

**Interstate 89 Exit 17 Scoping Study  
Public Meeting #2 (Alternatives Presentation) Notes**

**DATE:** Tuesday, October 22, 2013  
**TIME:** 6:30 PM  
**PLACE:** Presentation before the Colchester Selectboard, Colchester Meeting House,  
830 Main Street, Colchester  
**PRESENT:** Please see end of document

The Selectboard Chair, Nadine Scibek, called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

**5) Special Business Items**

Bryan Osborne, the Colchester Public Works Director, introduced the presentation of possible viable alternatives to improve travel at Exit 17. Steve Rolle of Parsons Brinckerhoff made the presentation (which will be available at <http://www.ccrpcvt.org/exit17>).

Steve explained that the study purpose is to advance the development and evaluation of improvements to the Exit 17 interchange and the US 2/US 7 intersection to: reduce congestion and improve traffic flow; accommodate future travel demands for all modes; and improve safety. 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 onto northbound Interstate 89 on-ramp block through movements on US 2

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

- High Crash Location on US 2 at the I-89 northbound on/off ramp intersection
- Queuing on northbound on-ramp backing up onto Interstate 89
- Weaving movement on westbound US 2
- High speed limits (50 mph)
- No pedestrian or bike accommodations

A set of alternatives for near- and long-term have been developed to be implemented in two phases:

### **Phase 1 Near-Term Improvements**

- Consolidate right-turn slip lane at the northbound off ramp intersection into signalized intersection and add a second left turn lane from the off ramp to US 2 eastbound
- Extend second westbound lane on overpass
- Add left turn pocket on eastbound US 2 at northbound on-ramp
- Create a 5-lane cross section between Chimney Corners and the northbound ramps intersection with dual left turns from US 2 to northbound US 7
- Add dual left turn lanes on northbound US 7
- Add a crosswalk to allow northbound left turns for bikes

The Phase 1 Near-Term Improvements address current and projected congestion and queuing issues at the US 2/US 7 intersection; are compatible with all long-term interchange alternatives; improve safety by eliminating the current merge from loop ramp; and reduce congestion and queuing on the northbound off-ramp. The preliminary cost estimate is \$2.3 million (preliminary costs are based on planning-level concept sketches and will be refined following conceptual engineering).

### **Phase 2 Long-Term Improvements**

Steve explained that three long-term alternatives will advance for detailed evaluation and conceptual engineering. All configurations presume prior implementation of near-term improvements, replacement of the existing overpass with a new 5-lane overpass, and improvement of the merge on the southbound on-ramp. All three alternatives address projected long-term traffic needs. The preliminary cost estimates are approximately \$11.3 to \$12.3 million.

- Long-Term Alternative 1: Maintain signalized intersections at all 3 study intersections
- Long-Term Alternative 2: Install a two-lane roundabout at northbound ramps with remaining 2 study intersections staying signalized
- Long-Term Alternative 3: Create new northbound off-ramp to eastbound US 2 and close existing southbound off-ramp left turn. All 3 study intersections remain signalized.

Steve described the next steps: develop conceptual layouts and refined cost estimates for long-term alternatives; complete evaluation of long-term alternatives; Selectboard endorsement of preferred alternative(s) (possibly November 4<sup>th</sup>); and finalize the Scoping Report (February 2014).

The floor was opened to Questions and Comments from the Board and public.

Tom Mulcahy: What kind of improvement in traffic congestion are we getting for the money? Steve: The initial fixes improve traffic congestion significantly – to a Level of Service (LOS) “D” or better.

Marc Landry: For Long-Term Improvement #3, if the wetland was not an issue, would this be the best solution? Steve: I can’t answer that at this point. All three alternatives operate well through

2035. The third alternative is likely the most costly construction option.

Nadine Scibek: Can the short-term improvements be done immediately? Steve: Final design needs to be completed and funding must be secured. In addition, there will be some environmental review required.

Renn Niquette: How long will it take to be “shovel-ready”? Jason Charest (CCRPC): We can’t answer that now; the wetlands review isn’t complete. Steve: funding is also an issue. Renn: Less than 20 years? Yes.

Dennis Goyette: Why not build a new loop onto the Interstate westbound (in the northwest quadrant)? Steve: We considered this option; however, there isn’t sufficient space to build it without moving the southbound off ramp and impacting more wetlands. We thought it prudent at this time to simply expand the capacity of the existing intersection. Dennis: Why not create a slip lane to avoid the traffic light (when traveling westbound on US 2 and proceeding northbound onto the Interstate)? Steve: This would create an issue for bicyclists’ safety.

