

VII. FREIGHT MANAGEMENT

The regional transportation network must not only move people safely and efficiently, but must also facilitate the safe and efficient transportation of goods as well. Local freight movements to and from area businesses are a critical part of the regional economy. At the same time, the region serves as a critical link in the nation's freight network with much of this country's imports from/exports to Canada passing through on Route I-495 or via Pan Am Railways trains.

Rail

The major freight rail provider in the Valley is Pan Am Railways. This carrier, formerly Guilford Rail Systems, is headquartered at Iron Horse Park in Billerica, MA. Pan Am Railways operates over a network of about 1,600 miles of track in Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont. The company's system is made up primarily of the former Boston & Maine, Maine Central, and Springfield Terminal railroads.¹ The paper industry provides the largest source of business to the railroad including inbound chemicals, clay and pulp². Pan Am Railways also ships coal to power plants in Massachusetts and New Hampshire.

Pan Am Railways has freight rights over the Haverhill Main Line, which is owned by the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority. This line carries virtually all of the rail freight traffic between western Massachusetts and the remainder of the US to eastern New Hampshire, Maine, and the Maritime provinces.

Pan Am has a rail yard located off Andover Street in Lawrence. This is a marshalling facility where trains are assembled and broken down and serves the Merrimack Valley and much on northeastern Massachusetts.

Lawrence Industrial Park

Freight service to the Lawrence Industrial Park is operated out of the Lawrence Yard along a rail spur through south Lawrence. In 2005, users of rail service in the Lawrence Industrial Park sought improved rail service. At the same time, Pan Am Railways officials were looking at options to reduce their costs in serving the park. MVPC staff worked with the shippers in the industrial park as well as with representatives from Pan Am Rail and the City of Lawrence to make improvements to the spur that will facilitate improved rail service. A project to build a passing/storage siding along the rail spur to the park now appears in the region's FY 2007-2010 Transportation Improvement Program. When completed, the siding will allow Pan Am Railways to reduce by half the number of train trips necessary to deliver full cars and pick up empty cars from the park.

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² *Ibid*

Highway

Route I-495 is a major trucking route not only in the region but also in Massachusetts. Data collected as part of the Route I-495 Study shows that trucks comprise almost 20% of traffic counted on the highway in Amesbury. A significant proportion of the truck freight imports from/exports to Canada travels along I-495 through the region.

Estimates prepared by the Federal Highway Administration show that the overall amount of truck tonnage in Massachusetts is expected to grow from 230,195,141 tons in 1998 to 399,087,626 tons in 2020, or an increase of 76.6%. This is a much higher rate of growth than is expected for other vehicle types.

Under a previous plan, the MPO had surveyed shippers and truck freight uses in the region to identify any impediments to truck traffic on the highway network. This survey identified 29 problem locations on the region's transportation network. Since that survey, many of these issues have been addressed through improvements or are being/have been addressed in traffic studies of the affected areas. Table IV-3 below shows the problem locations as well as what actions have been taken to address them:

**Table VII-1
Freight Survey: Status of Issues**

City/Town	Route #/ Street Name & Problem	Actions Taken
Andover	Rt 125 & Rt 114 Congestion	Route 114 Traffic Study
Andover	I-93/I-495 Interchange Congestion	I-93: I-495 Traffic Studies
Andover	Rt 28 Congestion	Main Street Reconstruction Project
Andover	River Street in Ballardvale Truck Restrictions	Lowell Junction Interchange Study
Andover	Rt 133 Bridge Height	Still an Issue
Andover	Shawsheen Road Bridge Height	Still an Issue
Andover	Central Street Horn Bridge Height	Still an Issue
Andover	Rt 28 Railroad Bridge Weight Restriction	Still an Issue
Andover/Methuen	Route 93 Congestion	I-93 Corridor Study
Groveland	Salem Street Road Conditions	Roadway Reconstructed
Haverhill	Rt 97 from I-495 North to Methuen Line	Roadway Resurfaced
Haverhill	Rt 97 / North Broadway Intersection	Still an Issue
Haverhill	Washington Street Road Width	Still an Issue
Haverhill/Plaistow	Route 125 Congestion	Route 125 State Line Traffic Study
Lawrence	Merrimack St at Broadway Turning Radius	Still an Issue
Lawrence	Manchester Street Bridge Height	Still an Issue
Lawrence	Merrimack St Road Conditions	Still an Issue
Lawrence	Rt 28 at Andover St	Still an Issue
Methuen	Rt 28 through Methuen Square	Traffic Signals Installed
Methuen	Pelham St/Cross St/I-93	Additional Turn Lane to Be Built
Newburyport	I-95 Signage	Still an Issue
Newburyport	Plummer Ave. Jefferson St. Ashland St	Still an Issue
Newburyport	Rt 1 Signage	Still an Issue
Newburyport	Rt 1 Rotary Safety	Still an Issue
Newburyport	Rt 113 Congestion	Still an Issue
Newburyport	Chain Bridge Weight Limit	Bridge Upgraded
North Andover	Rt 114 at Willow Industrial Park Congestion	Route 114 Traffic Study
Salisbury	I-495 South to I-95 North Connection	Route 110 to Be Widened.
Salisbury	Rt 1 Railroad Bridge Alignment	Bridge and Abutments Removed

