

Martha's Vineyard Joint Transportation Committee

c/o Martha's Vineyard Commission, Box 1447, Oak Bluffs, 02557 508-893-3453

Minutes of the Meeting held on September 5, 2007 at the offices of the Martha's Vineyard Commission

In Attendance

Voting Members

Steve Berlucchi, County of Dukes County
Stuart Fuller, Town of Edgartown
Fred Lapiana, Town Tisbury
Dan Greenbaum, Town of Chilmark

Ex-officio Members

Mark London, MVC
Karen Pearson, EOTPW (via telephone)
Bob Clermont

Others

Jim Miller, MVC
Lin Gallant, MVC
Craig Whitaker

Steve Berlucchi, Chair, opened the meeting at 10:30am.

1. Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the meetings of June 6, June 28, and August 9, 2007 were corrected and unanimously approved.

2. JTC Membership: Wampanoag Tribe

It was noted that the Wampanoag Tribe had agreed to become voting members of the JTC.

Dan Greenbaum moved, and it was duly seconded, that the Martha's Vineyard Joint Transportation Committee name Durwood Vanderhoop as a voting member and Richard Randolph as the alternate member representing the Wampanoag Tribe on the JTC. Unanimously approved.

3. Transportation Improvement Program (TIP): FFY2007 and FFY2008-2011

Steve Berlucchi reminded the committee that, at its last meeting, the JTC was notified that Oak Bluffs was unable to meet the deadline for the Lake Avenue projects; the project budget is now \$1.4 million; will require more extensive review by MassHighway than originally anticipated, and also requires a substantial number of easements. At its last meeting, the JTC recommended transferring the to MassHighway (MHD) for on-Island projects (see minutes of August 9, 2007), or if this proves impossible, to have the VTA buy buses.

MHD has now notified the JTC that it will not be able to get any projects approved in time for the end-of-September deadline. Therefore, our only option is to transfer these funds to the VTA to purchase buses.

Dan Greenbaum moved, and it was duly seconded, that the Martha's Vineyard Joint Transportation Committee recommend transferring the FFY2007 TIP funds

to the Martha's Vineyard Regional Transit Authority for the purchase of buses.

- Stuart Fuller asked about replacing the guardrail on Beach Rd. with a steel-backed, decay-resistant wooden barrier, saying the '07 funds could purchase at least two miles of barrier. Mark London replied that it is too late to get the required approvals at the State level, and that the history of the existing guardrail suggest that there would be considerable public interest in this proposal, which would need time to air. Craig Whitaker noted that the existing guardrail was originally higher, but was lowered to bumper height for safety reasons.
- Karen Pearson noted that the deadline for TIP projects was moved forward, and that other MPOs had had similar problems. She mentioned that the Project Review Committee (PRC) only meets quarterly, and suggested that the Island should prepare a number of Project Need and Project Information Forms in order to have a backlog of projects approved by the PRC, to make sure this issue does not arise in the future.
- Fred Lapiana stated that he was unhappy with MHD's response that it is too late to proceed with projects on State roads, and said that it was unfortunate that MHD District 5 suggested several projects that could not actually be readied in time.
- Stuart Fuller suggested that the JTC ask the VTA to purchase smaller buses, more appropriate to their off-season ridership levels. Mark London replied that the JTC is not aware of all the factors that go into their selection of vehicles and it would probably be prohibitively expensive to have one fleet for the summer, and another one for the winter. Bob Clermont noted that maintaining a diverse fleet is expensive. It was agreed that the JTC would ask the VTA for clarification on their policy regarding bus purchases, including the use of alternative fuels.

The question was called. In favor: Steve Berlucchi, Stuart Fuller, and Dan Greenbaum. Opposed: Fred Lapiana. The motion passed.

There was a discussion of how to proceed with the Lake Avenue project.

- Steve Berlucchi noted that the 75% plans are at MHD and that the project is well advanced.
- Karen Pearson asked how the cost of the Lake Avenue project tripled. Steve Berlucchi noted that the increase was less than the various bridge projects; the cost of construction has risen considerably in recent years and it is especially expensive to build on Martha's Vineyard.
- Mark London suggested that maybe the project could be split into two or three projects, perhaps geographically; one section could be done next year, then the Blinker, and the other sections in future years, possibly leaving gaps so that other towns could complete projects in between, such as MUPs, the State & Old County intersection, Tisbury connector roads, etc.
- Steve Berlucchi said that the drainage needs might prevent the splitting of the project. Also, spreading it over many years could increase the disruption to business. He felt that the Oak Bluffs Selectmen might want Lake Avenue to proceed before the Blinker. He noted that Oak Bluffs has spent or authorized \$80,000 in design funds already and asked if there might be a way to fund the project all at once, for example by using Advanced Construction, or by having the Vineyard forfeit its TIP for two or three years as part of an agreement with MHD to fund all of Lake Avenue in one year.
- Karen Pearson suggested that statewide safety funds might be available to assist.
- Fred Lapiana felt that the roundabout at the Blinker has more regional importance on congestion and safety than Lake Avenue. He noted that Oak Bluffs has also spent or authorized considerable funds to plan and design the Blinker.