Pat Allard: I live at Foxbrook near Maplefield’s. Will you be widening Route 7? Steve: Route 7 will be widened with a merge to one lane near Wiley road. This is within the right-of-way. Pat: The noise from the trucks is very loud and shakes our buildings. I’m concerned with noise and safety. Will there be a berm or landscaping? Steve: We won’t get into that level of detail in this study; but it will be looked at in the future.

Stephanie Smith: I live on Kiley’s Way. You are looking at spending millions for a concept of transportation that is dying. Transportation by auto and truck as it is today will not last into the future.

Q: Have you considered building exit 17A in Milton? Jason: It’s not on the table at this time.

Taylor Newton: I’m the Planner in Milton. Have you looked at 3 lanes on Interstate 89 northbound with two left turn lanes on Route 2? Steve: Yes, that’s part of the Phase 1 near-term improvements.

Chris Butler: If the choice is between signals with signage and roundabouts, I favor the signals. My experience the roundabout in Winooski is that no one uses it correctly. The east-west traffic doesn’t yield as it is supposed to thereby making the roundabout inefficient and confusing. Jason: The roundabout at Winooski is not a true roundabout; there are good examples of functioning roundabouts in other parts of the state (Barre, Hyde Park).

Doug Smith: How many bikes use this intersection versus cars? Jason: We do our counts on weekdays; we know that there are more bicyclists on weekends. Doug: Thousands more cars use this area than bicycles. The alternatives should not be discounted because it isn’t an option for bikes. Steve: We’re trying to find a solution that will work for everyone.

Amy Cook: I live in Milton near Bear Trap Road. Have you discussed changes to the other exits on Route 2 West – perhaps turning lanes and a jug handle? Jason: That is a VTrans safety project at Clay Point Road, unrelated to the Exit 17 Study. Mike LaCroix of VTrans responded that they will be

having discussions with property owners and there may be an opportunity for a second public meeting.

Q: I live near Chimney Corners. I see a lot of bikes in the summer and I'm concerned about their safety due to the narrow lanes. An alternative would be not to allow them on Route 7, like they do at Mallett's Bay. If you're going to have two lanes at Wiley Drive, residents won't be able to exit their driveways due to the traffic. Steve: The intent is that the second lane would merge into one before the driveway.

Transportation Secretary Brian Searles addressed the group. He commended the Selectboard for sponsoring the meeting and everyone for attending. There are thousands of projects throughout the state and these projects are designed with the help of the local community. Only about half of the needed projects are funded due to fiscal constraints. However, this project is important to the State due to its role on the National Highway System – the intersection of US 2 and US 7 and the Interstate. Currently, this area isn't operating well and it's unsafe due to high demand and the condition of the bridge.

Brian endorses the approach but isn't supporting any particular alternative. Once there is a preferred alternative (a two phase approach is best), VTrans will include it in the Capital Program to get this work done. He likes the short-term plan because the bridge replacement is a major project.

Brian is interested in this project due to its critical nature. He's spoken with both Transportation Committee Chairs (Sen. Mazza and Rep. Brennan) and they understand that the bridge must be replaced. The replacement is a great opportunity to solve other problems at this interchange.

Brian advised the Selectboard to view this project as a stand-alone one rather than part of the CIRC Alternatives process. The project will proceed in a timelier manner as a stand-alone project.

Sen. Dick Mazza and Rep. Pat Brennan agreed to work on securing funding for this project.

This agenda item was finished at 7:25PM.

## Participants

Name	Affiliation
Aaron Frank	Colchester CFO
Alex Barnes	
Amy Cook	
Bob Magoon	
Brian Searles	VTrans
Bryan Osborne*	Colchester DPW
Shadde Rosenbloom	RSG
Chris Butler	
Curt Taylor	
Dawn Cutler	
Dawn Francis	Colchester Town Manager
Dennis Goyette	
Doug Smith	
Elena Atair	
Grace Woo	RSG
Ida Charron	
Jacob Hemmerick	
Jeff Palmer	
Ken Robie	VTrans
Lindsay Vannarsdale	
Lisa Liotta	
Marc Landry	Colchester Selectboard
Mike LaCroix*	VTrans
Mike Poulin	
Nadine Scibek	Colchester Selectboard
Pat Allard	
Renn Niquette	Colchester Selectboard
Rep. Pat Brennan	Chair, House Transportation Committee
Roger Hunt*	Milton DPW
Sen. Dick Mazza	Chair, Senate Transportation Committee
Stephanie Smith	
Taylor Newton	Milton Planning Director
Tina Barnes	
Tom Mulcahy	Colchester Selectboard

\*Members of the Exit 17 Study Team

**CCRPC Staff:** Jason Charest, Eleni Churchill, Christine Forde

**Consultant Team:** Steve Rolle, Parsons Brinckerhoff; Diane Meyerhoff, Third Sector Associates