

**Bath South End Neighborhood Transportation Study**  
**Public Meeting Notes**  
**January 31, 2019**

*Presenting:* Peter Owen, Bath City Manager; Nathan Howard, MaineDOT; Andrew Bond, BIW; Tom Errico, T.Y. Lin; Mitchell Rasor, MRLD LLC; Carol Morris, Morris Communications

*The meeting was attended by more than 50 members of the general public, and the Steering Committee of the South End Transportation Study.*

*NOTE:* To see presentation slides, click on *January Public Meeting Presentation*, which includes maps and graphics.

*The meeting began at 5:30 pm.*

Peter Owen thanked everyone for attending, and explained that what would be presented this evening are ideas that have been developed based on the conditions in the study area. He stated that a final plan would be developed centered on what is heard from residents tonight. He then introduced Carol Morris, Morris Communications, who added that in the work that has been done since September, there was no single action – no silver bullet – that solved all the problems. She explained that many small actions showed promise, and that these all together would make a big difference. Some can be implemented in the short term and some would take longer. She encouraged the audience to ask clarifying questions during the presentation, and noted that there would be plenty of time for general feedback afterwards. She also noted that the steering committee for the study includes representatives from the City of Bath, BIW, MaineDOT and the City Council.

She explained that the objectives of the study are to:

- Improve the safety of pedestrians
- Reduce the impact of vehicular traffic on neighborhood streets, and
- Identify strategies that will improve the availability of parking and/or reduce parking demands.

Finally, she reviewed what had been covered at the September public meeting.

Tom Errico, T.Y. Lin, then began to review the work that had been done and ideas generated since September. He first noted that people had asked about an older study that examined a bypass/new road. He showed a graphic from the study, noting that this idea was not part of today's study, and it will not be considered because it includes the need to take land, has environmental impacts, is very expensive, and further, it did not solve the traffic problems.

Tom then began to go over potential solutions developed as part of this study.

## **Transportation Solutions**

*Centre Street/High Street:* This is a high-crash location. During peak time periods, cars back up at this intersection, which affects Route 1. It used to be that intersections that are on a grade (hill) did not include stop signs because of the danger of cars slipping in winter; Tom said we are finding now that with so many all-wheel-drive vehicles, this is not a problem. The team suggests adding a stop sign at this location. This would be a short-term implementation.

*High Street/Route 1 Northbound Off-Ramp:* Again, there is traffic back-up here, so the team is recommending adding an additional lane on High Street when the bridge is rebuilt. At this time, sidewalks and bike lanes could also be added. This is a long-term fix. On the short term, the sight distance can be improved by removing vegetation and sign obstructions. We can also direct BIW traffic to Washington Street, which should help to relieve traffic delays, we can look at capacity improvements at Centre Street, and we can also change the lane assignment on the Route 1 off-ramp to a left/through and right lane configuration. All these will help traffic flow.

*Washington Street/Leeman Highway:* Tom had a number of suggestions here:

- Change the signal to extend green time on northbound Washington during the BIW's afternoon shift release. This would be a short-term fix.
- Consider relocating the stop bar and crosswalk on the railroad crossing on southbound Washington Street and install railroad crossing gates. This would make this signal much more efficient, moving more traffic through. It would take some work, so this is a mid-term time frame.
- Consider making Washington Street northbound a one-way street from 3:30 pm to 4:00 pm. This alternative would reduce delay for the Washington Street northbound left-turn and through movements. This is the same approach used at concerts and sporting events – do everything possible to flush as much traffic out as quickly as possible. It would slightly impact the queue on the Washington Street southbound approach. Traffic destined to BIW for the second shift would use Middle Street or other streets. This is a mid to long-term implementation.

Tom noted that fixing the Washington and Leeman intersection goes a long way towards improving traffic flow as directed by the study goals.

*Street Traffic Circulation Changes:* Tom said that here we are looking at making the neighborhood streets that exit onto Washington one way in order to stop BIW traffic from filtering through the neighborhood. The goal is for all vehicles to stay on Washington Street. This would include:

- Stacey Street eastbound
- Fisher Court eastbound
- Wesley Street eastbound
- Shepard Street eastbound
- Bath Street – change direction to eastbound
- South Street from Middle Street to Washington Street eastbound
- Castine Street eastbound
- Spring Street westbound
- Middle Street from Russell Street to Castine Street southbound.

