



TOWN OF CASCO
635 MEADOW ROAD
CASCO, MAINE 04015

August 13, 2019

Robert Skehan
Maine DOT
Scarborough, ME

Re: Route 11 & 121

Dear Mr. Skehan,

On behalf of the Casco Selectboard, I am writing to express the support of the Selectboard with regards to a four-way stop at the Intersection of Route 11 and 121. At the Selectboard meeting of August 13, 2019, the Selectboard voted in favor of the State of Maine Department of Transportation's recommendation to alter the intersection from a two-way stop to a four-way stop.

As you are aware, this has been a topic of concern for the Town and its residents for some time. While everyone may not agree that a four way stop is the answer, we can certainly agree that we must do something. We look forward to the immediate action steps outlined at the yesterday's meeting and to the eventual plan concept for the long-term solution.

Thank you very much for your time and that of your colleagues. Your time is greatly appreciated.

Respectfully,

Courtney O'Donnell
Town Manager & Road Commissioner
Town of Casco

Town of Casco
Maine Department of Transportation
Route 11 and Route 121 Intersection
Meeting Notes
August 12, 2019

Present:

Sue Austin, Bill Diamond, Jessica Fay, Holly Hancock, Randy Illian, Stephen Landry, Courtney O'Donnell, Tom Peaslee, Meghan Russo and Robert Skehan.

Robert Skehan:

- Highway Engineer Dennis Emidy conducted a thorough analysis of the intersection.
- MDOT determined that the intersection justifies an all stop condition.
- MDOT recommends an all stop flashing light (four way) light.
- MDOT's recommendation has not changed since its previous recommendation.
- An all stop flashing light is 1) effective in improving safety; and 2) cost effective.
- MDOT estimates that an all stop flashing light will result in a 64% - 65% reduction in crashes.
- MDOT found that the installation of an all stop flashing light at other locations resulted in a 100% reduction in the severity of crashes and injuries.
- MDOT has documented 1,200 high crash locations in the state.
- MDOT states that the intersection remains as an MDOT priority.
- MDOT's analysis does not meet the standard criteria for a full (red, yellow, green) light.
- MDOT intends to reduce the speed limit on Route 11 from 40 to 35 miles per hour in both directions well ahead of the intersection.
- MDOT's plan includes "Stop Ahead" signs on Route 11.
- MDOT's plan includes new stop signs at the intersection with solar powered white flashing lights.
- Explained that in similar circumstances, a full stop light can lead to an increase in accidents.
- Stated that traffic delays on the Route 121 approach in both directions resulting from the need to stop will be about the same after the installation of an all stop light.
- Stated that plans include installing variable message boards on Route 11 ahead of the intersection two weeks before and after the installation of the all stop flashing light to warn traffic of a pending new traffic pattern ahead.
- Stated that 1) fatal accidents are a result of speed; 2) speed mitigation reduces fatalities; and 3) an all stop flashing light is an effective way of mitigating speed.
- Commented on differences in perceptions of the speed of approaching traffic between younger and older drivers.
- Stated that the intersection is a high crash location as defined by eight crashes in a three year period of time, which qualifies the intersection as a high priority for the State.

Randy Illian:

- Emphasized the dangers of a full light, which can lead to an increase in crashes resulting from more aggressive driving, e.g., speeding to beat a yellow light, green = GO!, etc.
- Quoted statistics obtained by the Town radar between July 15 and July 30, 2019.
 - 45,667 vehicles
 - Average of 2,927 vehicles per day
 - 2,994 vehicles on weekends
 - Average speed of 43 miles per hour

Jessica Fay commented on push back regarding an all stop flashing light she received from residents along Route 11. Jessica cited residents' perceptions and concerns about 1) an increase in heavy trucking, e.g., Poland Spring and P&K Sand & Gravel; 2) potential noise and exhaust fumes near the intersection; and 3) the huge impact that increased trucking on Route 11 has on the quality of life in the area. Robert Skehan stated that MDOT estimates that heavy trucking accounts for approximately 5% of the traffic on Route 11.

Sue Austin and others described successes resulting from the installation of all stop lights at similar intersections.

- Route 125 and Quaker Meeting House Road in Durham.
- An intersection with heavier traffic in Yarmouth.
- Others

Courtney O'Donnell inquired about whether additional signage might be a first step prior to the installation of an all stop flashing light. Stephen Landry replied that signs are not a good solution in slower traffic circumstances. Stephen cited drivers' tendency to ignore signs and driver confusion resulting from an inconsistent application of signage throughout the state. Stephen advised against additional signage as a first step.

