

January 19, 2016

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Through: Joe SanClemente
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RE: Route 28/Crowell Road Intersection Design Project
Office Hours: June 22, 2015
Summary Memorandum

Overview

The Chatham Route 28/Crowell Road project will provide safety, operational and aesthetic improvements to the existing five-legged intersection at Route 28 (Main Street) and Crowell Road, Queen Anne Road and Depot Road in Chatham. It will take place within the context of the Town's broader Route 28 Corridor Visioning Project and the West Chatham Roadway Design Project as needed and appropriate. As part of the public involvement process for the Route 28/Crowell Road Project, the Town of Chatham and its consultant team have undertaken various efforts to solicit input from the community. The major components of this process include public information meetings, briefings to local officials, responding to written comments and questions received, and the abutter interviews summarized in this memorandum.

HSH conducted abutter conversations, discussed herein, with the owners and/or operators of abutting businesses and properties at the intersection of Crowell Road and Route 28. The purpose of these discussions, which were held prior to the initial public information meeting, were to provide those most familiar with the intersection and its operations over the course of seasonal fluctuations Chatham with an opportunity to meet the project team's public involvement specialist in a conversational, one-on-one setting to discuss their perceptions of the intersection's functionality and potential.

These short conversations focused on the key informants' experience with the intersection, issues they have seen in terms of safety, things that work about the junction, things that do not, and their general experiences as abutters. The findings from these interviews can be used by the Town and project team to guide and inform other elements of the public awareness process.

Executive Summary

The office-hours session summarized herein consisted of the immediate abutters to the Route 28/Crowell Road intersection, including the businesses at the intersection and within the Chatham Village Market Plaza. Participants were generally supportive of a project to address the Route 28/Crowell Road intersection although views on an appropriate solution varied. Based on responses from abutters, a multi-modal solution is essential as motorists, pedestrians, many of them senior citizens, and cyclists are common users of the intersection and visitors to the adjacent retail

businesses. The questions summarized below help to understand abutter perceptions of the intersection.

To begin the conversation, participants were asked how they personally use the Crowell Road intersection. One participant voiced concern about elderly parishioners walking from Park Place west of the intersection to the Unitarian Universalist Church; the need for pedestrian cross walks was reiterated throughout the session by multiple respondents. It was also noted that the vehicular connection between the Cumberland Farms and Chatham Village Market parking lots helps mitigate some congestion at the Crowell Road/Route 28 intersection, but can present a challenge to pedestrians moving to businesses within those lots.

Participants associated with businesses were asked how their customers use the Crowell Road intersection and how their businesses take deliveries. While most customers drive, it was noted that a fair number of people arrive via bicycle, especially seasonal workers. Generally, customers to the Chatham Village Market Plaza enter from Crowell Road into the Cumberland Farms lot, which currently lacks signage to caution or guide drivers. On the eastern side of the lot, drivers primarily use Oyster Pond Furlong as an exit. Delivery and landscaping contractors' trucks both use parking lot space and at times the plaza becomes difficult to navigate for large vehicles.

Next, participants were asked to think about what they felt would be the single most important change to make to the intersection. This question highlighted key themes for improvement. The main concern and point for improvement was a need for increased clarification or a simplified intersection configuration to resolve right of way conflicts. Pedestrian and cycling improvements were requested, particularly given the local elderly population. It was noted that any improvements should take into consideration the amount of traffic to be processed during the summer months.

On the other side of the coin, participants were asked to think about one thing they would like to see remain from the existing intersection. There was a desire to maintain existing green space as well as certain existing points of access and egress from the Chatham Village Market plaza. Multiple participants did not express an opinion of anything they would like to keep.

To better understand how participants perceive the functionality of the intersection, they were asked to think about ways in which the intersection is successful currently. One participant appreciated that the signalized intersection stops drivers, forcing them to pause and allowing them to see the stores in the Chatham Village Market Plaza. Generally, participants felt that the signalized intersection could work well given better signage, phasing improvements, and mitigation of frequent signal outages due to frequent inclement weather events which negatively impact the obsolete signal controller equipment at the intersection.

