



**Battle Road Scenic Byway Committee  
Ad Hoc Working Group - Route 2A Project**

Date: January 13, 2022  
Time: 10:00am

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89146124860?pwd=OUdrVW90OHlxTzE1TE82RDUwWDluQT09>

Webinar ID: 891 4612 4860 Password: 707194

Attendees: Nancy Nelson, Concord; Richard Canale, Lexington; Margie Coffin Brown, Minute Man National Historical Park; Paul Fennelly, Arlington; Bob Domnitz, Lincoln; Ross Morrow, MassDOT Highway Division; Marc Gailus, Concord resident

**Minutes:**

The Ad Hoc Working Group ("WG"), as authorized by the Battle Road Scenic Byway Committee ("BRSBC"), met virtually at 10 AM on January 13, 2022 to consider MassDOT Highway Division's plans for the Route 2A Project ("Project").

Discussion was based on the Draft 25%-75% Construction Plans dated 9 December 2021 ("Plans"). The WG received Draft 100% plans dated 7 January 2022 from MassDOT on the day of the meeting but there was insufficient time for the WG to review the revisions that may have been made.

The objective for the meeting was to examine the Plans and make recommendations to the full BRSBC to help inform its position on the Project.

After discussion, the Working Group came to consensus, except as noted, on the following issues:

1. Configuration of Road Intersections

Background

The WG examined the Plan's physical layout of the intersections that connect Route 2A to local roads.

Recommendation

The WG supports the Plan's layout for all but one of the intersections. The WG noted that the intersection at Old Mass Ave has a safety and maintenance issue on the eastbound side of Route 2A, when cars turning left on Old Mass Ave cause backed-up eastbound traffic on 2A to attempt to pass on the right, without adequate pavement width being available. The result has been continual erosion of the pavement and large potholes that are a chronic safety and maintenance issue. The WG recommends that BRSBC defer to MassDOT for a solution to this problem and the timing of its implementation.

2. Speed Limits

## Background

Most of the Project's roadway has a 40 mph speed limit. Speeds in excess of 50 mph are commonly observed. The roadway is used year-round by bicycle commuters and recreational bikers. During warmer weather some sections of the roadway carry hundreds of bike riders per day. There is scant room for vehicles to safely pass bikers on the roadway.

Currently, a short section of the resurfacing project roadway is signed for 35 MPH in Lexington, while most of the roadway is signed at 40 MPH, with a yellow recommended reduced speed sign at the Lexington Road intersection.

At the Toole/MassDOT Stakeholder meetings, it was generally agreed that the current speed limits are too high to allow safe cycling or pedestrian access on this roadway.

Efforts were made by MassDOT to address pedestrian and cycling access. In earlier plans, a consistent 4-foot shoulder was considered along with 23 cycling signs to improve safety for pedestrians and bikers. Those proposals were changed resulting in a variable width shoulder of less than one foot to up to five feet. All cycling signage has been removed from the Plan. The result is that MassDOT is making no accommodations for cyclists or pedestrians along the roadway. There are crosswalks proposed but there are no accommodations for pedestrians to get to them without walking on or along the roadway. There are no sidewalks or off-roadway access paths proposed by MassDOT.

Since the Toole/MassDOT Stakeholders' meetings, most of the roadway has been designated by the Federal Highway Administration as an All-American Road. This is the only such designated roadway in the Commonwealth and only the second in all of New England. It has also been designated as a Massachusetts Scenic Byway. This same section also travels through the Minute Man National Historical Park. Exceptions made by MassDOT for this unique project would not set a precedent for other MassDOT projects.

There are numerous examples in the Federal Highway Administration's documentation that allow flexible treatment for projects in context-sensitive historical, cultural, and scenic areas.

Currently, the 100% Plans do not signify the context of the roadway and instead misclassify it as any other urban roadway. MassDOT, in its 7 January 2022 letter<sup>1</sup> states it plans to "*determine how to improve the safety of the roadway while respecting the historic character and significance of the National Park*" and it later says, "*RRFBs, pedestrian crossings, and splitter islands will help reduce speeds and increase safety for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists*". *MassDOT is acknowledging that pedestrians and cyclists will use the roadway but is providing no safe passage for pedestrians to access the crosswalks without walking on the 40 mph roadway, nor will there be anything to make cycling safer than what exists now.*

Generally, biking along a roadway with a 40 mph speed limit is not safe without any bike accommodations. Also walking on a 40 mph roadway to get to a crosswalk is not safe.

