



TO:	Marie Rose, P.E.	DATE:	October 7, 2020
FROM:	Bridget Myers, P.E.	MASSDOT PROJECT NO.:	608954
SUBJECT:	Weston – Route 30 Reconstruction Project – 25% Project Timeline and Public Process		

The following is a summary of the project timeline as well as an explanation of key design elements, how decisions relating to those design elements were made, and the public process that has occurred to date during the pre-25% design phase.

Project Timeline

EARLY 2017

The Town of Weston Department of Public Works (DPW) reached out to Howard Stein Hudson (HSH) to discuss a potential corridor improvements project along Route 30 within the Town's limits.

HSH performed an initial cost analysis of three potential cross sections for the Town:

- **Alternative 1:** Resurfacing only. This option would not alter the cross section nor add any additional bike or pedestrian accommodations.
- **Alternative 2:** Combination of box widening and resurfacing to provide a cross section with 11-foot lanes, five-foot bicycle accommodating shoulders, and a five-foot sidewalk along one side of the roadway.
- **Alternative 3:** Meeting all relevant design standards at the time by providing 11-foot lanes, five-foot bicycle accommodating shoulders, and five-foot sidewalks along both sides of the roadway.

The conclusion between the Town and HSH was to proceed with Alternative 2 as we felt that would provide increased pedestrian and bicycle accommodations than what exists today while also helping to minimize impacts to abutters along the corridor.

NOVEMBER 2017 – PNF/PIF

HSH assisted the Town with the preparation of the Project Notification Form (PNF) and Project Information Form (PIF) using the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) Project Information Tool. The project was approved for creation and given the MassDOT project number 608954.



MAY 2018 – TOWN MEETING

HSH provided the Town with a full scope of work and fee proposal to complete the design process from 25% design through to final Plans, Specifications, and Estimate (PS&E). This design fee was approved at the May 2018 Town Meeting. One of the key advantages to approving the project was comparing the cost of the design to the cost of the Town having to resurface the road on their own. The design fee approved at Town Meeting was for \$937,800 which also included the survey subconsultant. The preliminary estimate in 2018 to resurface Route 30 was approximately \$4M. This would just be for repaving, and no additional signalization, bike or pedestrian improvements would be included. With the Town paying for the design fee and going through MassDOT's design process, the construction will be entirely paid for by the State Transportation Improvement Program. The current cost estimate for the 25% design is approximately \$10M which includes the roadway improvements, Shared Use Path, signals, and intersection improvements.

Notice to proceed (NTP) from the Town was given to HSH on July 1, 2018.

DATA COLLECTION

- Survey began in July 2018 and was substantially complete in October 2018
- Wetland Flagging was conducted from August – September 2018
- Traffic Counts were collected in late September 2018

Meetings

JANUARY 2019 – MEETING WITH TOWN

HSH met with the town's DPW, Engineering department, and the Town Planner in 2019 to discuss initial thoughts on cross sections, intersections, and potential signals.

FEBRUARY 2019 AND MARCH 2019 – TRAFFIC AND SIDEWALK COMMITTEE

HSH presented at Traffic and Sidewalk Committee (T&SC) meetings in February and March of 2019. During the February meeting HSH presented potential options of cross sections. The two main options discussed were comparing bicycle accommodations in the form of a Shared Use Path versus a buffered bike lane**.

** It is important to note that in late 2018, MassDOT had reached out to HSH to share information regarding upcoming changes to MassDOT's bicycle and pedestrian guidelines. Based on the speed and volume of traffic on Route 30, a five-foot bicycle accommodating shoulder would no longer be an acceptable bicycle accommodation. For this reason, the cross



sections that were advanced to be compared included a buffered bike lane with one sidewalk versus a Shared Use Path which could accommodate pedestrians and bicycles.

APRIL 2019

HSH and the Town (DPW, Engineering, and the Town Manager) met with MassDOT District 6 for an initial meeting and discussion about the project. At this meeting we discussed the cross sections that were presented to the T&SC and what the general initial thoughts were regarding the two bicycle options. The Town's initial preference was for a buffered bike lane primarily because most of the existing cyclists on this road were the type that would prefer riding in the road. The T&SC had relayed that there are groups of cyclists on this road on early weekend mornings, however, there currently were not many cyclists who commuted on Route 30 during weekdays.