- Craig Whitaker wondered if there were mechanisms that could allow Oak Bluffs to finance the project through a local bank and then receive TIP funds post facto. Karen said she would look into it.

As for the '08-'11 TIP, Karen Pearson suggested that we keep it as it is for now. In October, the JTC can sit down with MHD District 5 and propose a TIP amendment with a full-fledged public participation process. She suggested that the JTC's intention to reassess the TIP in October should be well noted.

Fred Lapiana moved, and it was duly seconded, that the JTC leave the FFY2008-2011 TIP as is, with the addition of the Lake Avenue project to the appendix of regional priorities, noting that the JTC intends to amend the TIP at a later date. The motion passed unanimously.

Mark London noted that the projects suggested by MHD for the TIP funds are still needed, and that Pam Haznar of MHD should be reminded of that fact. He also suggested that the town's representatives seek the support of their Boards of Selectmen for potential TIP projects before we submit the proposal to District 5 and to the Project Review Committee.

Karen Pearson indicated that she would be coming to the Island for our October 3 meeting.

4. Reclassification of Island Roads

Fred Lapiana stated that Tisbury has allocated its entire share of the County engineer's time to study the possible reclassification of Island roads, to better reflect their current use.

Mark London noted that FHWA must approve. We could either focus on one or two roads that are clearly mis-classified, or do an overall request. It had been suggested by other Regional Planning Agencies that the FHWA might be more receptive to a more limited approach.

Fred Lapiana favored the overall approach, saying that we have to change the paradigm, so that the Island can get assistance without changing road design.

Mark noted that responded that, during its two-year trial period, the "Footprint Roads" program allowed roads with better-than-average safety records to be exempted from design guidelines. The new Highway Design Guidebook mentions footprint roads but it is up to MHD as to whether they would approve an exemption from the Guidebook. Otherwise, we could find ourselves in the position of having to accept MHD's requirements to widen shoulders or to have very wide cleared areas along the newly reclassified roads, or send the money back. This would be contrary to the clear public desire to maintain the character of the Vineyard's rural roads. It was not clear that there would be adequate public input in these design decisions. He suggested that we ask MHD to agree in principle to treat our roads as footprint roads, and that this understanding be part of the agreement on the reclassification of roads.

Craig Whitaker mentioned that Yellowstone National Park has redesigned it's roads contrary to design guidelines, and suggested that the JTC go directly to the federal government, perhaps with a paper explaining the situation and benefits, such as energy and monetary savings; he also mentioned that SAFETEA-LU encourages "context-sensitive solutions."

Fred Lapiana agreed with this approach, and asked whether Craig Whitaker and Steve Berlucchi

could work on the paper. He suggested that the paper be widely circulated locally to ensure political acceptance.

Mark London suggested that we get the latest accident statistics which, hopefully, would confirm that our roads are actually quite safe, despite the fact that they do not conform to many Guidebook requirements. MHD will be more open to treating our roads as footprint roads if we can demonstrate that safety is consistent with our rural roadway design.

Steve Berlucchi asked about the criteria for classifying roads. Stuart Fuller replied that the criteria are quite general – with an emphasis on traffic and linkages to other roads and communities – leaving room for local interpretation.

Mark London suggested that the JTC have some materials ready for the October 3rd meeting, particularly on accident rates. Steve Berlucchi said he would meet with Skip McCourt in MHD District 5 to discuss this.

5. Bicycle-Pedestrian Subcommittee

Jim Miller updated the JTC on the activities of the Bicycle-Pedestrian Subcommittee, including the recently created bicycle map and flyer and the letter sent to business regarding interacting with cyclists. The Bike-Ped Subcommittee also drafted a policy for marking intersections between MUPs and sidestreets, and drafted a letter to MHD District 5 regarding the repaving of New York Avenue that requests 10'6" lanes and 36" shoulders, instead of the proposed 11' lanes and 30" shoulders. The Bike-Ped subcommittee also suggests the use of "sharrow" pavement markings to indicate to motorists to share the road, since New York Avenue carries a lot of bicycle traffic. The JTC took these issues under advisement.

6. MVC DRI Transportation Policy

This item was tabled.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:28 p.m.

The next JTC meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 3, 2007 at 10:15 a.m.