

Wiscasset Transportation Committee
August 4, 2003

Attending: Don Jones, Lois Kwantz, Seaver Leslie, Marguerite Rafter, Sean Rafter

Agenda:

1. Review minutes of July 14 meeting
2. Bypass route presentation from Ad Hoc Bypass Committee
3. 1989 comprehensive plan review
4. Other business

Don Jones called the meeting to order at 7:15 PM. The TC introduced themselves to the audience. The July 14 minutes were reviewed, discussed, amended and adopted unanimously as amended.

The ad hoc committee presented the route that they have laid out as the best for the town of Wiscasset. Phil Simpson, chair of the ad hoc committee, explained that he joined and agreed to chair the ad hoc committee for the following reasons:

1. He believes that the town of Wiscasset needs to be proactive re: a bypass route.
2. The town must express its wishes to MDOT and show where we would like a route to go rather than allowing surrounding towns to be the ones to have all the say.
3. The committee believes that Route 1 is where business development should occur and therefore, it should not be clogged with through traffic, thus the idea of starting the route further south (near Miss Wiscasset Diner).
4. The AHC believes that its route is a better one than any that MDOT has laid out for the following reasons:
 - a. It is a "long term" solution while the MDOT routes are only short term in light of future business development of the Route 1 corridor.
 - b. Not as many people would be impacted by this 'new' route.
 - c. This would be a limited access bypass with no business development allowed on it.
 - d. Moving the route out above the high school would preserve the Route 27 area for a school campus development (as proposed in the 1989 comprehensive plan).
 - e. The longer loop out would allow access of traffic from Routes 27 and 218, eliminating the need for the traffic to come into the village in order to connect with Route 1.

George Jones of the AHC spoke next, re-iterating some of what Phil had spoken to regarding the "why" of beginning the route nearer the Woolwich/Wiscasset town lines. The four top reasons for having a bypass are the free flow of traffic throughout the Mid-coast region, safer access to the business community of Wiscasset, development of additional business in the southern Route 1 area, movement of large trucks, busses, etc. around the community thus reducing the negative impact of gas and diesel fumes created by these idling vehicles. The AHC believes that the current MDOT routes do not

adequately address these issues because they would be “outdated” shortly after completion due to ever increasing traffic demands on the Mid-coast region. Although the AHC’s route is longer than the MDOT routes in mileage, it would be shorter in terms of time since traffic could travel at 55 mph with no stopping. A bypass beginning at the NAPA auto store would not eliminate the effects of entering/exiting traffic into all the current businesses on the southern part of Route 1, nor does it take into account Wiscasset’s intention to further develop this area of Route 1 as the business district.

Karl Tarbox next spoke to the issue that Wiscasset must have a voice in the process of a bypass and that so far we have none because we have no consensus regarding the best route for the town of Wiscasset. The AHC has attempted to draw out what they think is the best route. Karl believes that there may still be time for Wiscasset to impact the choice of route, but that this time is quickly drawing to a close. He also believes that we can use the 1989 comprehensive plan as a bargaining tool with MDOT regarding routes. Even though the plan was never accepted by the state, the townspeople of Wiscasset did vote on it and accept it. That plan clearly laid out the southern part of Route 1 as the area to develop for business purposes and the Route 27 area between the current high school and primary school as a school campus area. The current MDOT routes take none of this into consideration.

John Blagdon said that he became involved with the AHC because Wiscasset people matter, local interests matter and because we need to develop a route with the least impact and the most good. We need a route that is a long-term solution for the greater good.

We cannot just sit back and let a route happen to us. Jo Bryer, another member of AHC, said that since the ‘squeaky wheel gets the grease’, Wiscasset needs to squeak as loudly as the surrounding communities.

When asked whether the business community currently out on Route 1 had been polled, the AHC said that many had been contacted and that the feelings were mixed regarding the latest proposed route.

David Sutter stated that he believes that MDOT has additional routes marked out that they are not sharing with the town. He referred to aerial reference points and markers that he has observed on some of the rural road within town.

Andrew Gilmore, Wiscasset’s new director of economic/commercial development, laid out MDOT’s time line re: the bypass routes. MDOT is finalizing its studies of the routes left on the table and will be allowing public comment in late October/early November on the ones that they intend to send to the Federal government. After public comment, they will send their EIS (environmental impact statement) on the route(s) that they believe are the most optimal to the Feds. The Feds will probably make their decision by mid-summer of 2004. The actual decision about building a bypass depends on many things, including support of our legislators, in order to free up federal monies for building.

