

**Interstate 89 Exit 17 Scoping Study
Study Team Meeting #2 Notes**

DATE: Thursday, September 12, 2013
TIME: 10:00 AM
PLACE: CCRPC, 110 W. Canal Street, #202, Winooski, VT
PRESENT: Amy Bell, VTrans
Meredith Birkett, CCTA
Michele Boomhower, CCRPC
Jason Charest, CCRPC
Eleni Churchill, CCRPC
Jacob Hemmerick, Town of Milton
Richard Hosking, VTrans D5
Michael LaCroix, VTrans
Matt McMahon, LRRCC/GBIC
Diane Meyerhoff, Third Sector Associates
Bryan Osborne, Town of Colchester
Brian Palaia, Town of Milton
Steve Rolle, Parsons Brinckerhoff

1) Introductions and Overview

Jason Charest welcomed everyone and introductions were made.

2) Study Status

Steve Rolle of Parsons Brinckerhoff briefly described the public meeting on Tuesday (Sept. 10) before the Colchester Selectboard. The purpose of today's meeting is to brainstorm short and long-term alternatives in the study area.

3) Purpose & Need Statement

The Purpose & Need Statement has been simplified (see attached). Bryan Osborne of the Town of Colchester suggested that queuing on the Interstate is a safety issue more than a congestion issue; the last bullet should be moved under the "safety" heading. Bryan also suggested that the first bullet under congestion be clarified; "there will be insufficient capacity to accommodate growth in the area and region in the future."

In order to finalize the Purpose & Need for our October 22nd public meeting, team members should send comments to Jason and Steve by **October 1st**.

Amy Bell from VTrans noted that this interchange is important to the Islands as well as Franklin County. This should be identified as one of the project Needs.

4a. Review Identified Issues – Traffic Analysis Results

Meredith Birkett of CCTA is working with Colchester to move the commuter bus from the Interstate to Route 7. The Transit Development plan includes a commuter route from the Islands to Burlington that will travel through Exit 17. Meredith will provide updated information to Jason.

Steve presented the existing conditions information that he shared with the public at the September 10th meeting. He explained that the study purpose is to advance the development and evaluation of improvements to the Exit 17 interchange and US 2/US 7 intersection to: reduce congestion and improve traffic flow; accommodate future travel demands; improve safety; and accommodate all travel modes. Steve described the results of the previous 2006 study and the study process for the current study.

Steve reviewed the existing traffic volumes in the AM/PM peak as well as level of service (LOS). There was discussion of the growth projections for the region and Colchester. Bryan feels the level of growth may be low; Steve noted that the team recommends including a measure that assesses the ability to accommodate demand beyond the projected level of growth.

Steve described the existing highway network and cited the following congestion issues:

- Heavy southbound US 7 to southbound Interstate 89 traffic pattern during AM
- Significant PM Peak queuing on Interstate 89 northbound off-ramp
- Southbound through and northbound left turn movements compete for green time at US 2/US 7 intersection
- Eastbound left turns on Interstate 89N on-ramp block through movements on US 2

In addition to congestion issues, the study area includes the following safety issues:

- High Crash Location at US 2/I-89 northbound ramp
- Queuing on northbound off-ramp
- Weaving movement on westbound US 2
- High speed limits (50 mph)
- No pedestrian or bike accommodation

Other Modes

- CCTA Route 56 routing through interchange (moving to US 7 in autumn)
- Access to Chimney Corner Park & Ride
- Pedestrian and Bicycle accommodation
 - Interchange is an identified “Critical Crossing” (by the CCRPC Bike/Ped Plan)
 - US 2 and US 7 are identified Bicycle Routes and part of the Champlain Bikeway

4a. Review Identified Issues – Local Concerns Meeting Recap

Steve reported that the public confirmed our findings to date. People recognize that the interchange is difficult to travel through and will get worse. There was interest in tying this study to a possible Exit 17A in Milton.

