



Massachusetts
Bicycle Coalition

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MassBike.org

October 31, 2013

Patricia A. Leavenworth, P.E., Chief Engineer
MassDOT, Highway Division
10 Park Plaza, Boston, MA 02116
Attn: Accelerated Bridge Department

Re: Memorial Avenue Rotary, Project File No. 605353.

Dear Ms. Leavenworth,

I am writing on behalf of the Massachusetts Bicycle Coalition (MassBike) to provide written testimony regarding the West Springfield Memorial Avenue rotary replacement project. MassBike is the statewide bicycle advocacy organization, with chapters in Cape Cod and the Pioneer Valley. We work to promote bicycling across the state for recreation and transportation, and have been doing this work since our founding in 1977.

MassBike is also writing on behalf of Live Well Springfield, which aims to promote active living and healthy nutrition in Springfield. Live Well Springfield is a coalition of community-based organizations, the City of Springfield, and PVPC, all working to make Springfield a community where people can live, work and play.

In general, this project does not demonstrate adequate facilities for bicyclists or pedestrians, and presents a major barrier for those choosing non-automotive transportation between Springfield and West Springfield. Below, I have listed several reasons for this conclusion in addition to some recommendations for ways to improve the intersection.

As it is currently configured, the Memorial Avenue rotary in West Springfield facilitates high traffic speeds and large traffic volumes. The sidewalks are in poor repair, and there are no crosswalks to guide pedestrians through the rotary. For bicyclists, there is no dedicated space, creating an atmosphere where most use the sidewalks to navigate both Memorial Bridge and the rotary. Because of the high traffic speeds coming into, off of, and within the rotary, it creates a barrier for those wishing to travel by bike or by foot. While the project would address sidewalks and crosswalks, bicyclists in particular are still left with few good options.

We are very concerned about this project for multiple reasons. Because it creates an adverse environment for travelers using non-automotive modes of transportation, we feel that it does not contribute to the mode-shift goals as indicated by MassDOT in the GreenDOT Implementation Plan, or

the Healthy Transportation Policy Directive. This is very disheartening, as MassBike has worked closely with Secretary Davey and MassDOT staff to craft these goals and policies. This design maintains the status quo, with only marginal improvements.

We are also concerned because it represents a regional inequity in the way MassDOT treats road projects across the state. In the Casey Arborway Replacement Project in Boston, Shea Circle (a rotary) is being converted to Shea Square (a traditional signalized intersection) due in part to concerns about navigability by bike and by foot. While projects inside Route 128 are replacing outdated infrastructure with Complete Streets designs, we are disappointed to see another rotary project outside of Route 128 maintaining the status quo.

Finally, there is an implicit socioeconomic element to this project. All three bridges between Springfield and West Springfield (North End, South End and Memorial) have a rotary intersection upon entering West Springfield. For those unable to drive for economic reasons, this presents a significant barrier to biking or walking between the two communities. This barrier effectively walls off carless, low-income Springfield residents from accessing the businesses, employment opportunities, and attractions in West Springfield.

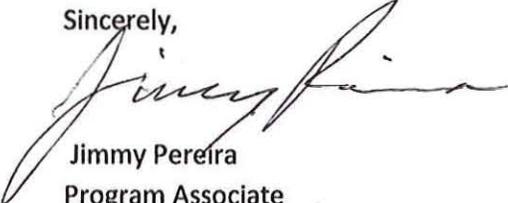
If it is too late to change the rotary into a traditional at-grade signalized intersection, then we have suggestions for ways to improve the navigability of the intersection:

1. Bicyclists should be separated from the rotary traffic, and ideally also segregated from pedestrian traffic. As currently designed, there is a sidewalk around the perimeter of the rotary. Bicyclists will invariably use the sidewalk because of the strong preference for separation from traffic. This project should assume that both bicyclists and pedestrians need to be accommodated in this grade-separated facility, and design an appropriate 10-foot wide, grade-separated path for both users as described in the AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities (2012) in section 5.2.1.
2. Ramps should be installed to allow bicyclists onto the grade-separated facility at least 50 feet prior to the start of the rotary, as described in section 4.12.11 of the AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities (2012).
3. The current location of the crosswalk on the West Springfield side of SR 147/Memorial Ave is very dangerous for pedestrians. It is located in between a high traffic area where vehicles are entering and exiting major businesses in West Springfield. The crosswalk should be relocated a short distance east of its current location.
4. It is not clear if there is any signalized crossing for pedestrians at the rotary. If not, a horizontal flashing beacon, HAWK signal, or other system should be used to increase compliance with yielding to crossing pedestrians.

As a last note, I want to point out that I ride from my home in West Springfield into Springfield daily using the rotary and Memorial Bridge. It is by far the most stressful part of my bicycle commute into the city, and I would very much like to see it improved. If MassDOT has any realistic hope of promoting

active transportation, then projects like these must be drastically re-thought in order to draw more potential bicyclists and pedestrians into the transportation mix.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jimmy Pereira". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left.

Jimmy Pereira
Program Associate
MassBike