Highway Access and Economic Development

As noted above, the Merrimack Valley region owes much of its economic growth over the last 30 years to the fact that three interstate highways traverse the region. Conversely, factors which prevent a particular firm or a number of firms in an area from moving goods and raw materials easily between markets or which impact employees' commute times can inhibit and even prevent the growth of existing firms and the development of entire areas. Listed below are several industrial or commercial locations in the region that are widely perceived as having transportation access problems. In many cases, the problems are the result of capacity limitations on the surrounding roadway system.

North Andover Willow Street Industrial Area Access

The industrial area is located off Route 114 and abuts the Route 125 Bypass. All traffic traveling to this area must enter and exit from the signalized intersection of Willow Street and Route 114. Traffic congestion on Route 114 between I-495 in Lawrence and Willow Street during peak travel periods make it difficult to access this location. Local officials have requested that the MVPC's Route 114 Corridor Traffic Study investigate the feasibility of providing another access point to the industrial area by creating a new intersection on the Route 125 Bypass and to estimate what impacts such a connection would have on traffic flow.

Newburyport Industrial Area Access

Over the years, development of the industrial areas located just east of I-95 have created congestion problems at intersections along the Storey Avenue (Route 113) and Low Street corridors. In the early 1990's, the City began the process of preparing the Plans, Specifications, and Engineering for incorporating an abandoned section of I-95 into the existing roadway network both to alleviate the existing congestion problem and to sustain further industrial growth in the area.

In 2003, the city undertook a comprehensive planning analysis of the area north of Hale Street between I-95 and Low Street to determine the most appropriate use of the land that is available. This analysis suggested that much of the land in and around the industrial area should remain as open space and that the development rights instead be transferred to a transit oriented development in the vicinity of the Newburyport Commuter Rail Station, which is located at the southern end of the industrial park. This transit-oriented development proposal is now being evaluated by the City of Newburyport and the Town of Newbury.

Georgetown Industrial Area Access

All traffic accessing the area must currently travel on a narrow road through a residential area. The intersection of this residential roadway (Tenney Street) with Route 133, the major connector to downtown Georgetown and Route I-95, is a particular concern. This intersection has poor geometrics and presents both a safety and capacity problem. Tenney

Street itself is extremely narrow and structurally unsuited to carry heavy loads. Community officials have proposed that an access road be constructed from Route 133 to the industrial area on the east side of I-95 thereby removing the industrial traffic from the residential area and the problematic Route 133/Tenney Street intersection.

In 1997, MVPC worked with officials and citizens from Georgetown in completing a traffic study of the area that examined the feasibility of constructing a new access road to the industrial area from Route 133. This study showed that a new access road to the industrial area from Route 133 was feasible and would dramatically improve traffic conditions in the area. Design work and the securing of necessary rights of way for this project was completed in 2003. Soon thereafter, a Chapter 40B multifamily housing project was built at the northern end of the industrial zone, adjacent to the proposed roadway. The access roadway is now under construction.