Michele Boomhower of the CCRPC recognizes the importance of understanding the implications of a possible Exit 17A, however it cannot be analyzed as part of this study. Brian Palaia of the Town of Milton suggested that a corridor study between Exits 17 and 18 should be done prior to analyzing improvements at Exit 17. Michele responded that Exit 17A will be considered in the Milton Route 7 Corridor Study; this study can help us ascertain when to begin the process of planning for a new interchange. Steve noted that the existing Exit 17 overpass has been designated structurally deficient based on the condition of the substructure and will need to be rehabilitated, or more likely replaced.

5. Preliminary Alternatives – Brainstorm Session

Bryan suggested that future discussion of alternatives should address the issue of the fourth (eastern) leg of the intersection. In addition to being precluded by current access control, prior analysis demonstrated that adding the fourth leg would not operate as efficiently as providing access elsewhere on US 7.

Short-Term Candidate Options (1-10 years)

- Signal Timing Improvements. Mike LaCroix of VTrans explained that the signals are as efficient as they can be given current hardware. The group discussed adaptive signal control and how much benefit can be gained given the cost of the equipment. The group expressed interest in the timing for bridge replacement in order to determine the timing of other improvements.
- Dual left-turn from the northbound Interstate 89 off-ramp (also requires extending 2nd eastbound lane on US 2). There were questions about right-of-way that will be addressed by subconsultant Vermont Survey in the next few weeks.
- Eastbound left-turn pocket on US 2 at northbound Interstate 89 on-ramp.
- Dual northbound left-turn pocket on US 7 (requires a second westbound receiving lane on US 2).
- Right-turn on red blank-out sign on Route 7 south to Route 2.
- Reducing speed at interchange area below the current 50 mph. This may improve safety but likely won't reduce congestion.
- US2 access to Interstate – the high speed ramp (from the west) has the yield sign. Perhaps the lower speed left turn ramp should have the yield instead? An issue might be driver expectation that the vehicle on the right should yield.
- Improving sight distance (clearing shrubbery).

Longer-Term Candidate Options (10+ years)

- New northbound off-ramp in southeast quadrant to Route 2 or Route 7
- Eliminate “outer” loop ramp and create a diamond intersection
- Double Crossover Diamond
- Connect northbound Interstate ramps directly to US7 (north of Chimney Corners) instead of US 2.
- Jughandle on Route 7 north (replacing left turn)
- Prior study recommendations
 - Widen bridges and approaches
 - Roundabouts replacing all three intersections
 - Roundabouts at two intersections (not at intersection of US2 and US7)

The group discussed appropriate bike and pedestrian access in this area. It is a controlled access roadway; shoulders seem more appropriate than sidewalks. There needs to be pedestrian improvements at the intersection of Routes 2 and 7 due to the anticipated growth in that area.

6. Next Steps

The Team's next meeting will be **October 10th from 1-3PM at the CCRPC**. We will discuss the refined alternatives.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:05PM.

Exit 17 – Revised DRAFT Purpose and Need Statement (with changes suggested at the September 12th meeting)

Purpose

The purpose of the Exit 17 Scoping Study is to develop alternatives that improve the interchange and connecting highways, including the adjacent US 2/US 7 intersection, to provide safe and efficient travel for all users under current and projected future conditions.

Needs

Improve safety for all users

- The intersection of US 2 and the northbound I-89 ramps is a High Crash Location.
- US 2 is designated as part of the Lake Champlain Bikeways Corridor but is not well suited for use by bicyclists through the interchange area due to lack of dedicated space, high vehicular travel speeds, and conflicts with turning vehicles.
- No accommodations are provided for pedestrians across the Interstate overpass or at intersections.
- The current bridge is rated as Structurally Deficient.
- Queuing on the northbound I-89 off-ramp extends onto the Interstate forcing vehicles to queue in the shoulder.

Provide access from the Interstate

- Exit 17 is an important connection between US Routes 2 and 7 providing access to the Towns of Colchester and Milton, and Grand Isle County.

Reduce traffic congestion and enhance mobility for all users

- Peak period travel demand exceeds capacity and operates at poor levels of service under current conditions. As a result there will be insufficient capacity to accommodate future local and regional traffic growth.