
- Why was the transit hub in Alternative 1 in Essex Junction?
 - A: Infrastructure is already there.
- Comments on gas prices do not reflect possibility of substitution, e.g. hybrid cars multiply mileage by 2-3 times.
- Will you look at carbon emissions and global warming?
 - A: Yes.
- Americans tend to revert to old habits. Don't depend on a “silver bullet” to solve problem.
- Alternatives 2, 3, 22 are essentially the same. But 16 and 17 use signals not roundabouts in Rte 2A spot improvements.
 - Roundabouts would be of bigger scale than the definition of spot improvements would include.
- Are spot improvements for flow only or also for the safety?
 - A: Primarily flow, but safety would also benefit.
- What about pedestrian crossings at roundabouts? Might need activated signal or crossing guard.
- Similarly with Rail Road Crossing.
- Would Five Corners roundabout impact Veterans Memorial parking and other buildings?
 - A: Yes, as looked at in screening. Will try to refine to reduce impact.

- Would village people have a say? Can a solution be imposed on them?
 - A: FHWA and VTrans are in general responsive to local concerns.
- In Europe pedestrian underpasses are used. They can be made accessible with ramps.
 - A: Need design to answer some of these questions.
- Would traffic operations be considered in design?
 - A: Yes.
- What about development scenarios where zoning changes under pressure caused by access improvements? Saw this happen in Colchester.
 - A: Study team has been meeting with local planning officials and will consider this situation. Using this information to determine what change has occurred in anticipation of Circ construction, and what more could occur.
- What happens if there is a series of roundabouts with big trucks? (Approximately 100 trucks per day go through Five Corners, mostly Northbound to Canada.)
- Funding for roundabouts – 100% under the new federal transportation bill (known as “TEA-LU”); this is the same as signalized.
- What about maintenance cost of signals vs. roundabouts? Are roundabouts cheaper to maintain?
 - A: It will be checked.
- What about maintenance load added by a new road?
 - A: Cost isn’t a required consideration in an EIS, but could look at a life cycle cost for information purposes.
- What is in center of roundabout? Could the park be relocated there? (Access could be via tunnel).
- Circ A/B alternatives allow traffic to bypass Essex Junction, an original purpose of Circ.

How are we doing on public involvement?

- Pretty well, but should do more with the mailing list to inform people.

Meeting Date: Thursday November 17, 2005

Location: Williston Central School Cafeteria, 195 Central School Drive

Time: 6:30 - 8:30 PM

- Original Circ Plan: I-89 to Colchester/Burlington.
- What was growth projected for 2005-2025?

Rte 2A Improvement Alternatives:

- What is traffic volume on Industrial Ave? This movement should be addressed.
 - A: It will be addressed.
- What is speed limit on Rte 2A? It should be 25mph. Can't get out of his neighborhood without gaps in traffic, which will be lost with roundabouts.
- Did all short list alternatives have comparable improvements?
 - A: Alternatives 22 and 23 have 4 lanes in the south, 3 lanes in Williston north of Blair Park and 2 lanes in Essex Junction; others have 4 lanes throughout.
- Can 45 mph speed limit work with roundabouts?
 - A: This will be examined in the next step.
- James Brown Drive needs traffic signals at Rte 2A.
- Roundabouts large enough for large trucks and will take much land.
- 150' roundabout at Industrial/Mountain View Road would take my house.
- Underlying issue is volumes. All options assume the traffic goes through Essex Junction via Five Corners. Need to consider beyond the Rte 2A Corridor, where traffic is coming from.
- Flowing traffic with roundabouts "traps" people on side streets because there are no gaps; this defeats the purpose of the project.
- 3-Lane section would make it easier to turn out of side streets.
- Does next step include changes to Exit 12 & other locations? (It currently backs up onto I-89.)
 - A: Yes.
- Why were Brownell and North Williston Road Alternatives removed?
 - A: Screening showed these were not as effective as the short-listed alternatives.
- In the 2A improvement alternatives, are there takings on Rte 2A between roundabouts?
 - A: Yes.
- How are roundabouts consistent with pedestrian safety, especially at Five Corners – where many school children cross?
 - A: It will be studied. Essex Junction public safety officers are being consulted.
- With roundabouts, Five Corners can't function with railroad crossing, as the entire roundabout needs to stop.
- Is a combination of intersections and roundabouts possible?
 - A: It depends on circumstances, but it will be studied.
- Essex Junction was just designated as a Historic Village – how will this be addressed?
 - A: Federal historic preservation laws offer protection and put burden of proof on study to show there is no alternative to their use.
- How would traffic be maintained during construction?

