

May 11, 2000

## Huntington Lower Village Green Transportation Study

L&D began its work on this project by preparing a base map of the study area with its ground positioning system (GPS) equipment. The survey located building fronts, pavement edges, signs, poles, driveways, sidewalks, significant trees, and other physical features in the study area that were readily noted. From the survey, we produced a base map of the study area. After completion of the base map, we revisited the site to make further notes about circulation and use patterns, tree size and quality, land uses, sight distances and other less tangible features of the study area.

Once sufficient information had been collected about the study area, we conducted the first public work session with the adjoining land owners and other interested Town residents.

L&D began the first public work session with a short presentation about what existed now on the Village Green and in the surrounding area, and by presenting the base survey. We also summarized what the Town had discussed in the past as solutions to the circulation problems on the roadways surrounding the Green. After these presentations, L&D opened the meeting to discussion, first to check that all important issues were being considered. Those present made the following comments:

Three buses use the Bridge Street side of the Green as a transfer point twice a day: in the morning from about 7:10 to 7:15 AM and in the afternoon from about 2:25 to 2:35 PM. One bus comes from the south and one bus comes from the north; the direction of the third bus is not clear. The buses leave the area the way they came. The buses now park side by side, blocking the road for about ten minutes while they are parked.

In the past, there was no parking in front of Jacque's general store on the east side of the Main Road, but the posts that kept vehicles off the Green have rotted and were removed. The "no parking" sign is ineffective.

Vehicles traveling from Bridge Street to Main Road southbound often shoot into traffic quickly, creating a hazard for those traveling both ways on the Main Road.

There is a significant drainage issue by the Waitsfield Telecom Property; water gathers there in the summer and the winter, creating hazards in all seasons.

The bridge at the eastern end of the study area is not posted as one way but this should be considered in the future as the bridge is rebuilt. Considering the importance of pedestrian travel and the interaction of pedestrians in this area, the Town should consider extending the Study Area to include the turn on the east side of the bridge.

Sidewalks on the south side of Bridge Street could pose a problem, due to the power line and multiple access points along the road.

The curve around the Jacques's in the Main Road is blind. Southbound traffic turning onto either Brooklyn Street or East Street take a risk since they can only see oncoming traffic for a short distance. Parking for the phone company and large trucks at the general store compound the problem.

The fact that there are several roads in the area divides the traffic and separates the turning movements, so that no one area is tremendously impacted.

Motor vehicles need to slow as they travel north on the Main Road as it approaches East Street and the Village Green. Flashing yellow lights should be used.

Pedestrian access to East Street and bicycles on the Main Road are problems.

The curbs used in Essex Junction at a similar problem intersection helped the intersection to function better.

Adding sidewalks to the area would be acceptable and would blend with the existing character of the area, but curbs may be too much.

A stop sign on the Main Road should be considered.

After general comments, the participants began a discussion of possible solutions to the issues. Various ideas were discussed, until eventually, seven different options as to how the intersection could be reorganized emerged (see attached sketches 1 through 7).

- #1 Close Bridge Street east of the Green; narrow Main Road and move it further to the east into the Green in front of the store; close the eastern connection of East Street to Main Street and improve the western connection, tee-ing it into Main Road.
- #2 Similar to #1, except that the through traffic movement is made to be Main Road to East Street; Main Road south of the Village Tees into East Street.
- #3 Lessen the curve on Main Road south of the Village Green by cutting into the hillside; tee East Street into Main Road midway between the two current connections; other streets stay the same.
- #4 Tee East Street into Main Road in the vicinity of the southern/western connection; route northbound traffic onto the one-way north Bridge Street (between the Green and the residences) then onto Brooklyn Street, and north on Main Road. Southbound through traffic travels on the Main Road as they do now. Brooklyn Street remains a two way street.

- #5 Remove the connection of East Street to Main Road and route all traffic for East Street onto Bridge Street. Brooklyn Street would serve as the connection to the Main Road for East Street traffic. The Green would be connected to the private property south of the East Street/Main Road intersection.
- #6 A variation of #5, which creates openings at either end of the narrow barrier between East Street/Bridge Street and Main Road.
- #7 This option leaves the traffic as it is now.

After considerable discussion about the merits and shortcomings of each, the group took an informal vote to determine which options enjoyed the most support and why. Option #1 emerged as the favored option alternative followed closely by #5 and #6.