Jessica Fay commented on the 43 mile per hour average speed near the intersection and questioned whether it may have been skewed by the visible posting of speed on the Town radar. Stephen Landry suggested switching the Town radar to stealth mode for a more accurate analysis of the average speed.

Holly Hancock noted the potential for increased traffic near the Memorial Park site, which is in close proximity to the intersection, and suggested moving the 35 mile per hour speed reduction further away from the intersection. Randy Illian stated that he will look into this.

Courtney O'Donnell inquired as to whether MDOT's recommendation for an all stop flashing light is based on hard and fast standards or whether there may be alternative options such a rotary or roundabout. Robert Skehan stated that 1) roundabouts are expensive; 2) 100 feet is about the smallest size for a roundabout; 3) gasoline pumps near the intersection could be limiting and problematic; and 4) the turning radius of large trucks would call for a slightly raised center island.

Courtney O'Donnell inquired as to how much time MDOT would need to install an all stop flashing light if the Town were to give the go-ahead. Robert Skehan stated that it would likely be scheduled for 2022 with an "iffy" possibility that it could be scheduled sooner. Courtney O'Donnell mentioned the possibility of the Town fronting the cost of the all stop flashing light in an effort to expedite the installation. Following was general discussion about costs and MDOT's contractual and other processes necessary for such projects.

Courtney O'Donnell inquired as to whether MDOT is waiting for the Town to sign off on the installation of an all stop flashing light. Robert Skehan stated that MDOT would like the Town's support and approval. Robert subsequently stated that the intersection poses a demonstrated safety issue such that the State may not wait and could proceed without Town approval.

Holly Hancock noted that the Selectboard is authorized to issue such an approval. Tom Peaslee noted that it became clear during the recent public discussion about the intersection that something must be done, adding that it's better to receive criticism for getting something done than for doing nothing at all.

Jessica Fay noted that the hard part is messaging and educating the public, adding that meaningful education with all available information is key.

The discussion turned to focusing on the urgency of improving traffic safety at the intersection.

- Bill Diamond expressed a sense of urgency and suggested that the State could find a way to use surplus funds to get the project done sooner rather than later.
- Robert Skehan stated that the intersection is a high crash location as defined by eight crashes in a three year period of time, which qualifies it as a high priority for the State.
- Robert Skehan stated that he will meet with the MDOT Commissioner to emphasize urgency in an effort to secure funding and expedite the timing.
- Jessica Fay supported Robert Skehan's efforts and emphasized the importance of education.
- Robert Skehan stated that he will "shout from the rooftops" and do everything he can.
- Representatives Bill Diamond, Sue Austin and Jessica Fay expressed their support for Robert Skehan and his efforts.

The discussion turned to focusing on an action plan.

- Tom Peaslee requested a written statement of what will be done from MDOT.
- Robert Skehan will submit immediate action steps and information to Courtney O'Donnell on Tuesday, August 13.
- Robert Skehan will submit a concept plan with all the elements of the plan including an overhead view to Courtney O'Donnell in the near future.
- Courtney O'Donnell inquired about trimming vegetation, including a lilac bush.

- Stephen Landry stated that MDOT's plans called for "massive" trimming and clearing, adding that it should have been done in 2017 but never happened because it was MDOT's understanding that the Town intended to speak with property owners prior to the clearing.
- Stephen Landry stated that although the State has the right-of-way, it prefers prior approval and cooperation from the property owners.
- Courtney O'Donnell stated that she will facilitate discussions with the property owners.
- Randy Illiad committed to providing a list of vegetation to be cleared and marking it.
- MDOT will move the painted stop bars back on the Route 121 approach heading towards Raymond.
- Robert Skehan stated that plans include installing variable message boards on Route 11 ahead of the intersection two weeks before and after the installation of the all stop flashing light to warn traffic of a pending new traffic pattern ahead.
- MDOT's plan includes "Stop Ahead" signs on Route 11.
- MDOT will consider installing tubular markers (flexible delineators) on the islands on both sides of Route 121.
- Randy Illian stated that an unused utility pole near the intersection will be removed.
- As a temporary measure, a decision was made to increase the size of the "Cross Traffic Does Not Stop" signs on both sides of Route 121 to the next size up.
- A discussion about the intersection will be included on the August 13, 2019 Selectboard meeting agenda.
- MDOT will wait for Town approval.

Bill Diamond expressed that a show of approval and support by the Selectboard at its August 13, 2019 meeting would demonstrate the Selectboard's sense of urgency.

Respectfully submitted,

Bob Tooker
Casco Administrative Secretary