With Washington one-way and the above changes made, modeling shows that 426 vehicles would shift to Washington Street. Tom cautioned that making these streets one-way without making Washington one-way during the shift change would make the traffic situation much, much worse than it is now. He also noted that they would make sure that no traffic could slip through to the South End. This would be a mid-term implementation.

### **Pedestrian Enhancements**

*Sidewalks:* Tom noted that there were sidewalks in the neighborhood that are not ADA compliant, and some that needed upgrading. He also suggested adding sidewalks on Castine Street, Union Street, Washington Street (not in winter due to falling ice hazards), and Western Avenue. This is a short to long-term implementation period.

*Leeman Highway at Middle and King Crosswalks:* Tom suggested a Rectangular Rapid Flash Beacon here as these do a very good job stopping traffic for pedestrians.

*Washington Street and Leeman Highway:* Tom noted that the traffic signal here now covers all the crossings and allows pedestrians to push a button and stop traffic. But he added that most people push the button and don't wait, but dash across when they think they can. Then, when the signal does respond, there are stopped cars but no pedestrians. Tom suggested separating out the signal for each crossing, making the signal more efficient.

*Route 1 Viaduct Crossing and Washington Street:* Install a barrier under the Route 1 Viaduct to prevent pedestrians from crossing Leeman Highway between the intersections, as well as along Washington Street to forestall the same problem. These are challenging areas where pedestrians flow through at shift changes and really affect traffic negatively. There are some negatives in doing this along Washington Street, as it would impact access to the Post Office. This could be a relatively short-term implementation.

### **Parking Improvement Strategies**

*BIW Parking:* Tom noted that BIW's goal is to create safe and organized parking for all employees. They are looking at 800 new workers in 2019, and will locate employees who don't need to be in the shipyard to other locations. Investment and expansion is underway at BIW Brunswick facilities. They do not intend to add new parking in the neighborhood; the satellite lots and other BIW properties have the capacity to handle additional parking needs. They have expanded access to their satellite lots with an all-day <sup>SEP</sup>shuttle service, something employees said they wanted. They will be working with SupeShip to offer this auxiliary capacity to their visiting Navy employees. Finally, the team is suggesting that the 2-hour parking in front of BIW be changed to permit parking for vanpools and carpools only.

*Parking Garage:* Tom stated that they are not recommending a parking garage. Adding 600+ additional parking spaces would not help the situation and would likely intensify traffic impacts on Washington Street. From a BIW employee point of view, the long delays in departing the garage would not be popular. Tom noted that he has worked with the City of Portland on the Maine Medical Center garage, <sup>SEP</sup>and many employees are not using it, but parking on the street for that very reason. He added that a garage would also have high construction and maintenance costs. <sup>SEP</sup>

*Neighborhood Parking:* Tom said that the study is suggesting that the City implement a one-hour time limit on area streets and at the same time increase parking fines and enforcement significantly to discourage BIW employee parking on neighborhood streets. At the same time, he recommended the city implement a Residential Parking Permit program for the South End neighborhood to allow residents to park on the street without restrictions. Both these would take some time to organize and find resources, so he sees a Mid-Term Implementation for these.

### **Transportation Demand Strategies**

*GoMaine:* BIW is encouraging employees to use GoMaine, a program that coordinates carpools and vanpools and provides a free rental car should an emergency occur.

*BIW Deliveries:* BIW has requested that deliveries to BIW use Route 1 to Washington Street as opposed to local streets.

*Flashing Warning Signs:* Another idea is to install "Shift Change When Flashing" signage on Leeman Highway and High Street, advising motorists to seek an alternate route.

Tom turned the presentation over to Mitchell Razor to talk about how zoning could over time change the character of the neighborhood.

### **Zoning Changes**

Mitchell said that these recommendations are about how parking could be stabilized or phased out in the neighborhood over time. He said that the goal would be to stabilize

the South Bath residential neighborhoods, particularly the R1 and C2 zones, by not allowing parking lots as a standalone land use. Right now, it is legal to have a standalone parking lot in the C2 and C3 Zones. If they are rezoned as R1, parking is no longer a legal use.

This does not mean that the parking lots would automatically go away – they would be grandfathered – but it means that all current freestanding parking lots would become legally nonconforming. This means if a parking lot is discontinued for year or more, it would lose its legal nonconforming status and would have to become something else, such as a park, or even a lot for new housing.

