

**Route 44 Corridor Study, Canton
Technical Advisory Committee Meeting #3
April 1, 2024, 1:30pm
Draft Meeting Notes
Hybrid Meeting via Microsoft Teams**

On April 1, 2024, the Route 44 Corridor Study (the Study) TAC Meeting #3 was held in hybrid format with Canton representatives, CRCOG staff, CTDOT project team and the study Consultant, VHB and VN Engineers. The purpose of the meeting was to recap existing conditions information, present future conditions information for the group, and share preliminary transportation improvement alternatives developed by the Consultant Team. The TAC also discussed the date of the second Public Information Meeting for the project and the next pop-up meeting location.

Discussion Items

1. Welcome and Introduction

Pramod Pandey (CRCOG) opened the meeting. Attendees, in person and virtual, introduced themselves. He noted that the approval of meeting notes for the second TAC meeting would need to be postponed until the next TAC meeting.

2. Public Comments

Pandey asked if any attendees wanted to make public comments.

Lisa Coggins:

- a. Ms. Coggins asked about a statement in the Existing Conditions Report that noted people walking between the Shops at Farmington Valley and the commercial area across the town line in Simsbury/Avon to the east. There are no sidewalks along the road here. Neil Pade said there is a worn path along the road that shows the desire line. Daniel Amstutz said they had seen someone walking along the road from Simsbury to Canton during their field work.
- b. The public transportation in Canton does not run in the evening.
- c. Some potential developments in the study area are not included in the Existing Conditions Report. Amstutz noted additional developments are included in the Future Conditions Report that TAC members will see shortly.

3. Existing Conditions Recap

VHB went over the study progress and public engagement since the group last met on October 16. They briefly went over the data collected for the Existing Conditions Report, which included traffic counts, safety data, bicycle and pedestrian observations and data, public transportation data, land use & development, and previous and current plans. Various maps were produced to geographically show the data and summarize findings in the area.

4. Future Conditions Overview

VHB presented the findings of the Future Conditions Report. Tasks included looking at future development potential, the CTDOE traffic growth forecast, bicycle and pedestrian potential, and safety benefit estimation. CTDOE projects traffic to grow by about 1% per year over the next 25 years to be 25% greater than current traffic volumes. Future development parcels were reviewed, and trip generation was modeled for about 380 new housing units and 56,000 square feet of new development. Adding these new trips to the traffic growth will create more congestion at three of the study area intersections.

Joe Balskus noted that the traffic numbers used may be too conservative, as traffic has actually been going down over the last 10-15 years, not up. The goal is to account for developments that may not be covered by the CTDOE forecast. However, it's unknown if all these developments will be completed as well.

The Town has goals to create developments that are walkable and pedestrian-friendly. Making biking, walking, and public transportation attractive as options are important. Access and safety should be prioritized.

Comments:

Lisa Coggins (Bike Walk Canton):

- a. Traffic is projected to increase, but has it been increasing over the last 15-25 years? Balskus: no, it has been decreasing over the last 15 years – not sure about 25, would need to research that. Pade said predictions from developments of traffic going up over last few years have also not panned out. Pandey pointed out that the state has a plan to decrease traffic over next 20 years, despite projections of increasing traffic. Balskus: could look at peak hour traffic as well. Traffic decreasing partly from the pandemic, but it was decreasing before that as well.
- b. What about larger vehicles on the roads? Has that been looked at? Balskus: data on vehicle class is available, but not sure we can go back as far with that data – maybe only 5 years.

5. Potential Transportation Improvements

The following transportation improvements principles and goals were used, which include elements that are in the scope of work for the study:

- a. Complete Streets.
- b. Improve safety and mobility for all users.
- c. Improve quality of life for residents.
- d. Reduce impact of high-speed through traffic on Dowd Ave.
- e. Review trail crossing options for Farmington River Trail Extension
- f. Options to address congested intersections.
- g. Support future build-out of area as a high-density, mixed-use village
- h. Review non-motorized travel options to connect surrounding neighborhoods.

Four major areas for improvement concepts were discussed:

1. Dowd Avenue corridor
2. Route 44 at Dowd Avenue

3. Route 44 at Lawton Road/Lovely Street
4. Farmington River Trail Extension Crossing of Route 44

I. Dowd Avenue Corridor:

- a. Data shows that Dowd Ave has high traffic volume (6,000-8,000 vehicles per day), congestion and queuing at the Route 44 intersection (queues back past Canton Springs Road), and speeding (speed limit is 35 mph, but 85th percentile is 42 mph). Public concerns include truck traffic and difficulty crossing as a pedestrian, particularly at Commerce Drive.
- b. Potential improvements include:
 - i. Crosswalk curb extensions at crosswalks in the study area
 - ii. Roundabout at Canton Village Shops to slow traffic and create gateway
 - iii. Although desirable, raised crosswalks or speed humps are challenging due to the high traffic and speeds on Dowd Ave
 - iv. Consider automated speed enforcement at the local level
- c. Discussion:
 - i. Coggins asked about pedestrian refuge islands at the crosswalks. Balskus noted the road is very narrow here and doesn't allow it without right-of-way impacts.
 - ii. The roundabout could also discourage through traffic and truck traffic. It would likely need some right-of-way from Canton Village property.
 - iii. The Town could take over maintenance of the road if it desired, to have more control over its design, similar to what other communities have done. It has been discussed in the past but there is no proposal for this at the time.