During this meeting MassDOT expressed that given the speeds, volumes, and characteristics of the roadway, that a Shared Use Path would be a more appropriate bicycle accommodation for this corridor.

MAY 2019 – PRE-25% PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING/T&SC

Based on the feedback from the meeting with MassDOT, HSH revised the concept design and looked at various sections of the corridor to determine which cross section would be appropriate using a combination of a Shared Use Path as well as buffered bike lanes.

This T&SC meeting was well attended with over 40 attendees as well as a representative from MassDOT District 6. There were many comments and questions from the public during this meeting and many comments included positive feedback or concerns about the corridor that were going to be resolved by this project. One comment that was heard more than once from bicyclists was that it would not be desirable to switch back and forth from a Shared Use Path on one side of the road to buffered bike lanes which are on both sides of the road. The other less desirable aspect of a buffered bike lane is a wider paved roadway with additional pavement markings. The buffer will consist of two white lines and there will be bike lane markings. These pavement markings would add a more urban character to the road.

Based on feedback from this meeting, additional design adjustments were made. The primary design change following this meeting was creation of a consistent cross section with a 10-foot Shared Use Path rather than alternate from Shared Use Path, to buffered bike lane, back to Shared Use Path, back to buffered bike lane. The consistent Shared Use Path cross section would then shift from the south side of Route 30 to the north side at the Newton Street intersection. This is required to connect to the future Shared Use Paths in design on the north side of Route 30 in Newton.



AUGUST 2019 – MEETING WITH DPW AND ENGINEERING

HSH met with the DPW and Town Engineer to go over revised plans and discuss the cross section as well as potential signals based on feedback from the prior meetings.

SEPTEMBER 2019 – T&SC

The week prior to this meeting, the Town asked HSH to provide an update at the September T&SC meeting. This was not a formal presentation but rather a verbal update and sharing of a few plan PDFs. However, there were some residents in attendance who were new to the project discussion and had several questions and concerns as it was their first-time hearing about the proposed design. Those concerns and the responses from HSH are listed below under the October 2019 meeting description.

OCTOBER 2019 – T&SC

Based on the comments and concerns at the September T&SC meeting, HSH prepared a new full updated power point presentation and the Town made sure the residents were notified ahead of time in order to attend. Some of the concerns that were brought up at the September 2019 T&SC meeting that were addressed/responded to during this meeting included:

- A resident had questioned the Town acceptance of the Route 30 layout which was intended to question if the Town officially owned the roadway.
 - Town Counsel provided clarification: Ch. 336 of the Acts of 2006 – Roadways transferred to towns by law, not need for Town Meeting Vote.
- A resident had questioned the changes to the Healthy Transportation Policy. At the time of the meeting the new engineering directive had not been officially published so there were questions about why the project would need to conform to guidelines that were not made public yet.
 - HSH explained that the final policy was under review at MassDOT, but that we had been directed to design to these new guidelines and that the directive would be made public before the 25% design was submitted. MassDOT would likely reject the design if not in compliance with the guidelines as there is substantial right-of-way (66-ft) along Route 30.
- A resident had general comments regarding the narrowing of intersections.
 - HSH explained that narrowing/tightening of wide intersections creates a safer design. It makes for slower turning speeds.
 - While it may limit the ability of vehicles making right turns to squeeze past a vehicle waiting to turn left, it is a safer condition as the right turning vehicle would block sight lines of the left turning vehicle.



After this meeting, HSH took the feedback heard from this meeting and continued to advance the 25% design plans. Some of the questions/feedback from this meeting included:

- Questions from residents regarding stonewalls and/or landscaping along their property and how it would be affected.
- Truck turning in and out of properties that receive large vehicles/trailers and ensure the proposed design does not impede those movements.

HSH is ensuring all these comments are kept on our record so that they are addressed/considered as the design moves forward. Many of these design details can be resolved at the 75% design stage. That way MassDOT's comments can also be taken into consideration and compared to the Town's comments.

FEBRUARY 2020 – T&SC

HSH provided a project update to the T&SC which focused primarily on areas of concern that were brought up at the previous meeting. Additional discussion was focused on the reasons for a Shared Use Path and where new traffic signals are proposed and why.

- One resident at 334 South Avenue is concerned about the visibility of the new signal at Oak Street and its visibility into his house.
 - HSH revised the design to switch from 2 mast arms (one which would have been in front of the house), to one longer mast arm on the north side of Route 30. This signal has also been designed with optically programmed signal heads which limit visibility of the signals to only the approaching lanes.