All parking lots or parking spaces that are not an accessory use to the primary use of the parcel would not be allowed. That means each parcel would have parking only for those living there. Over time, this rezoning will allow the neighborhood to creep back in instead of parking creeping in.

There were several questions on the details about how this would work, how this works under the CMP power line. In response to a question, Mitchell noted that the parking lots in the neighborhood are owned by an array of individuals and by BIW. It was asked if it would help if residents went to City Hall and asked to remove neighborhood parking lots. Mitchell said he believed that would not be feasible for the City to take action, given the current zoning law.

Carol then turned the meeting over to Andrew Bond, BIW Human Resources, to provide more detail about BIW activities in recent months. Andrew made the point that BIW wants to be a good neighbor, as well as providing the following updates:

- All deliveries now go down Washington Street.
- Shuttlebuses now drop off only on the shipyard side of Washington.
- There is new Shuttlebus service that runs every half hour, with 54 shuttles each day. As ridership increases, they will add more. They are looking to make offsite parking as convenient as possible, and to expand it as needed.
- There are 112 carpools, which have at least four passengers each, and 84 commuter vans with 12-15 passengers each.
- BIW has about 1200 parking spaces within the city. Also have 600 off-site spots, of which 200 were added last year.
- They have made a commitment to provide free of charge parking for all employees, although it may not be as convenient as some would like. This was not always the case.
- In answer to a question, Andrew said the employees who used to park at the James Lot are now parking at the West Bath Satellite lot.
- BIW intends to do more work with GoMaine to encourage more vanpools.
- He appreciates everyone's patience in dealing with these issues.

There were several questions asked regarding parking and BIW:

- A resident asked if transport of employees by train was possible. Andrew responded that they could consider it, but had not at this point.
- A resident asked if there are other incentives for parking in the satellite lots? Andre responded that we will evaluate everything, but any change has consequences and he was not ready to commit to any at this point.
- A resident asked if employees who carpool could be allowed to leave early. Andrew replied that giving priority departure to those who park in a satellite lot could be considered.
- It was asked if people could work from m home, and Andrew replied that for a defense contractor, that would be difficult.

At this point Carol opened the meeting to other questions.

- What is the status of construction on Richardson Street? Peter Owen responded that the Richardson Street work is separate from this study, but that the consensus is that most people did not like the traffic calming measures tested last fall. The City is looking at other solutions.
- A resident commented that flushing out Washington is an interesting idea. But she is concerned with lack of access to Post Office. Another resident asked, what about blocking that access off all the time and adding it somewhere else? Tom responded that, if people think this is a good idea, we would look at other access points.
- A resident asked about a low tech solution of letting BIW add an extra 30 seconds to the Washington Street traffic light when the shift lets out. Tom responded that the adaptive signal we suggested will do that, give Washington traffic more time, but there could be delays for the other approaches, which could potentially cause safety issues. We think a balance is possible though.
- A resident asked \ about eliminating the bump outs on Washington Street? They are supposed to be traffic calming but they make the road narrow. Tom said he would take a look at this.
- A suggestion was made to have police on site at the shift change? Tom noted that this had been done in the past and he thinks police would do a better job than the signal. But he added that this is a resource issue for the City.
- It was noted that people are parking in front of the Cabin and when they do cars can't get by, Tom said he would look at this as well.
- There were concerns expressed about driving behavior, people don't know who has the right of way, and this turned into a discussion of the potential of police presence in terms of controlling behavior during the shift change,
- There was concern that pedestrians walking on Washington to Leeman just will not stop and will cross the street regardless. Tom said the solutions are not perfect, but they will help. He added that police would be especially helpful here.
- Andrew added that with the recent pedestrian/vehicle incident, he wanted to

underline that the issues are not just at 3:30 pm, but that the morning shift, with darkness as a factor, is also of major concern. Tom noted that lighting is an important factor to think about. A resident added that it is especially bad in the rain, and reflective gear would be helpful.

- A resident said she understood the reasons why a parking garage would not work for the shipyard, but wondered if there could be one built for downtown.

Carol thanked everyone for coming and noted that the PowerPoint, meeting minutes and updates would be on the City of Bath website.

*The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 pm*

SEP