II. Route 44 at Dowd Avenue:

- a. Data shows that this intersection is the location of the most severe injury crashes in the corridor (8) and has the second highest number of total crashes (50). The left turn onto Dowd has no dedicated lane, meaning the through lane becomes the de facto Left Turn Lane, which leads to weaving and sideswipes; in the No-Build PM Peak, nearly 800 left turns here are projected. Issues with this intersection also spill back into the Dowd Ave intersection with Canton Springs Road which also has several injury crashes (9).
- b. Potential improvements are:
 - i. Option 1: the typical traffic engineering approach would be to widen Route 44 to provide a left turn lane, which would impact nearby properties and make the road wider to cross. This option would also T-up the Dowd Ave intersection and allow left turns from Dowd Ave to Route 44, which are currently prohibited. A roundabout was considered here, but it would be very large, with two lanes on either side. There is too much traffic at the intersection and on Route 44 to keep it to one lane.
 - ii. Option 2: this option is to divert left turns away from Dowd Ave, not allowing left turns from Route 44 to Dowd, and push them to the next traffic signal at Canton Village Shops (or further west on Route 44) to get onto Dowd Ave. This is contingent upon changes to Canton Village that

the Town is interested in and has looked at in the past (with UCONN students and another consultant) that would make more of a local street through Canton Village. Three possible cross-sections were developed by VHB to give an idea of what it could be like:

1. An internal roadway between Route 44 and Dowd Ave with multi-use path and frontage roads for commercial parking. Would retain most of the parking that exists.
2. An internal roadway between Route 44 and Dowd Ave with multi-use path and frontage roads for commercial parking, with street trees and more parking impacted.
3. Local roadways with parking on either side, multi-use path in the middle, with more landscaping and sidewalk/outdoor dining space, with more parking impact.

The goal is not to provide simply a cut-through – though it can be – but to also provide additional traffic for the Canton Village Shops.

The other part of Option 2 would be to push truck traffic west on Route 44 to go south on Route 179/River Road instead of cutting through on Dowd Ave, if they are continuing west/south.

c. Discussion:

- i. Option 1 was recognized as a more car-centric approach to addressing the operations and crashes at this intersection.
- ii. There are currently around 500 left turns from Route 44 to Dowd Ave in the PM peak hour. Pushing the traffic west, not all of the left turns would necessarily turn at Canton Village but could also use East Hill Road or Route 179. Additional analysis is needed.
- iii. If you close off the left turn at Dowd Ave, would people start turning left at Canton Green, the next cut through street? That may need to be closed off. Neil Pade noted that people cut through Canton Green or the Canton Village Shops already, if the queue at Route 44 and Dowd Ave is very bad. However, it was noted that the Canton Fire Department uses Canton Green to exit onto Dowd Ave (they have a fire station on Canton Springs Road). Dunham Road was also raised as another possible location people may cut through, which is also used by school children to walk to Route 44.
- iv. There would need to be some kind of public-private partnership to do the Canton Village changes. It would be a long-term project. Much of the property is now owned by different individuals – in 2012, it was owned by one property owner, but they sold much of it off.
- v. Concern was raised about the crossing points in the path through the Canton Village Shops. These could be mitigated, or the road could mainly get from one side of the Village to the other, but the idea was to slow traffic and allow more traffic in the shops. If it is too inconvenient, however, people will go to other intersections to turn.
- vi. To pursue Option 2, there needs to be discussion with the property owners, so they are aware of and make sure they are not completely

opposed to it.

III. Route 44 at Lawton Road/Lovely Street

- a. This skewed intersection is the location of the highest number of crashes in the corridor (70). It also has the most injury crashes, but they are less severe than those at Route 44 at Dowd. Due to the heavy traffic volumes here, it is highly congested with significant queues and delays. The Farmington River Trail also crosses here, but it is a long crossing because of the wide road. The five legs of the intersection make for a complicated signal operation and also contributes to delays.
- b. Potential Improvement:
 - i. Remove Trailsend Drive from the Route 44 intersection by constructing a new road between Trailsend and Lawton Road (through private property).
 - ii. Benefits:
 1. Removes Trailsend phase from signal
 2. Allows left turns from Route 44 to Lawton Road to overlap with right turns from Lawton Road onto Route 44
 3. Reduces delays and congestion by simplifying operations
 - iii. The location of the new road would ideally be opposite the CVS driveway on Lawton Road.
 - iv. While more lanes could be added, the goal was to see what could be removed from this complicated intersection to make it simpler.
- c. Discussion:
 - i. A roundabout was reviewed for this location as well, but it would also be very large and not practical.
 - ii. Pade noted this could be a substantial taking of the property owner to do this unless it was able to be worked out to create an attractive development. There are also substantial grade changes on the properties.
 - iii. Trailsend could also be made right-in/right-out, which would also simplify phasing, which would have to be looked at.
 - iv. TAC members thought it would be good to continue to look at this option and explore different alternatives based on it, minimizing negative impacts to the property owner.
 - v. There was discussion of using the driveway for the Ethan Allen property west of Trailsend Drive as well, as another alternative. However, their driveway is unsignalized.
 - vi. Reducing the congestion will help to reduce the number of crashes as well.