After this meeting, HSH would have been looking for the T&SC to approve to advance this project to the Board of Selectmen (BoS), however due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the project schedule was halted. During this time HSH continued to advance the plans and other documents that would be needed for a 25% submittal to MassDOT as the intent would be to submit to MassDOT following the BoS meeting.

AUGUST 2020 – T&SC

The T&SC began hosting meetings again virtually and HSH provided another brief project update. During this meeting there were some new questions and comments from residents that had not commented previously. Comments included:

- Positive feedback on the addition of a path along Route 30 as there is a lack of existing sidewalks.



- Request for an additional crosswalk between Oak Street and Newton Street. This was brought up by the resident at 263 South Avenue as the owner has a small flower stand and there is also access to conservation trails near her property.
 - This is something HSH will investigate and find a safe location for an additional crosswalk in this vicinity.
- One resident asked about their existing planting strip between the sidewalk and their stone wall. The resident would prefer to keep the planting strip between the path and his wall if possible.
 - This has been documented and will be evaluated, along with similar concerns from others at previous meetings, after 25% design.

At this point it was stated that HSH understood that there would still be many comments and concerns as the design advanced, but that there would be a long design process that would allow many more opportunities for these comments and questions to be addressed. It is important, at this time, to get the 25% design submittal into MassDOT to start their review process.

During the August 2020 T&SC meeting, the committee voted to advance the project to the Board of Selectmen.

SEPTEMBER 2020 – BOARD OF SELECTMEN

HSH gave a full in-depth presentation to the Board of Selectmen (BoS) via a virtual public meeting on September 24, 2020. After the presentation there were questions and comments from the BoS before opening the questions to the public. As this was the first presentation for the BoS there were some questions from the Board, but no new comments or concerns overall. The BoS voted unanimously in support of advancing the 25% design package to MassDOT.

Design Discussion

The following are key components to the design that have brought up questions and concerns from the public and/or from the Town (DPW, Engineering, T&SC).

THE CROSS SECTION - SHARED USE PATH VS. BUFFERED BIKE LANES

This topic is/was the most discussed topic that has come up during the numerous T&SC meetings and meetings with the Town. HSH understands that there is not necessarily a one size fits all best approach for a 3.7-mile corridor, however the overall corridor needs to be considered as one cohesive project that will likely be part of a much larger network throughout the region. While there may be some segments of road where a buffered bike lane could work, the design needs to consider the feedback heard from bicyclists that they would not want to make several crossings on this high-



speed, high-volume corridor. Reducing the number of crossings is a safer design for bicyclists. In addition, the pavement markings associated with a buffered bike lane would not be in line with the character of Weston due to the urban look and feel.

A Shared Use Path (SUP) provides the safest facility for bikes given the speeds and volumes on Route 30. Because it is an off-road facility, it will also work to attract people that may be on the fence about cycling and will be more welcoming to recreational riders and families.

Regarding the cross section in general, the corridor has been designed to minimize the use of curb wherever possible. There is minimal curb proposed on the side of the road with no SUP, and on the side with the SUP curb was only added when the path came within 5' of the road. Grass/landscape buffers have been proposed where possible. In areas where space allowed for a wider grass buffers there will be opportunity for plantings and for use as drainage/stormwater recharge (which will be important with permitting). In some areas the path was shifted closer to the road (acting as a sidepath) to avoid impacting walls or trees.

INTERSECTIONS

The discussion regarding what is happening to several intersections along the corridor has also been a highly discussed topic at the T&S committee meetings. There has been a general positive consensus when it comes to the geometric improvements that will be made at all the major intersections along the corridor. The more debated topic is/was traffic signals. HSH performed signal warrant analyses at all the intersections along the corridor. These findings were discussed at several T&S meetings. The two intersections that HSH determined should have a proposed traffic signal are the intersections of Route 30 with Winter Street and with Oak Street. Both intersections met Warrants 1 (8-hour), 2 (4-hour), and 8 (Roadway network). These two intersections will benefit from a signal due to sight distance issues, volumes, turning movements and to provide a safe signalized crossing for peds and bikes. While there have been some opposed to new signals, there have also been people speaking in favor of the signals. The main reason for adding these signals is to improve safety. A signalized intersection will be a safer condition for all users. Also, if signals were not proposed at these locations HSH would need a strong argument to make to MassDOT as to why they are not being proposed. For these reasons HSH still feels that these two signals should be proposed.

