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Route One Re-striping Campaign

Background

Route One northbound enters Bath from the west as a two-lane 60 mph road from which pedestrians and bicyclists are banned. At the town line, the posted speed drops to 35 mph and bicycles are then permitted (though it would be unwise to ride this stretch). At High Street, the two northbound lanes divide into two separate one-lane roads, the left hand lane being the through lane and crossing a viaduct to the Sagadahoc Bridge; the second lane descending beside the viaduct to a traffic signal at Washington Street. Through the signal this second lane then becomes the on-ramp and joins the through lane on the bridge. On the bridge there are signed bike lanes as well as a separated pedestrian walkway on the south side of the bridge. The northbound lanes on the bridge are both through lanes, one southbound lane on the bridge is exit only for Bath and the other is the through lane over the viaduct. On the north bound side those two through lanes continue for a mile or so to the Taste O'Maine restaurant—with an added center turn lane—at which point the northbound lanes merge to one lane, the configuration of Route One from here on. The speed limit is there raised to 50 mph. On the south bound side, from the Taste O'Maine the one lane of Route One continues past the northbound merge for about one-third of a mile at which point Rte 127 joins it and a second lane is added. Now there are four lanes total plus a center turning lane up to the bridge. On the bridge the right hand lane southbound is the exit only lane with the left hand lane the through lane over the viaduct to be reunited to the four lane highway at High Street.

The Problem

- 1) Although there is a signed bike lane on the bridge it ends at the end of the bridge. (Ironically, at that point, there is a DOT sign "Right Lane Bikes Only.")
- 2) Speeding (anecdotal) For the next mile on the northbound side there is no shoulder, the posted speed limit is 35 but the actual speed is 45-50.
- 3) At Taste O' Maine, there is a wide shoulder and that continues on although the speed limit goes up.
- 4) On the southbound side, the same disappearance of the shoulder happens at Taste O'Maine with only one travel lane, creating very hazardous conditions for the cyclist and pedestrian. No side walk either.

Proposed solution (June 5, 2013): There is a fairly straightforward solution that would only involve re-striping in that short area. It would dampen speeds, provide for left turning (as now) and create a safer area for bicyclists. Heading north the re-striped pavement would maintain a single through travel lane both on and off the Sagadahoc bridge. Cars entering at Bath would merge left if traveling through Woolwich and would stay right if going to Rte 127 south (Arrowsic and Georgetown). Cars entering the traffic from the 127 entrance from Arrowsic would yield to through traffic and then merge into the through lane. Those drivers continuing across Rte 1 and onto 127 north would find it easier dealing with crossing a single lane of traffic then crossing the two lanes now required to get to the left-hand turn.

Chronology

2013

- June 5: email to Woolwich Select Board outlining problem and proposing a solution.
- June 7: Allison Hepler, Woolwich Select Board member expresses support, Select Board asks DOT to review restriping in light of proposal
- June 8: PowerPoint (PP) to Dan Stewart (D.S.) at DOT showing the problem and suggesting a solution
- June 8: Same PP to Woolwich Select Board
- July 15: Reminder to D. S. for comments on PP
- July 23: contact Sheriff Joel Merry, ask him to set up speed recording machine to which he agrees. The sheriff is extremely cooperative and encouraging throughout the process.
- July 24: Conference call scheduled with DS and Jim Tasse, BCM to discuss PP. Phone number does not work despite numerous tries and emails.
- August 8: Ask DS to put the question of striping and DOT shoulder policy on State Bike Council meeting for September. Does not respond.
- August 21-28: Sheriff records speeds on the section in question of Route One. 91% are speeding, 57% are speeding > 10 mph over 35 mph.
- October 3: DS promises meeting with engineer to discuss proposal. Responds to query about meeting by complaining of his own shoulder problem and emphasizing the need for "process." No info on whether a meeting with engineer was held.
- November 22: DS promises a meeting with engineers and interested parties in "January or February." Despite reminders does not set one up.

2014

- March 4: Two Woolwich bike advocates (Ben Tipton and Mark Wheeler) get very involved.
- April 9: DS again promises to set up a meeting but doesn't.
- April 17-20: Tipton, McChesney, and Wheeler get in touch with their state representatives and senator. Send PP around.
- April 18: Merrymeeting Wheelers Bicycle Club brought on board.
- April 18: Ben Tipton makes up advocacy cards.
- April 20: Press release is prepared with the help of BCM but when DS again promises a meeting press release is not sent.

- May 8: Woolwich Road commissioner notifies group that DOT plans “mill and fill” on that section in 2015.
- May 13: DOT does pothole repair and advocates of the proposed changes observe traffic flow on one lane. No problems noted.
- May 14: DS promises to set up meeting (with Doodle Poll)
- June 10: DOT cancels scheduled meeting with advocates, Woolwich officials, DS promises he’s looking into the issue.
- June 14: MDOT issues its “Complete Streets Policy”
- July 31: BCM provides key information on what MDOT is doing
- August 31: DS departs (briefly) DOT for Oregon leaving advocates wondering. His temporary replacements do not respond to emails.
- September 18: advocates (Hepler, McChesney, Tipton, Wheeler) meet to discuss strategy decide on petition and letter to commissioner of DOT
- September 20: petition prepared and circulating begins
- October 1: Meet with sheriff to go over speed data from August 2013
- October 6: Woolwich Select Board puts restriping of section of Rte 1 on agenda
- October 13: Letter and petition with 80-plus signatures sent to Commissioner Bernhardt at DOT. No acknowledgment.
- November 19: DOT issues Public Hearing Notice for December 15 for mill and fill of that section of Route 1.
- December: undated letter from BCM supporting DOT and Woolwich community members working together to realize a “complete streets” solution to the Route 1 problems in Woolwich
- December 12: Times-Record runs front-page story. DS quoted as somewhat negative about the changes.
- December 15: DOT holds public hearing and promises to re-stripe mostly according to the solution proposed in 2013 putting that section of Route 1 on a road diet, reducing through lanes to one in either direction for most of the problematic length. DOT calls it a trial which they will change back if it doesn’t work out. Advocates offer thanks to all parties.