## Recommendation

A reduced speed limit of 30 mph will improve pedestrian and cycling safety. The current 40 mph speed limit is not safe.

## 3. Pavement Color

### Background

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1 Letter from Paul Stedman, MassDot, dated 7 January 2022, to Clarissa Rowe and Nancy Nelson.

Some of the national parks use pavement color to create distinctive visual character. However, this type of treatment might not be durable enough for New England weather and snow plowing.

### Recommendation

The WG does not recommend special pavement coloring for the Plan. The WG recommends reliance on signage along the length of the repaving project to remind motorists that they are on a historically significant road. The WG does not have an opinion about what particular signage should be installed, and in any case, such signage may be outside the scope of the Project and can be decided in the future.

## 4. Crash Rails

### Background

There is presently a short section of timber guardrail at the eastern end of the Project. All other existing guardrails along Rt 2A are steel or aluminum. The Plan proposes to replace these guardrails with new steel guardrails that meet federal and state standards; replacement with timber guardrails would require a waiver from a MassDOT Engineering Directive that was adopted in 2020. In his letters to MMNHP and the Town of Lincoln<sup>2</sup>, Paul Stedman (District Highway Director) stated that timber guardrails would require a waiver from the Engineering Directive and none has been granted for any project since the Engineering Directive was adopted. It is not clear from his letters whether a waiver from Federal standards is also required and whether it is possible to obtain such a waiver with sufficient justification.

### Recommendation

The WG strongly supports continuity of the roadway's historic character throughout the full length of the Project. The WG supports continued investigation by both MassDOT and MMNHP to determine whether approved timber guardrails will be available before 2025. If timber guardrails will not be available, the WG recommends that MassDOT work with MMNHP to secure whatever waivers may be necessary to allow timber guardrails. A waiver was granted years ago for the current steel-backed timber guardrail at the east end of the roadway. It seems likely that a similar waiver could be granted for this Project.

## 5. Pavement Width and Bicycle Safety

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<sup>2</sup> Letters dated 27 October 2021 to Simone Monteleone, Superintendent, MMNHP, and Jonathan Dwyer, Chair of the Select Board, et al, Lincoln, stating in pertinent part,

"The District must specify highway safety items in our contracts that meet federal and state crash worthiness criteria. In areas where guardrail is required for safety, the District investigated if there were any federally approved (MASH 2016 TL-2) steel-backed timber guardrails and unfortunately at this time there are currently none that meet the latest standards. MassDOT enacted Engineering Directive E-20-004 on April 21, 2020 and it states all roadside hardware must conform to MASH 2016 or request for a MASH waiver. After discussions with the Traffic Safety Engineer, MassDOT has not granted waivers for timber guardrail since enacting this engineering directive. The District is proposing to only replace the existing steel guardrail with MASH approved equipment and will leave in place any existing timber guardrail.

The District understands the need to keep the aesthetics of the national park, but the District must also meet all safety requirements for these projects. The appropriate guardrail treatment can be discussed further during the Section 106 process."

## Background

In his letter<sup>3</sup> to MMNHP, Paul Stedman stated that MassDOT is proposing that pavement width not be increased beyond its current width, and that travel lane markings will be narrowed to 10.5' to provide a wider paved shoulder for bicycle use. However, even the most recent "100%/PSE" engineering drawings dated 7 January 2022 show a typical roadway cross-section with an 11' travel lane (see sh. 5 of 46 of the Plans). The travel lane is narrowed to 10.5' only in the vicinity of the splitter and pedestrian refuge islands.

## Recommendation

The WG supports measures that reduce speeds on the roadway, and narrowing the travel lane should help. An additional benefit of narrowing the travel lane is that the paved shoulder will be wider and this should provide some benefit for bicycle users. Consistent with Paul Stedman's letter, the WG recommends that the Plans be revised to incorporate a 10.5' travel lane throughout the length of the Project.

## 6. Pavement Markings

### Background

The Plans show standard treatment of highway pavement marking. The center double line and the "gore" diagonal marks approaching islands will be yellow.

### Recommendation

The WG has no objection to the proposed markings.

## 7. Splitter Islands

### Background

The Plan shows raised splitter islands with granite cobblestones and raised granite curbing.