Access Road to Holt Road Area - North Andover

A sizable amount of heavy industrial development has occurred over the years in the section of North Andover north of Sutton Street and west of Route 125. This area includes Lawrence Airport, the NESWIC trash burning facility, the Greater Lawrence Sanitary Treatment facility, and a number of industrial uses off of Holt Road. These facilities generate a substantial amount of heavy truck traffic, which use Sutton Street and Route 125. Continued development of available industrial land in the area will further increase congestion at the key Sutton Street/Route 125 intersection as well as at numerous unsignalized intersections along both corridors.

A proposal has been made to extend Charles Street north from Sutton Street along the MBTA tracks to the Holt Road industrial area. As noted in the discussion above regarding access to Davis/Furber Mills, this proposal and the proposal to reuse the railroad right of way would create a four way signalized intersection at Charles Street in the downtown area, which would connect the two proposed access roads.

Lowell Junction Industrial Area - Andover

The Lowell Junction Industrial Area is located along Route I-93 in southern Andover and northern Wilmington. This area is one of the largest employment centers in the state and poor access from it to I-93 has created frequent congestion problems, which have grown more acute over the years as development in the area has continued. Congestion in the area has led residents of the Lowell Junction section of Andover, located adjacent to the employment center, to file suit in order to block any further development that would increase employment in the area.

The Merrimack Valley MPO's Route I-93 Corridor Traffic Study in Andover and Methuen examined this issue and recommended that an Interchange Justification Study be undertaken. This new interchange would be located on Route I-93 approximately half way between the existing Dascomb Road (Exit 42) and Route 125 (Exit 41) interchanges. The new interchange would provide far more direct access to the employment center

from I-93 and remove much of the “cut through” traffic problem currently affecting the Lowell Junction area. It would also facilitate the continued expansion of this employment center.

In 2006, the Merrimack Valley MPO completed the Route I-93: Lowell Junction Interchange Justification Study. This analysis reviewed nine potential interchange configurations for the area in terms of traffic, land use, and environmental impacts. It recommended three interchange alternatives as being appropriate for further analysis through an Environmental Impact Study. The Executive Office of Transportation has submitted an Interchange Justification Report to the Federal Highway Administration in an effort to receive approval to undertake this environmental study.

In addition, officials from Andover, Wilmington and Tewksbury are now cooperating to identify a shared development strategy for the area in recognition of the fact that such an approach offers the prospect of maximizing the benefits that each community could realize from the further development. This effort will investigate a range of potential land use options, including the possible creation of a mixed-use zone with a new commuter rail station.

While these efforts are underway, officials in Andover are continuing their efforts to extend Burt Road to Ballardvale Street. Burt Road is currently a narrow, dead-end roadway that serves the northern part of the Lowell Junction industrial area. The town will soon be submitting a revised PWED proposal to the state to extend Burt Road south from its existing terminus by Gillette to an intersection with Ballardvale Road in Wilmington. Also included would be the widening of Ballardvale Road south and the installation of a traffic signal at the new Burt Road/Ballardvale Road intersection. This extension of this roadway will divert traffic from the River Street and Ballardvale Road areas in Andover by offering alternative access to this section of the Lowell Junction area.

In addition to extending Burt Road, MassHighway is now completing work on the construction of a new ramp that would provide access from Route 125 westbound to Route I-93 northbound. This ramp should help reduce some of the congestion experienced in this area.

To further reduce congestion in the area, local businesses have combined to form the Ballardvale Transportation Management Organization (TMO). This organization has been active in reducing travel demand to the Lowell Junction area through the promotion of ridesharing, initiation of a commuter service between New Hampshire Park and Ride Lots and major employers in the area, and offering commuter choice incentives to area employees. In support of this effort, the MVRTA is working with the TMO in providing a subscription bus service that brings workers living around the Junction in Lawrence, Andover, Methuen and North Andover into the area. This service also has been designed to serve the nearby Ballardvale Commuter Rail Station thereby allowing workers in the Lowell Junction area that live along the Haverhill Main Line to travel to work via train.

Recommendations:

- ❖ Examine options for addressing bridge height limitation issues in Andover and Lawrence
- ❖ Review signage along Route I-95 and Route 1 directing traffic to the Newburyport Industrial Park
- ❖ Define status of efforts to construct access improvements to the Newburyport Industrial Park from I-95