An Edgecomb resident asked about the intent of the new route regarding the Davey

Bridge. The AHC responded that they certainly had no intention of having the bridge removed.

The following questions were asked by various members of the audience:

- If the comp plan of 1989 was never accepted by the state, does it have any teeth in directing where the route would go?
 - How much longer is the proposed route than MDOT's routes?
- If MDOT's routes are only a "short term solution", are they really any cheaper than the newly proposed longer route?
- Wouldn't a shorter bridge (near the old iron bridge) free up money to be put toward construction of a longer road?
 - If fewer houses are impacted, then won't the "buy-outs" be less expensive?
- With exchanges at Routes 27 & 218, can the town enforce lower truck weights on town roads?
- With an exchange at Route 218, could the route from the exchange into town become part of Wiscasset's road system, thereby relieving MDOT of the upkeep of that portion of the road?
- What happened to the suggested route that followed the telephone "right of ways"?
- _ How do we proceed from here to open up the process for the townspeople to be able to discuss all the proposed routes and possibly to entertain newly proposed routes?

Andrew Gilmore addressed this last question, stating that the process is almost as important as coming up with a route that most people can live with. The goal should be to put a route on the table that satisfies the largest number of residents. Andrew suggested a workshop or two in order to allow the public to have input. Being proactive is extremely important. At this point, we really have two choices - to create a position for the town of Wiscasset or to let the state control things.

The transportation committee members then began discussion about when and where to have a public workshop. Sean Rafter stated that we need to let the selectmen know what we are doing and what our intentions are. He then made a motion to "have the chair present the ad hoc committee's information and route to the board of selectmen with our endorsement". Marguerite seconded the motion. Discussion ensued with Don stating that he believed that any endorsement of a route should not occur prior to the public having an opportunity to speak. Lois and Seaver agreed that they also were not comfortable with endorsing any route before a public workshop opportunity. Sean amended his motion to read that the transportation committee should present the ad hoc committee's proposal to selectmen as a starting point to re-open discussion re: bypass routes. In discussion, Don said that the ad hoc committee has already presented all this information to the town manager and the selectmen. A vote on both the amendment and the original motion failed, 3-2.

Lois then moved "to set up a public workshop for Monday evening, August 11, to discuss the ad hoc committee's proposal and any other proposed viable routes, plus the existing routes already on the table". It was seconded by Don and amended to include an invitation to an MDOT person to attend. After discussion about the need for the

amendment and the suggestion by Andrew Gilmore that this probably was not a good idea at this point, the amendment was withdrawn. The committee voted on the original motion; it passed unanimously.

The transportation committee asked for the media's help in getting the word out about the August 11 workshop at 7:15 PM at the Lincoln County Communications Center meeting room.

As most of the audience left, the transportation committee continued its work, discussing the transportation issues that had been dealt with in the 1989 comprehensive plan, particularly the problems that still exist - parking, traffic flow in the downtown, congestion on Route 1, traffic queues at the Route 1/Route 27 intersection. We also talked about things that had been accomplished, which were few and far between. Much of the proposed policies in the 1989 plan revolved around the assumption of a bypass and since none is in place, nor on the near horizon, many of these policies have remained a moot point. We still have a regional congestion problem; we believe that economic development is tied to a bypass, that there is still a parking problem in town, that a trained traffic management officer would help alleviate some of the traffic problems. Some of the things that have been accomplished are additional parking (at the Main St, pier), the change from perpendicular parking to angled parking on Main St., the formation of a transportation committee and a waterfront committee, the adoption by the transportation committee of the access management philosophies regarding Route 1 development, etc. See the page attached to these minutes. We agreed that the airport is an area that the transportation committee does not need to concern itself with since the airport has been successful at accomplishing many of the goals set out in the 1989 comp plan and since there is an airport committee in charge. Regarding railroad service, some progress has been and is being made, particularly in the area of commercial rail service. We are now seeking passenger rail service, especially for commuters and are working with MDOT on the location of a downtown railroad station; a site for a station outside of town has already been chosen.

The committee agreed that it was time to adjourn. We were asked by Don to send him further input regarding how many of the problems, policies and solutions as identified by the 1989 comp plan committee have actually been dealt with and what direction the current comp plan committee should be heading. Don and Marguerite will be presenting a report to the committee at the comp plan meeting on August 18 (subsequently changed to August 25). The committee will meet again at 7:15 August 20 at the CEI building the meeting the meeting adjourned at 10:15PM.

Respectfully submitted
Lois Kwantz, Secretary