- A: Maintenance of traffic is considered at a planning level during the development of the alternatives in the EIS, and the ability to maintain traffic during construction is a consideration in the evaluation of each alternative. After completion of the Final EIS, the construction documents for the selected alternative will include detailed staging plans to maintain traffic on affected roadways.
- Was cost analysis done in screening? How do they compare?
 - A: Cost was not a major factor in screening decisions. Circ A/B alternatives would cost in the neighborhood of \$60 million; the Rte 2A widening Alternatives would cost less (estimates were exclusive of property acquisition costs, so total cost is not known at this point.)

Circ A/B Alternatives

- Sometimes interchanges are short-changed in highway design – (i.e., more should be provided). Need more than one interchange on Circ A/B between I-89 and Rte 289.
- Connections at US2 would provide better access to Maple Tree Place and other commercial destinations.
- Costs to date on entire Circ Highway has been \$82 million. Right of way is already paid for, design is already done. Circ A/B is the alternative that takes care of the problems. It should be built.
- Large solid waste trucks would need to use Circ A/B to/from the landfill. Can't use it if it is limited access because of state weight limitations on this type of highway – these limitations wouldn't apply on Boulevard.
 - This will be considered during design.
- Boulevard is also more in keeping with the scale of the town.
- Heavy trucks are permitted to use VT 289.
- A boulevard is beautiful compromise, looks better, more flexible for access points. Compatible with recreation path.
- Tree-lined Boulevard could be beautiful.
- 2 or 4-Lane Boulevard?
 - A: Currently it is assumed that 4 lanes are needed.
- Do same mitigation requirements exist for limited access and boulevard versions?
 - A: Yes.
- What are "Spot Improvements"?
 - A: Spot improvements on 2A address remnant congestion; addressed by signal timing adjustments that are standard practice when a new roadway changes traffic patterns. Some small scale intersection modifications are also included where they would fit within the right of way.
- Will interchange at US Rte 2 be considered? Mountain View Road vs. Redmond Road?
 - A: Yes, these are options that will be considered in the analysis.
- Interchanges are more effective than intersections – don't need to stop.
- There's a transition from 4-Lane A/B to 2-Lane Rte 289? How will this work?
 - A: This will be examined during design.
- Circ right of way was purchased to accommodate 4-Lanes.
- 4-Lanes is "overkill".
- Widening Rte 2A to 4-Lanes makes the situation worse in Essex Junction.

Hybrid Alternatives:

- Hybrid alternatives won't eliminate traffic from Five Corners. It will dump traffic onto Mountain View Road.
- Believes there is too much traffic at Marshall for roundabout.
- Is the large number of screening options due to the court's role?
 - A: No, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) which created the EIS process requires all reasonable alternatives to be considered.
- Roundabouts can work, do work in other places and deserve to be studied.
- Why no 2-lane alternatives for Circ A/B?
 - A: It's not off the table, although screening suggested that 4-Lanes are needed.
- 2-Lane Boulevard in A/B corridor is easier than adding 2 lanes to Rte 2A and better.
- Should also consider roundabouts on the new roadway component of the hybrid alternatives and on the Circ A/B Boulevard; room for a roundabout is available in this corridor.
- How close are actual volumes today to projections in 1985 EIS?
- When do you integrate town plans and bring study to town legislative bodies?
 - A: The relationship to local plans is one of the categories for analysis. The project team will meet with local boards during the next step, or anytime requested by the towns.
- What is specifically going to be analyzed in terms of neighborhood impacts?
 - A: Includes noise, air, visual, traffic impacts, takings, and community cohesion.
- Whose responsibility is it to take care of these issues? For example providing a berm along A/B.
 - A: If mitigation in the form of berms or noise barriers is found to be necessary, it would become part of the EIS and Record of Decision and become a project responsibility.
- Higher speed results in higher noise, so a boulevard is better than a limited access highway.
- People might not use a boulevard if speeds are not high enough to attract them away from Rte 2A.
- Would curb cut access to a Circ A/B boulevard be restricted? It would be sad to see development occur due to Boulevard.
- Should keep the new road from becoming another Rte 2A with development along it.
- What about cross-country vs. local trips? These can be as much as half of peak hour trips on Rte 2A.

Other Comments:

- Will northern portion of Circ Highway (segments G-J in Colchester) be considered in the EIS?
 - A: This project is part of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), and like the other projects in the MTP it is included in the "No-Build" alternative, the baseline to which the short-list alternatives will be compared.
- Will consistency with regional transportation plan be considered?
 - A: Yes.
- Are sound barriers a consideration?
 - A: Yes, they will be considered if noise levels high enough to meet FHWA criteria.
- Need Park and Ride lots for transit.

Comments on Public involvement?

- Comments can get repetitive – start with what you/we heard and go on from that.
- Post the flip-chart notes on the web. The June forums held in Richmond were good in this respect.
- Put maps and design drawings of the alternatives on website
- Do eye-level renderings of the alternatives.