



Maura Healey, Governor
Kimberley Driscoll, Lieutenant Governor
Gina Fiandaca, Secretary & CEO
Jonathan L. Gulliver, Highway Administrator



February 6th, 2023

Subject: Milton - Intersection Improvements at Route 28 (Randolph Avenue) & Chickatawbut Road
Project File No. 607342

Nicholas Milano, Town Administrator
Milton Select Board
nmilano@townofmilton.org

Dear Mr. Milano and Milton Select Board,

I am writing to provide you with responses to the comments you submitted following the Design Public Hearing on October 27th, 2022 regarding the Intersection Improvements at Route 28 (Randolph Avenue) & Chickatawbut Road in the Town of Milton. Your comments and specific responses to the comments are provided below.

1. Comment - At the Design Public Hearing on October 27, 2022, MassDOT's presentation noted that the previous public information meeting was held in Summer 2019, but there were subsequently no additional public meetings to solicit further input, provide project updates, or respond to concerns raised by the Milton community. It was at the Design Public Hearing on October 27, three years after the last public meeting, that MassDOT formally presented a design and solicited comments on a pre-determined solution. A public planning process that values community engagement does not go three years between public meetings. We are requesting that MassDOT engage with the Milton community by scheduling additional public meetings and that MassDOT be responsive to the numerous concerns raised, such as: queueing that prevents residents from entering and exiting side streets and driveways, speeding and unsafe vehicular travel along the Route 28 corridor, impacts to streets such as Hillside Avenue due to increased vehicle volume, as MassDOT anticipates and noted in the Design Public Hearing, and alternative designs for the intersection.

Response – The design development, project development process, and agency coordination drove the timeline for public engagement on the project.

MassDOT held initial kick off and coordination meetings with Town of Milton to coordinate the project development and proposed solutions. In March 2019, a meeting was held with MassDOT, Town of Milton, the State Representative, and the Milton Select Board Chair staff to discuss the intersection alternatives under development which presented multiple traffic signal concepts and a roundabout concept design. At this time comments

were made in support of the roundabout with specific comments to certain aspects of the design.

Following this coordination meeting, the Public Information Meeting was held in July 2019 which presented a signalized intersection alternative with left-turn lanes and a roundabout alternative. The presentation presented traffic and safety impacts of both options and walked through why the roundabout was the preferred alternative. Following the significant feedback heard at the initial Public Information Meeting, MassDOT also presented to the Milton Select Board on September 11, 2019, prior to advancing into design of the roundabout. These initial meetings to the public and Select Board presented detailed information regarding the intersection alternatives of the traffic signal with left-turn lanes and the proposed roundabout and presented conceptual designs for each.

Following these meetings, design development with MassDOT and DCR drove the schedule for the design public hearing to ensure that the design was context-sensitive to the critical environmental areas surrounding the intersection. At this time, MassDOT provided the 25% design to the Town of Milton engineering and DPW and received written comments prior to advancing to the Design Public Hearing held in Fall 2022.

MassDOT has listened to the concerns voiced from the public regarding the proposed intersection design and corridor concerns outside of the intersection design project limits. MassDOT has engaged the Town and public in the project development process since the alternative analysis. While there has been significant concern and skepticism voiced from the public regarding the roundabout, it has remained the preferred alternative for design due to the safety benefits it is expected to provide for the intersection. It is understood that there are additional safety concerns beyond these project limits along the Route 28 corridor, however the intersection of Randolph Avenue at Chickatawbut Road has consistently ranked as a Top 10 crash location within the state and is therefore prioritized for safety improvements. The intersection project is funded by the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) and MassDOT is therefore responsible for prioritizing the intersection design which provides the greatest safety benefits. The proposed roundabout design meets the project goals to improve safety and mobility through the intersection and reducing vehicle speeds.

In response to requests to expand the study area to the full corridor, MassDOT is committed to performing further analysis to evaluate potential for interim corridor improvements, separate from the Randolph Avenue (Route 28) and Chickatawbut Road intersection project.