When asked to think about what aspects of the intersection do not work well today, the main concerns targeted the challenges of crossing the intersection as a pedestrian, managing traffic volume in the summer, and the current confusing intersection configuration.

Methodology

Conversations for the office hours were loosely guided by a seven question protocol developed by the consultant team's public involvement specialist and approved by the Town of Chatham. While visitors to the office hours were allowed to discuss whatever topic they chose and in the order they wished to do so, the protocol's goal was to provide a general framework and structure for conversations to allow for the analysis of trends summarized in this document. HSH worked with the Town of Chatham to identify and contact the abutting owners or operators of the businesses and properties at the intersection of Crowell Road. The office hours were held on June 22, 2015 in the

field at each participant's location. In total, representatives of six different businesses and properties were interviewed. Each interview was one-on-one with the exception of the Unitarian Universalist Church which had two participants attending together.

Detailed Discussion

The following section discusses responses provided by participants in the office hours in detail by question.

Questions 1

The first question was designed to get participants engaged by visualizing their personal use and relationship to the intersection. Participants, who were all abutters, generally use the intersection not only to access their own business or organization, but also to access the other businesses at the intersection. Participants mentioned using multiple routes, especially when accessing the Chatham Village Market plaza.

The Unitarian Universalist Church can be accessed via either Main Street or Queen Anne Road. The main concern for the Church is the lack of bicycle and pedestrian access, especially with an elderly population coming from Park Place to the west on Main Street and low-income housing on Crowell Road.

The Chatham Village Market participant mentioned entering the plaza from Oyster Pond Furlong as an employee but that most customers would not take that route. The connection between Cumberland Farms and the Chatham Village Market parking lot was noted as an important connection that relieves some volume in the intersection.

Question 2 and 3

Questions two and three were directed at abutting businesses. Participants were asked to think about how customers and delivery services typically access and use parking lot space. Further, participants were asked what sorts of delivery vehicles are used and whether any unusual or custom trucks make use of the businesses.

Many customers to the Chatham Village Market Plaza come in on the main driveway from Crowell Road. However, there is no signage to direct drivers when they use this entrance, causing confusion. It was suggested that a yield sign could help clarify who has the right of way. Few cars enter the plaza from Oyster Pond Furlong, although it is sometimes used as an exit. Although most customers drive, bicycles are also a common transportation option to access the plaza, especially among seasonal workers.

Deliveries to Cumberland Farms, CVS, Chatham Village Market and Kinlin Grover arrive by truck. At Kinlin Grover, non-articulated box trucks are used. Fuel trucks for Cumberland Farms usually access the parking lot from Route 28 heading eastbound and then cross the parking lot to the eastern side. Depending on how full the parking lot is, trucks will reverse and back up to the tanks. Tractor trailers access the plaza from the east and pull into CVS. Deliveries for CVS and Chatham Village Market access the plaza via Oyster Pond Furlong and then to loading docks in the back.

Getting trucks out of the plaza was referenced as a challenge and drivers often have someone outside the truck guiding them. The plaza parking lot also sees a lot of landscaping vehicles parking in the back area or along Oyster Pond Furlong.

Question 4

Question four was designed to have participants prioritize what improvements they would most like to see by choosing only one thing to change. The key requested improvements suggested through this question are summarized below:

- Addition of a raised crosswalk protected by pedestrian activated signals and improved sidewalks. It was hoped that a raised crosswalk would help slow traffic.
- Implementation of bicycle lanes could mitigate conflict between cyclists, traffic and pedestrians trying to cross the intersection.
- Removal or repurposing of the westbound right turn onto Depot Road.
- Removal of the islands within the intersection.
- Addition of left-hand turning lanes.
- Alignment and signage improvements to address confusion within the intersection.

