

Martha's Vineyard Island Roads Committee

Minutes of Meeting 9

Date: December 4, 2014, 4:00 p.m.

Location: MVC Offices, 33 New York Avenue, Oak Bluffs

Present:

Committee Madeline Fisher (Co-Chair, MVC), Linda Sibley (Co-Chair, MVC), John Breckenridge (Oak Bluffs), Stuart Fuller (Edgartown) Dan Greenbaum (Chilmark), Fred Hancock (MVC), Richard Knabel (West Tisbury), Brian Smith (West Tisbury), Juli Vanderhoop (Aquinnah), Craig Whitaker (Tisbury)

MVC Staff: Mark London, Bill Veno, Priscilla Leclerc

Consultants: Joe Bucovetsky (McCormick Taylor), Jim Klein (Lardner-Klein)

...Others: Ben Robinson (Tisbury Planning Board), Melinda Loberg (Tisbury Selectman), Dan Martino (MVTV), Alex Elvin (Vineyard Gazette)

The meeting was chaired by Linda Sibley who opened the meeting at 4:05 p.m. It was agreed to discuss the Mission Statements and political outreach at a future meeting, in order to devote all the time to the consultants.

1. Scenic Roads Initiative Scope of Work

Mark London explained that Joe Bucovetsky and Jim Klein had been hired by the MVC to help the Island Roads Committee to outline a recommended Scope of Work to advance efforts on the Island Roads Initiative.

1.1 Presentation

Joe Bucovetsky and Jim Klein gave a presentation that included following. A copy of their PowerPoint presentation is included in the appendix. Some comments are in response to questions from Committee members.

- They provided some information on their firms' background, including teaching a class on looking at landscapes and preparing design manuals in various locations.
- They have familiarized themselves with relevant materials about Martha's Vineyard, including Kevin Lynch's Looking at the Vineyard and various document produced by the MVC.
- They toured the Island before this meeting and found it to not only be scenic, but also to have what they would consider to be historic landscapes.
- They looked at the MassDOT Project Development and Design Guide, which they felt was well done and could serve as a model.
- The Green Book (Federal Highway Administration Design Standards) is not as rigid as people think. It has a lot of "shalls", but the wording allows for taking scenic and historic values into consideration, for adapting projects to their landscape.
- Their design standards treat roads differently based on their location (urban, suburban, or rural), their level of significance (national, regional, local), their integrity, and their defining

characteristics. A high priority to analyze all the roads to identify the significance and define the scenic qualities of each. Some roads are really important, possibly nationally significant, and are destinations for visitors. Nationally significant roads are those that would be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

- Designs must take into consideration the functional category of the given road, but this should not be the only criterion, as it was in the past.
- Transportation Research Board Special Report 214, *Designing Safer Roads*, provides for resurfacing, restoration, or rehabilitation that fixes existing roads without having to comply with the Green Book. AASHTO has different standards for very low volume local roads.
- The fundamental objective is to identify and protect the character defining features, especially of the most significant roads, while incorporating safety and other needed improvements.
- The character of some roads, such as the Edgartown Vineyard Haven Road, is less significant, but these too can be enhanced over time.
- The document *Context-Sensitive Solutions* (Maryland State Highway Administration) gives guidance for scenic byways. Engineers understand how to deal with historic roads.
- Utility poles present a particular challenge because they are needed to carry electricity and the utilities have extraordinary legal authority. Local guidance about the scenic qualities of roads can be useful in discussions with utilities, even if we cannot impose our standards.
- They generally recommend identifying a number of management categories that are a function of the level of significance. The guidelines should indicate the acceptable level of change for each category. For example, the most significant roads should be preserved as is.
- With respect to signage, the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* outlines criteria for signage design so there is uniformity from one place to another. Also, some signs are needed for safety. It might be possible to remove some of the signs at the Martha's Vineyard Roundabout over time, as people become more familiar with it.
- Dealing with multiple jurisdictions, such as on the Vineyard, presents a challenge. It would be desirable to coordinate the effort, but each town might want its own approach.
- It might be possible to simplify speed limits, in conjunction with better defining the character of each road based on its location, say 45 mph in rural areas, 35 mph for transition areas, and 25 mph for town areas.
- The sight lines in many locations on the Island are not good. In some cases, it might be possible to improve visibility with landscaping management rather than modifying the road itself.
- Using different surface materials can help differentiate paths, and even shoulders. The *Context Sensitive Roadway Surfacing Selection Guide* is a useful resource. Options include porous pavement, exposed aggregate, and tinting
- Roadside drainage structures can be removed and asphalt reduced, and other ways used to achieve water-quality goals. Drainage structures should use exposed aggregate and be tinted to blend in, rather than being bright white.
- Instead of galvanized guardrails, they could be timber or rusting steel, though the latter is not great in a marine environment.

- Traffic calming measures can be a challenge with scenic roads. With Virginia Route 50, they proposed 12-foot lanes in a rural zone, 11-foot lanes in a transition zone, and 10-foot lanes in a town zone. The proposal is to avoid curbs in the rural area, but have them in town areas. Roundabouts are very safe; they were involved in several projects.
- The design of overlooks should be considered. The Tashmoo Overlook is not very Vineyardy.
- The effort has to look not only at the roadway but at the whole roadscape in a holistic way. This includes identifying key views, such as views to the water, and having a vista management strategy. It also includes the tree canopy and vegetation and other features of the road corridor.

1.2 Discussion

Committee members and the consultants made the following comments.

- Too many signs are confusing, are there studies that show how many are useful. Wayfinding is important and advance signs before an intersection are needed so people can make the right choice once they are in the intersection. In some places, tinting a crosswalk might help visibility more than an excess of signs. The main resistance to large signs is in roads within a park system. There is more leeway with wayfinding signs, as opposed to regulatory ones, though they too must meet MUTCD regulations.
- To better accommodate bicycles, it is important to address roadside hazards and drainage. Instead of widening roads, it might be possible to restripe them to narrow the travel lane and widen the shoulder.
- The scope on work will outline everything to be done to move the Scenic Roads Initiative forward, possibly but not necessarily with a consultant. The Commission could do more of the initial inventory work with interns.
- In addition to the overall manual, there could be corridor studies of specific roadways to bring plans to a 20% level with community involvement, with engineering work to be done later.
- It would be useful to have a suggestion about how many meetings would be involved in carrying out the whole scope of work, and how long it might take.
- There have been budget cutbacks in Massachusetts. Perhaps the new Transportation Act will result in more funding for this kind of project. There might also be funding for climate change and water quality, which could include looking at the roads. It might also be useful to do a pilot project that could be applicable to other communities.
- It is important to clarify in the scope of work how we would go about determining what makes a road scenic, how to determine the road's significance, how to identify the defining characteristics, and how to protect these features.