IV. Farmington River Trail Extension Crossing of Route 44

- a. The FRT Extension will go through the Shops at Farmington Valley and continue east up to Route 44 then along Old Albany Turnpike before planning to cross Route 44. Options for crossing include:
 - i. Option 1: Cross the trail at Route 44/Secret Lake Road intersection with the existing signal then stay on the north side of Route 44.

- ii. Option 2: Cross the trail at Old Albany Turnpike/Brass Lantern Road intersection with a new signal, roundabout, or bicycle/pedestrian bridge.
- b. Discussion:
 - i. The roundabout option would be more of a traffic calming and gateway treatment that would incorporate the trail crossing. It could possibly work here because there would be very few turning conflicts.
 - ii. The character of the road lends to higher speeds – wide open road, few curb cuts, not much friction. Character of the road could be changed to help reduce the speed but would need more analysis. Note this is also a commuter highway, so something physical like a roundabout would make more of an effect. Automated traffic enforcement would also help slow speeds.
 - iii. The TAC noted interest in changing the character of the road as well. There was a recommendation to create more of a boulevard along Route 44 as part of the original year 2000 plan, which could be looked at again.
 - iv. There was discussion of doing a road diet between the Simsbury town line and Secret Lake Road, which could be reviewed.
 - v. Pade noted that the trail could also stay on the south side of the road into Simsbury/Avon and cross at the Best Buy signal.
 - vi. The TAC discussed the crashes that have occurred since the new restaurant opened. It was noted that lighting is missing from the entrances to the restaurant from the road.
 - vii. Some residents are interested in putting a trail in a median on Route 44. There are places it has been done, but not often on high-speed roads.

Public Outreach

- a. Next public information meeting is planned for May or June.
- b. Another public survey will be released before the public meeting, in the May timeframe.
- c. Possible locations for the pop-up meeting include the Collinsville Jamboree (May), Music on Main (May), and the Burlington to Canton 10K (May 5). Any other ideas?
 - i. There is the Pups & Pride Parade in early June from the dog park on the FRT to the Shops at Farmington Valley. Staff at the Shops can provide tents and tables and it's a good event to table at. Talk to Liz Ackerman about it. It has good attendance, and it lasts just a couple of hours. This year it will be Saturday, June 1.
 - ii. Coggins suggested having the pop-up at the Burlington to Canton 10K and then have the public meeting on June 5, which is the same evening as the Temporary Traffic & Pedestrian Safety Advisory Committee.

6. Next Steps

- a. CRCOG will forward the Future Conditions Report to the TAC for review; there will be two weeks provided for review.
- b. CRCOG will also send a link to the meeting recording and the presentation slides.
- c. VHB will review additional improvements for sidewalk gaps, trail gaps, and similar infrastructure gaps within the project area.

The meeting adjourned at 3:15 pm.

**Route 44 Corridor Study, Canton
 Technical Advisory Committee Meeting #3
 April 1, 2024, 1:30pm
 Attendees
 Hybrid Meeting via Microsoft Teams**

<u>NAME</u>	<u>ORGANIZATION</u>	<u>E-Mail</u>
Pramod Pandey	CRCOG	ppandey@crcog.org
Jacob Knowlton	CRCOG	jknowlton@crcog.org
Sotoria Montanari	CRCOG	smontanari@crcog.org
Neil Pade	Town of Canton Planning	npade@townofcantonct.org
Tom Richardson	Town of Canton DPW	trichardson@townofcantonct.org
Chris Arciero	Town of Canton Police	carciero@townofcantonct.org
Melanie Carr (<i>Virtual</i>)	Shops at Farmington Valley	Melanie.Carr@wsdevelopment.com
Lisa Coggins	Bike Walk Canton	lc2w2kids@gmail.com
Tim Bowman (<i>Virtual</i>)	Bike Walk Canton	tim.bowman@legrand.com
Mary Tomolonius	Canton Temp. Traffic & Pedestrian Safety Committee	mtomolonius@gmail.com
Fred Kulakowski (<i>Virtual</i>)	CTDOT	frederick.kulakowski@ct.gov
Caswell Smith (<i>Virtual</i>)	CTDOT	caswell.smith@ct.gov
Obesebea Aye-Addo (<i>Virtual</i>)	CTDOT	Obesebea.Aye-Addo@ct.gov
Marlon Pena (<i>Virtual</i>)	CTDOT	marlon.pena@ct.gov
Dan Amstutz	VHB	damstutz@vhb.com
Joe Balskus	VHB	Jbalskus@VHB.com >
Andre Singer (<i>Virtual</i>)	VHB	asinger@vhb.com