

Audibert, Gerry

From: Morrison Bonpasse [morrison@wiscasset-road.org]
Sent: Tuesday, April 12, 2011 9:52 AM
To: Laurie Smith
Cc: Audibert, Gerry; Todd Brackett, Sheriff, Lincoln County; Don Jones; Frank Risell, co-chair, R.O.A.D.
Subject: Re: Request to begin planning for Part-time Vehicle/Pedestrian Control Officer for Summer 2011 for Route 1/Water Street Intersection

Dear Laurie,

A member of R.O.A.D. has offered to contribute up to \$2,000 toward the placement of a vehicle/pedestrian control officer at Water Street this summer. A key condition of such a contribution would be that the officer's first priority would be to assist the flow of traffic.

Given the importance to the state's and region's economy of a smooth flow of traffic on Route 1, it's vital that the Wiscasset Route 1 traffic congestion be reduced. I'm hopeful that some reasonable sharing of responsibility for the vehicle/pedestrian control officer can be negotiated.

There can be no question that a major source of the seasonal traffic congestion is caused by pedestrians and turning vehicles at the Water Street/Route 1 intersection. Many reasonable people, including the Maine Dept. of Transportation, believe that such congestion warrants the construction of a \$100 million by-pass, which would mean the taking, and loss from the tax rolls, of a considerable swath of land in Wiscasset, and the destruction of many homes and businesses. Given the monetary and human cost of this solution, it seems reasonable that a way should be found to assign a trained vehicle/pedestrian control officer at that intersection this summer.

Wiscasset, Lincoln County and the Maine State Police, all have uniformed officers who could perform this work, which begs the question of whether the proposed 221 hours can be performed without any additional expense to taxpayers, by using existing staff and budgets. This is an important question which can be negotiated among the stakeholders.

The next step is to bring the stakeholders together (virtually, or actually) for that negotiation, and it seems reasonable to look to MDOT, to lead that effort.

Best regards,

Morrison

----- Original Message -----

From: Laurie Smith
To: Morrison Bonpasse
Cc: Gerry Audibert, Maine Dept. of Transportation ; Todd Brackett, Sheriff, Lincoln County ; Don Jones ; Frank Risell, co-chair, R.O.A.D.
Sent: Sunday, April 10, 2011 11:05 AM
Subject: Re: Request to begin planning for Part-time Vehicle/Pedestrian Control Officer for Summer 2011 for Route 1/Water Street Intersection

So I am to take from this email that ROAD is planning to assist in the sharing of the cost?

Laurie Smith

On Fri, Apr 8, 2011 at 3:06 PM, Morrison Bonpasse <morrison@wiscasset-road.org> wrote:
 Dear Gerry, Todd, Don, Laurie and Lt. Allen,

4/12/2011

No matter what MDOT decides for the long term solution to the Wiscasset Route 1 congestion, we will see congestion this summer. Without formal votes, I believe that there was a consensus that having a traffic/pedestrian control officer at the intersection of Route 1 and Water Street during the summer months is a good idea.

As the responsibility for reducing the Wiscasset congestion seems to be shared, the challenge is to work together to ensure that the need is met this summer. In letters last winter, Gerry indicated that MDOT might be able to help with funding such a person.

The key to the success of such work would be a clear charter for the Vehicle/Pedestrian Control Officer that, consistent with safety for all, the primary goal is the flow of traffic through town. The secondary goal is to assist pedestrians in crossing the street, but to do so by encouraging them to assemble into groups, where applicable, (i.e. where more than one person is likely to want to cross the street within a 60 second window) and then assisting their crossing. If, for example, on a typical Friday afternoon, there is one crossing of a pedestrian or pedestrians every minute, the vehicle/pedestrian control officer can reduce the number of pedestrian crossings by 66% if s/he can reduce the frequency to once every three minutes, thus requiring some people to wait for a larger group to assemble.

Attached is a spreadsheet with a proposed schedule for 17 hours a week for 13 weeks, for a total of 221 hours.

The vehicle/pedestrian control officer could also assist with southbound and northbound vehicles turning left onto Water Street.

Several people recall that several years ago, there were officers assisting pedestrians to cross Route 1 at Water Street and/or Federal Street, and that there wasn't much reduction, if any, in the Wiscasset congestion. The key differences between then and now are that, this time...

1. The charter of the officer will be, clearly, to encourage traffic flow, and
2. MDOT now has the ability to measure the congestion, with the radar/webcam stations outside of town.

If there is a measureable reduction in traffic congestion due to the use of a vehicle/pedestrian control officer, then the argument will strengthen for having a similar officer in place in 2012, and perhaps at Federal Street as well. On the other hand, if there is no reduction, then other ways of reducing the congestion must be pursued. R.O.A.D. recommends the construction of a pedestrian bridge or tunnel, but first let's see what a vehicle/pedestrian control officer can do.

R.O.A.D. hopes to videotape the intersection at times this spring and summer, so we can record a real-time sense of the frequency of pedestrian crossings and the utility of the vehicle/pedestrian control officer.

As MDOT has led the effort to consider ways of reducing the congestion, including the option of a bypass, can I suggest that it lead the way toward the training and placement of an officer at Water Street/Route 1 this summer by scheduling a meeting of the stakeholders, and others I may have missed? Or leading the way with a proposal? Perhaps MDOT has, or knows of, experience with the use of vehicle/pedestrian control officers in other towns and cities.

Best regards,

Morrison

Morrison Bonpasse, Co-Chair
R.O.A.D. (Route One Alternative Decisions)
P.O. Box 390
Newcastle, ME 04553
207-586-6078
www.wiscasset-road.org