### Recommendation

To enhance the historic character of the roadway, the WG supports construction of splitter islands that are at grade, not raised. Granite should be tumbled or have a used, weathered appearance.

The WG believes an additional benefit of lowering the islands to grade would be increased vehicle safety and resistance to damage from snow plows.

A majority of the WG did not object to the length and width of the splitter islands. However, the Town of Concord recommends reducing the length of the splitters and notes that all splitters are now 46' long (up from 10' ± in the first Submittal).

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<sup>3</sup> Letter dated 27 October 2021 to Simone Monteleone, Superintendent, MMNHP, stating in pertinent part,

"Reduce vehicle lane width and increase bicycle shoulder width

The District is proposing a 10.5 foot wide travel lane and this will result in a wider shoulder for bicycle use. No pavement widening is proposed."

## 8. Crosswalks, Pedestrian Refuge Islands, RRFBs (Blinkers), Associated Signage

### Background

The Plan includes 4 crosswalks at Bedford Lane, Bedford Road, Mill Street, and the Visitor Center near the Minuteman Tech High School driveway. In addition, in response to a request from Lincoln, MassDOT is evaluating a crossing near Brooks Road<sup>4</sup>. Each crosswalk includes a raised pedestrian refuge 69' long with granite cobblestones and vertical granite curbing, a pair of RRFB's (pedestrian activated blinker lights), square concrete pads at grade for handicap accessibility, and associated signage to alert motorists approaching the crosswalk.

### Recommendation

After much discussion, the WG agreed to recommend that the crosswalk at Bedford Road be removed and replaced with a splitter island. The WG felt that this busy intersection was likely to be unsafe for pedestrians even with RRFB's due to the eastbound traffic's downhill grade and limited sight line. In addition, there is no sidewalk along Bedford Rd, a principal road in North Lincoln with a 35 mph speed limit. Finally, the WG noted that the crosswalk would detract from the historic character of the Capt. William Smith House site. The WG's agreement to recommend removal of this crosswalk was contingent upon MMNHP committing to improve the trail from Bedford Road to Bedford Lane that runs parallel to Route 2A.

A majority of the WG supports the Plan's other crosswalks with the following modifications:

1) Installation of the RRFB's should be deferred until traffic response to the roadway changes has been evaluated.

2) Pedestrian refuge islands should be treated similarly to splitters: To enhance the historic character of the roadway, the WG supports construction of splitter islands that are at grade, not raised. Granite should be tumbled or have a used, weathered appearance. Ross Morrow stated that ADA compliance would not be an issue since the raised design that is currently shown in the Plan also does not meet ADA standards.

A majority of the WG defers to MassDOT in its decision whether to install a crosswalk near the Brooks Rd. intersection. The majority notes that the crosswalk would facilitate access for the Brooks Rd neighborhood and enable park visitors who walk the trail or park at the adjacent lot to cross Rt 2A and go to the Noah Brooks Tavern site.

The Town of Concord offered the following dissent from the majority of the WG: Concord supports removal of the Bedford Road crossing but does not support the others as currently designed because of their intrusive nature and because they seem likely to be safety hazards with no connections to safe, accessible paths on either one or both sides of Rt 2A. It is also unclear if the islands are primarily for pedestrians or primarily to slow down traffic – which they may or not do.

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4 Letter from Paul Stedman, MassDOT dated 27 October 2021 to Jonathan Dwyer, Chair of the Select Board, et al, Lincoln, stating in pertinent part,

"MassDOT is evaluating a crossing at this location. Sight distance requirement will be identified and confirmed. If the sight distance demonstrates a crossing is suitable at this location, pedestrian refuge islands and advanced warning signs will be proposed."

It is not clear from the letter whether the crosswalk would include RRFB's.

## 9. Signage

### Background

There are currently dozens of signs along the roadway. While it would be desirable to have fewer signs, it will be difficult to find situations where they can be safely eliminated.

### Recommendation

Signage should be installed that reminds drivers that they are on a Federal All-American Road and The Battle Road Scenic Byway (and/or a Massachusetts Scenic Byway). MMNHP signage would likely be on park land and is probably outside the scope of the Project. Additional warning signs will be needed on the approaches to splitters and crosswalks.

The meeting adjourned at 12:55 PM.

Minutes prepared by Bob Domnitz, 1/18/2022, Revised 1/22/2022

Minutes Approved: 3/24/2022