A secondary concern of the intersections/signals is the snow/ice issue in “the cut”. “The cut” is the area east of Oak Street where Route 30 narrows as it passes through areas of ledge on either side of the road. The current design proposes widening through that area. There will be ledge removal on the south side of Route 30 to provide width for the SUP. As was mentioned in past presentations,



widening/ledge removal would be necessary for any proposed improvements therefore it would be prudent to remove enough ledge to carry the full Shared Use Path cross section through here. Additional details regarding ledge removal will be included with the 75% design. It is anticipated that in some areas, there will be ledge remaining as exposed, and in other areas the ledge will be removed entirely, and a fence and landscape screening will be needed between Route 30 and the Massachusetts Turnpike. New drainage is also being proposed in this area as well as the removal of the roadway super elevation here. This will improve ice conditions as stormwater will have new places to drain to and the whole road will not be sloped to one side where water/ice can build up.

RIGHT OF WAY (ROW)

As shown on the Preliminary ROW plans, there are many easements along the corridor but most of them are temporary easements for grading/construction access. That is to be expected with a corridor of this length. There are 39 permanent easements, however 23 are permanent utility easements for overhead wires as required by the utility companies. There are 16 permanent easements related to the Shared Use Path. These were minimized as much as possible but in some cases the path crossed over the layout line, and in particular there was the MWRA property and the school property where the path meanders away from the roadway and therefore require a permanent easement. There are a couple (2) minor areas with takings where the new edge of pavement ends up crossing the layout line, however those are either on Town or State-owned property.

TREE IMPACTS

A corridor improvement project of this length will involve a significant number of trees impacted. Currently the tree information being used by HSH includes the trees captured in the ground survey as well as the GIS tree data provided by the Town. As was mentioned before to the Town, it appears that some of the GPS located trees are not as accurate (some show up in the road or in the middle of driveways). HSH did ask the surveyor to confirm there was no issue with the survey. The surveyor overlaid the Route 30 survey on the old Route 30 and Wellesley survey (performed by a different surveyor). Those two files lined up which confirmed that there are no location issues with the current survey. The surveyor did say with the tree cover on Route 30 that GPS is not going to be as accurate. This makes sense because some of the trees from the GPS survey line up with the Route 30 survey and some do not. With that said, it is still helpful in determining the order of magnitude for tree removal. The GPS trees as well as the surveyed trees were used in determining the number of impacted trees. This provided a basis of comparison to determine which cross section (SUP vs. Buffered Bike Lane) would impact a greater number of trees. However, based on the GPS tree location issues, the actual numbers used for these comparisons would not be considered accurate.



For comparison purposes only, the proposed design has 243 tree removals whereas the buffered bike lane option would have 339 tree removals. It should also be noted that of those trees, about 20% are classified as “dead” from the GPS survey.

The tree removals will be further investigated as the project moves to 75% design. The 25% design cost estimate does carry a lump sum item for Landscaping to cover tree replacements and any other landscaping needed along the corridor. All landscaping details, including locations, quantities, and species does not get included into the design until the 75% submittal. However, there will be room to plant trees in the grass buffer, near the intersections where we are removing pavement, and any other locations that the Town wants.

RETAINING WALLS

As previously mentioned, whenever possible the path was shifted as to not impact existing walls along the corridor. There may be some walls that need to be rebuilt and there are various locations where new retaining walls have been proposed. These are shown in the plans, but in many cases a wall was proposed to potentially save trees so that a cut or fill slope would not extend too far and result in more tree removals. This was also the case for wetlands. The proposed design crosses wetlands at various locations so walls are needed to extend headwalls and reduce impacts to wetlands in a widening section. The 25% design shows proposed locations for the walls in plan view and on cross sections. Additional design and detail of these walls will be included in the 75% design plans. The design proposes cement stone masonry walls as well as pre-fab modular block walls. The type of wall depends on the size and whether the walls would be visible. Other areas where walls were needed was where the path meandered away from the road. It needed to follow its own profile and be ADA compliant, so in some cases there were fill sections that required walls. These walls are shown in plan view on the construction plans and on the cross sections.