Comments on the various schemes included:

- Option #1 improves the visibility without a significant change to the layout of the village.
- Option #5 separates traffic; it keeps the traffic coming north on the Main Road isolated. It also has less drainage problems.
- There were also general comments that could apply to any option.
- Separating the traffic movement to Main Road and East Street would be helpful.
- Dividing the traffic doesn't slow northbound traffic on Main Road as it enters the Village.
- The most important issues are to slow traffic down, improve sight distances and improve the slope on the East Street connection to the Main Road.
- Enlarge the center island at the East Street/Main Road intersection. This would be restoring what used to be there.
- Storm drainage needs to be added to ANY solution.
- Installing a rotary may be good for traffic, but it would isolate the green in the middle of the area away from the rest of the buildings in the Village.
- The pedestrian flow in the area needs to be understood so that it can be accommodated. The participants provided information on how they perceived pedestrian traffic flowed around the Green.

During the discussion, there were shifts in the viewpoints of the participants, but a gradual, weak consensus emerged that option #1 was the most desirable plan. Many reserved final judgement until they saw what the more detailed plans looked like.

Following the first work session, L&D explored methods of how to turn the most desirable plan into an acceptable plan for the area that address the complete list of concerns in a concise, easily understood way. During the course of developing alternate methods of fulfilling the recommendations of the preferred option, L&D conferred with members of the Huntington Planning Commission and Selectboard about the directions they were taking. L&D created two alternate plans to be considered at a second public work session.

The second meeting on the Lower Huntington Green Project began with an overview of what was discussed at the first meeting. This initial presentation included a discussion of:

- the important comments made about the area at the beginning of the meeting;
- The seven different options that were discussed;
- The selection of "favorite" option, resulting in the selection of two likely solutions;
- Further discussion about the options; and
- The conclusion of the evening was to proceed with option #1 and to proceed with other options only if option #1 could not work.

Option #1 called for the closing of Bridge Street between the green and the residential properties to the east; the relocation of the Main Road into the Green as well as a cutting back of the hillside adjacent to and south of the Champlain Valley Telecom (CVT) property; the rerouting of the intersection between East Street and Main Road further to the south; and the elimination of the small bump in Main Road south of the East Street intersection.

Following this discussion, L&D outlined the two alternate proposals they had developed based on Option #1. The first, "A", (shown on sheet 8), provided a bus pull off at the eastern end of the green on Brooklyn/Bridge Street. This plan also required the relocation of the utility pole on the west side of the Main Road outside of the CVT property. The second, "B", (shown on sheet 9), provided a driveway extending south from Bridge Street, along the alignment of the street to be closed, eliminated driveway access to Main Road, and left the utility pole adjacent to the CVT switching building in its current position.

Reaction to both plans was mixed. The bus situation was the largest perceived difference, and it was generally felt that the second option, while not great, was preferred. During the discussion, a CVT representative indicated that moving the pole could be accomplished relatively easily, if it was needed. Another general reaction to the plan was that it did little to slow northbound traffic on Main Road, and that increasing sight distance may NOT be a good idea.

As the discussion progressed, other options considered at the first meeting were reconsidered, which

led to a new modification to Alternative B. The new plan Alternate B-1 created a one way road extending from East Street to Bridge Street, over which ALL northbound traffic from East Street would need to travel to reach Main Road. Southbound traffic for East Street would be required to make the left hand turn from Main Road to East Street through the newly aligned, one way connection. Bus use of Bridge Street would be accommodated by providing a left turn lane from the one way connection to East Street to Bridge Street. Buses would enter the one way portion of Bridge Street and stack there. When the student exchange is complete, they would depart to the north in whatever direction required. This plan is a hybrid between the two most preferred plans from the previous meeting.

There was still a strong sentiment from some that the option #5 from the first meeting, which created a total separation between East Street and Main Road, should be examined in more detail. It was pointed out by others that this alternative would be esthetically unappealing and would not be easily traversed by pedestrians. This alternative also did not have a readily apparent method of allowing the bus exchange to occur. The use of the new post office parking lot was suggested, but no one was sure it would work.

The Planning Commission determined at the end of the meeting that L&D would look at two final alternates; Option #5 from the first meeting, to be called Alternative C, and the new hybrid created at the meeting that evening, to be called Alternative B-1. Due to the very open nature of the options, it was determined that it was more important to look closely at the two alternates, rather than develop an initial, very loose, cost estimate. The time it would take to develop the cost estimate were put towards the development of a second "final" scheme.

After the close of the second work session, L&D created two revised plans and discussed the two alternatives with the Planning Commission and Selectboard representatives. After addressing their suggestions, the two alternatives were submitted to the Town.



