Fostering Private Investment in Public Infrastructure

The Waltham Proposal

Transportation & Economic Development
In the Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Route 128 (I-95 corridor)
and Route 20 / Route 117 Interchange
Solving a Critical Issue Through a Public/Private Partnership

The Issue
Outdated and overwhelmed traffic infrastructure currently funnels highway access through neighborhood streets, compromising safety and causing delays. The current roadway network is unable to support further development in the corridor.

The Proposal
A series of component roadway and multi-modal improvements that complement and build on each other – designed, constructed, and funded by state, local, and private stakeholders working together.

The Benefits
This proposal capitalizes on current opportunities to obtain needed real estate and secure private and state investment to fund these improvements.

It will unlock millions of square feet of commercial development in the region while:

- removing traffic from the neighborhoods
- decreasing traffic delays and travel times
- improving safety
- implementing multi-modal infrastructure (rail, bus, taxi, bike, pedestrian)
- performing critical structural repairs
- expanding the commercial tax base/keeping residential taxes low
- creating new jobs
- enhancing quality of life for residents and commuters
The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) is a regional planning agency that provides land planning, transportation, economic development, public safety, and other advisory services to nearly 101 communities in Greater Boston.

In 2011, the MAPC carefully studied the 128 Corridor, and issued a comprehensive report with its findings and recommendations.
Route 128: The “Massachusetts Technology Highway” I-90 to I-93

MAPC study focused on:
Interchanges at
  Route 3A
  Route 3
  Route 2
Two Local Corridors Served by a Single Interchange (the focus of this Proposal)
  Route 20 (purple)
  Route 117 (yellow)
The MAPC’s 2011 Route 128 Central Corridor Plan forms the basis for this proposal

It identifies:
- Poor Levels of Service
- Traffic Congestion
- Safety
- Growth Potential
- Improve Mass Transit

Recommendations include:
- Public/Private Partnerships
- Improved Interchanges
- Route 117 (Main Street) Bridge Replacement
- Green Street Connector Road
- Totten Pond Road / Route 117 Interior Connector
- Widening Highway Clearances (Rail and 117 Bridges)
- Lengthening of Acceleration and Deceleration Lanes
- Weave Removal
- Bus on Shoulder
- Multimodal Improvements
2011 MAPC Central Corridor Plan: Congestion

Waltham has been identified as the most congested section.

Volume to Capacity Ratios of 1.25-1.49 (2007)

Traffic volumes far exceed capacity (worst classification)
2011 MAPC Central Corridor Plan: Accidents

Waltham Section: **Highest Accident Rate**

Route 20/Route 117 Corridors served by single interchange through a residential neighborhood

Multiple closely spaced ramp movements at Route 20 rotary interchange – results in substantial congestion and risk of accidents.
MAPC Projected Daily Traffic Increase By Town
The MAPC projected that there would be substantial future growth in the Cities of Waltham and Lexington
Traffic Improvement Recommendations in the MAPC Corridor Plan

• Build on existing public and private transit service in the corridor.
• Create a new Fitchburg Line/Route 128 Multi Modal Transit Center more appropriately sited on the former Massachusetts Broken Stone site with access to Route 20/Route 117 and Route 128.
• Coordinate and enhance mitigation measures that will reduce traffic congestion and improve safety.
• Implement component improvements over time to reduce commuter and pedestrian disruption.
• Implement roadway modifications including:
  – Green Street connector
  – Totten Pond Road interior road connection to Route 117
  – Route 117 Bridge replacement and widening
The Proposal
Development Potential
Traffic improvements could unlock over 4 million square feet of new commercial development.
Connector Road Improvements:

Construct Green Street Connector Road to Existing Route 20 Ramp System and Relocate 128 Northbound Connector

This key first phase will yield substantial reductions in cut-through Stow Street traffic as all movements heading east from Route 117 to 128 south will bypass Stow Street. The Jones Road connector adds additional benefit to adjacent property owners and further reduces traffic over the existing bridge. Additionally, with a relocated NB ramp to Route 128 from Route 117, northbound traffic will bypass Stow Street.
Route 117 Bridge Improvements:

Construct New Bridge at Route 117

This will substantially increase capacity and improve traffic flow, eliminating a major traffic restriction.
Internal Connector Road Improvements:

An internal connector road, dependent on private land held by two major stakeholders (1265 Main and Boston Properties), will help to balance traffic flows in the region and minimize use of residential streets to travel between Totten Pond Road and Route 117.
Northbound Frontage Road Improvements:

Construct northbound frontage road on the east side of Route 128 from the Route 20 ramp system. This mirrors the Green Street connector road, and directs all remaining traffic away from Stow Street, allowing a direct connection to Route 117 that bypasses the Tavern Square neighborhood.
Route 20 Ramp Improvements:

Contemplated to be the final step, these improvements include a major reconstruction of the Route 20 bridge and ramp system. This simplifies movements and increases roadway capacity, and removes undesirable weaves while providing direct access from Route 128 to Route 117.
MBTA and Multi-modal Improvements:

The relocation of the Kendall Green MBTA station to a more central location will create substantial multi-modal opportunities for the region, including improved access to bus and rail transit, and enhanced pedestrian and bicycle connectivity when integrated with the Wayside Trail initiative.

This location is consistent with the MAPC recommendations.
Wayside Trail Part of Bay State Greenway

- Transportation connections to population centers, recreational resources and neighboring states
- 788 miles / 7 corridors
- Shared-use paths & on-road facilities
- Over 30 shared use paths totaling 152 miles/ another 60 miles in construction and focus on BSG Priority 100
23 Mile Corridor: Berlin to Waltham
A Public/Private Initiative

Created after careful and thorough collaboration with:

• The Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development
• The Massachusetts Department of Transportation
• The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation
• The City of Waltham and its Transportation and Planning Departments
• The 128 C3 Committee
• The 128 Business Council
• The Waltham Bicycle Advisory Committee
• And other associated neighborhood groups and private stakeholders
Timing is Critical

It is important to act quickly to maintain current momentum and capitalize on potential contributions from both private parties and public entities.

**Private (Developer) Contributions**
- Design Expertise and Funding
- Funding of Improvements
- Dedication of Critical Real Estate Required for Improvements

**Public (City/State) Contributions**
- Permitting Assistance
- Funding of Improvements
- Assistance with Right of Way Needs
Public Benefits

“What’s in it for me?”

- Reduced congestion and delays
- Increased roadway and pedestrian safety
- Directing highway access away from neighborhood streets
- Increasing commercial tax base, keeping residential taxes low
- Substantial new job creation
- Increased local revenues and economic growth – resulting in a healthier, more stable City and community
- Enhanced access to rail, bus, pedestrian, and bicycle transit alternatives
- Advancement of smart growth principles – environmental benefits such as reduced emissions, improved multi-modal and alternative transit access, and enhanced bicycle and pedestrian connectivity will serve all residents in the region.
Direct excerpts from the 2011 MAPC Corridor Plan

• “If communities want to **retain and add additional jobs**, new and creative ways to efficiently move people around the corridor need to be developed.”

• “Improvements should also include a **continuation of the highway service connector road from Totten Pond Road to Routes 117/20**. In Waltham, improving access to and from Green Street and the Polaroid parcel should also be considered. Since the Route 117 crossing of Route 128 may be the first to be redesigned and reconstructed, any changes at this location must widen the bridge sufficiently to allow Bus on Shoulder to operate if that option is implemented.”

• “More detailed examination of the crash records should also include a search for any safety problems related to the geometrics of the on and off ramps. Existing interchanges should be redesigned as necessary to **eliminate weaving areas, and to lengthen acceleration or deceleration lanes.**”

• “**A new Fitchburg Line/128 Transit Center should be built at the former Massachusetts Broken Stone site** along the Weston/Waltham border....The center will become a stop on the Fitchburg commuter rail line. The goal of the Fitchburg Line/128 Transit Center would be to draw cars off of Route 128 and provide feeder bus and shuttle service to employment centers along the corridor.”

• “The Fitchburg Line/128 Transit Center would include **direct connections to Route 128** North and Southbound, via a redesigned Route 20 interchange, and other connections to the corridor communities via Route 117.”

• “Any reconstruction and geometric improvements along Route 128 needs to **discourage commuters from utilizing neighborhood streets.**”