Question 5

Similar to question four, question five asked participants to prioritize a single aspect of the intersection they would like to keep. The results are summarized below:

- Maintain the dogwood trees at the Unitarian Universalist Church and green space generally.
- Maintain the traffic signal configuration which was referenced as “seeming to work O.K.”
- Maintain access to the parking lots.
- Maintain two lanes exiting from Queen Anne Road.
- Maintain the extension of the sidewalk on the eastern side of Queen Anne road.

Question 6

Question six asked participants what they think works about the intersection today. The signalized intersection was generally believed to work well enough, especially for movements going straight through the intersection. A key point from Chatham Village Market is that the signalized intersection forces drivers to pause and allows them to see the businesses in the plaza.

Question 7

Question seven asked participants what does not work about the intersection today. The responses to this question are summarized below. In addition, comments from other questions that addressed this question are also included.

- Left turns throughout the intersection but especially from Crowell Road during the summer.
- Crossing the intersection as a pedestrian is challenging and dangerous.
- There are difficult sightlines throughout the intersection and it is difficult to see the islands.
- Route 28 has a hill which causes drivers to inadvertently accelerate towards the intersection.
- Exiting Kinlin Grover or the CVM plaza can be difficult due to vehicle queues.

Additional comments

- The Unitarian Universalist Church is interested in deeding land to MassDOT to receive a sidewalk extension around the full property.
- There was concern that a roundabout would be challenging for pedestrians to cross, confusing for non-locals, and might not process summer volumes of traffic well. In addition, there was some concern that vehicles will not have to pause, as with a signalized intersection, which could hurt businesses that benefit from drivers seeing their locations.
- Other respondents thought that a roundabout might be a successful option.
- Power outages impacting the traffic signals happen frequently during weather events.

Recommendations

The Route 28/Crowell Road intersection is a complex location with multiple roadways entering the intersection in addition to parking lot entrances to the Chatham Village Market Plaza, Cumberland Farms, Kinlin Grover, and the Unitarian Universalist Church. While data collection shows the intersection to have relatively stable, if high, traffic volumes throughout the year, abutters perceive a distinct summertime traffic spike.

Feedback from abutters revealed key themes regarding issues with the intersection and shared desires. The complex configuration of the intersection leads to truncated sightlines and confusion over who has the right of way. These challenges are exacerbated during the summer months and left turns in the intersection become highly difficult. Delivery and landscaping trucks that use the Chatham Village Market Plaza parking lots often have trouble exiting the lots. One of the most pressing concerns is the lack of appropriate safety accommodations for pedestrians and cyclists traversing the intersection, especially given the presence of an elderly population, many of whom walk to the Chatham Village Market Plaza or to the Unitarian Universalist Church, and seasonal workers who ride bicycles to the plaza. There is interest in both pursuing an improved signalization and a modern roundabout, a theme echoed by the later public information meeting.

Given these shared concerns and participant input, HSH recommends the following:

- The Town and consultant should continue to develop a comprehensive traffic study to have a complete understanding of multi-modal traffic patterns.
- A revised configuration should be considered to simplify the complex intersection, improve sightlines, and reduce right of way confusion, particularly for those entering and exiting abutting parking lots.
- Pedestrian and cycling accommodations and accessibility are a community priority.
- Continued access to abutting properties should be maintained given the importance to the local community of the local businesses and organizations. Given the large number of visitors to the area during the summer months, whatever concept is chosen moving forward should ensure that abutting businesses can be easily seen and accessed from the intersection.

Appendix A: Office Hours Guide Protocol

Name:	
Chatham Address:	
Affiliation:	

1. How do you use the Crowell Road intersection?
2. How do your customers use the Crowell Road intersection (if applicable)?
3. How does your business take deliveries via the Crowell Road intersection (if applicable)?
 - a. If your business does take deliveries, what sort of vehicles are used?
 - b. Do any unusual vehicles make use of your business- delivery trucks? Customer vehicles?
4. If you could change on thing about the Crowell Road intersection, what would it be?
5. If you could keep one thing about the Crowell Road intersection, what would it be?
6. What works about the intersection today?
7. What doesn't work about the intersection today?