2. Comment - We are grateful for the efforts of the Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization's Central Transportation Planning Staff's Route 28 Priority Corridor Study which identified the numerous challenges residents face daily on Route 28, whether congestion during peak travel times or unsafe vehicular traffic due to speeding. MassDOT's focus on this singular intersection means that the rest of the corridor is being ignored and improvements are further delayed. In addition, by focusing only on this intersection, MassDOT is not fully evaluating impacts of the roundabout design along the entire corridor and those impacts are not fully understood. We are requesting that MassDOT more fully evaluate how the roundabout will impact the Route 28 corridor and compare those impacts to an alternative design of a signalized intersection with dedicated left hand turn lanes. We also note that the Route 28 Priority Corridor Study identified numerous short-term improvements. The study states that the recommended short-term improvements "are usually low cost, relatively uncomplicated and inexpensive to implement, and require minimal design efforts." We request that MassDOT review the Route 28 Priority Corridor Study, as well as the 2016 Road Safety Audit, and provide an update to the Town within 30 days on progress towards implementing the short-term improvements and next steps for long-term improvements, such as the modernization and coordination of traffic signals, for the full corridor. The Town is ready to collaborate on short-term improvements where the Town's right of ways are impacted.

Response – In response to requests to expand the study area to the full corridor, MassDOT is committed to performing further analysis to evaluate potential for interim corridor improvements, separate from the Randolph Avenue and Chickatawbut Road intersection project. Given the safety impact of this project and the pressing need for safety improvements at the Randolph Avenue at Chickatawbut Road Intersection Improvement Project, the intersection project would not be delayed to implement full corridor improvements. MassDOT will collaborate with the Town of Milton within the larger corridor analysis where Town jurisdiction is involved. The traffic volumes along Randolph Avenue are higher than typically recommended for a full road diet and the Boston MPO CTPS corridor study did not recommend a preferred alternative. Therefore, additional engineering analysis would be required prior to implementing corridor changes along Randolph Avenue.

3. Comment - MassDOT's failure to implement short-term improvements as well as make progress towards planning and design for long-term improvements is related to our concern that the roundabout proposal (or an alternative design) does nothing to improve safety in the intersection in the meantime. With 18 to 24 months before a project would start and a long project schedule, MassDOT needs to make immediate improvements to increase safety at the Route 28/Chickatawbut intersection.

Response – There were number of short-term improvements suggested in the 2016 RSA and 2021 Boston Region MPO study, five of which have been implemented. They were restriping pavement markings, installing advance lane usage signs at Randolph Avenue and Reedsdale Road intersection, providing double left-turn lane at Redesdale Road intersection, installing speed feedback signs, and replacing incandescent stop sign ahead sign with an LED stop sign ahead sign. Currently MassDOT is reviewing additional short-term improvements for implementation.

4. Comment - Lastly, the Town seeks to better understand alternative designs, such as a signalized intersection with dedicated left hand turn lanes, and how they may compare to the proposed roundabout. While some information was shared at the Design Public Hearing on October 27, it was not clear that MassDOT fully evaluated alternatives. We are requesting that MassDOT share more information about alternatives with the Milton community. We ask that MassDOT more fully evaluate, in a timely basis, how alternative designs might affect traffic congestion, travel times, and safety and conduct additional public meetings to review these potential alternative designs. We also note the concerns raised by residents about whether the roundabout would, in fact, increase safety for pedestrians and bicyclists because of the lack of dedicated signals for safe crossing on foot or by bike.

Response – MassDOT evaluated signalized intersection alternatives with left-turn lanes and the roundabout alternative for traffic and safety impacts prior to recommending and proceeding with a preferred alternative. An independent safety analysis was performed at Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) high crash locations throughout the district which provided the predictive safety analysis following methodology within the Highway Safety Manual of the signalized and roundabout alternatives, the results of which were presented at the initial intersection alternatives meetings held for the public and Milton Select Board.

The MassDOT project website, (<https://www.mass.gov/randolph-ave-rt-28chickatawbut-intersection-improvement-project>), provides the presentation made to the public in July 2019 under the “Document & meeting materials” page. Additionally, the Milton Select Board presentation given on September 11, 2019 is also provided with this response.

While we have heard to concerns voiced by the public and residents' that the roundabout will worsen safety for pedestrians and cyclists using the intersection, the safety data presented within the Highway Safety Manual and MassDOT's Safety Alternative Analysis Guide does not support the claim that a roundabout will worsen safety for pedestrians and bicyclists. The project

proposes to provide a shared use path along the intersection approaches with well-marked crosswalks, Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFBs), and splitter islands to provide safe and accessible crossing opportunities at the intersection. The MassDOT crash modification factor for converting a signalized intersection into a modern roundabout shows a crash reduction for fatal and injury and property damage only crashes across travel modes.

Should you have any further questions or comments regarding this project, please feel free to contact the Project Manager, Josh Bartus, at (617) 620-3705 or by email at Joshua.bartus@state.ma.us.

Sincerely,



Michael J. O'Dowd,
Director of Major Projects

MJO/jdb

cc: Erin Kinahan, P.E., District 6 Project Development Engineer
 Chase Berkeley, P.E., Milton DPW Director
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