

Nashua Regional Planning Commission Northern Middlesex Council of Governments Exit 36 Southbound Project Overview October 2012



Background

The Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) in conjunction with the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG) has received federal funding through the Transportation, Community and Systems Preservation Program (TCSP) to conduct a study assessing the effectiveness of a south bound off-ramp at exit 36 on the F.E. Everett Turnpike, near the New Hampshire and Massachusetts border. The study will evaluate traffic flows and potential economic benefits to businesses in the area and will ultimately complete planning analyses in support of the development of a southbound off ramp on US Route 3 at Exit 36 in Tyngsborough, Massachusetts.

The Exit 36 Southbound Planning Study is of both local and regional significance. The project has been included in the NRPC Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) for many years and is widely accepted as having significant benefit to the region for a relatively small investment. The project was also recommended as part of the *Daniel Webster Highway and Spit Brook Road Corridor Study* completed in 2002. Most recently, the City of Nashua Transportation Task Force included Exit 36 Southbound (Exit 36S) in its report to the Mayor as a high priority project for the City, citing congestion relief and economic development opportunities to the City. The significance of this project is also recognized in Massachusetts by the Town of Tyngsborough and NMCOG. This project is included in the Northern Middlesex Region's recently updated 2012 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP).

The Exit 36 Southbound Planning Study has several desired outcomes that address livability and integrate transportation, community and system preservation plans and practices. The goals of this project, which are consistent with the project selection criteria, include:

- Improve the operation of the major roads in the vicinity of the proposed Exit 36 Southbound;
- Create safer roads for all modes of transportation;
- Provide efficient access to services and local and regional job centers;
- Generate opportunities for sustainable growth and economic development;
- Support existing, and initiate new opportunities for innovative financing and public/private partnerships; and
- Develop a plan for mitigating traffic congestion and greenhouse gas emissions associated with the transportation sector.

The final product will be a planning study report which summarizes data collection efforts and analyzes traffic operations and impacts, transit system improvements, pedestrian and bicycling issues, and opportunities to improve economic competitiveness. A land use analysis will result in recommendations that will foster a more sustainable future for the residents and businesses in the study area.

Task 1: Establish a Project Steering Committee and Kick Off the Project

The committee will meet quarterly through the planning process. The Project Steering Committee includes the following committee members:

Congressional Delegation

- Office of Senator Kelly Ayotte – Simon Thomson
- Office of Senator Jeanne Shaheen – Sarah Holmes
- Office of Congresswoman Niki Tsongas – Brian Martin

Business

- Greater Nashua Chamber of Commerce – Chris Williams
- Greater Lowell Chamber of Commerce – Danielle McFadden
- Bahama Breeze Restaurant – Justin Lance
- Dell – Peter Denial
- John J. Flatley Company – Richard Cane
- Olive Garden Italian Restaurant – Steve Blaise
- Simon Mall – Vince Cosco

Municipalities

- City of Nashua Division of Public Works – Steve Dookran
- City of Nashua Division of Public Works – Andy Patrician
- City of Nashua Community Development Division – Kathy Hersh
- City of Nashua Community Development Division – Roger Houston
- City of Nashua Economic Development – Tom Galligani
- City of Nashua Citizen – Dan Kelly
- Town of Tyngsborough Board of Selectman - Rick Reault
- Town of Tyngsborough Planning Board - Steve O'Neill
- Town of Tyngsborough Town Administrator - Michael Gilleberto,

State Departments of Transportation

- MassDOT District 4 – Joe Onorato
- MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning – Karen Pearson
- NH Department of Transportation – William Rose

Staff

- Nashua Regional Planning Commission – Tim Roache
- Nashua Regional Planning Commission – Camille Pattison
- Northern Middlesex Council of Governments – Beverly Woods
- Northern Middlesex Council of Governments – Sarah Bradbury

Task 2: Create a Public Outreach and Education Strategy

A public outreach strategy has been developed and includes public meetings that will be held throughout the project, methods for increasing public/private partnerships and alternative outreach mechanisms to engage the larger public (i.e., social media, website, etc.). Please see the attached **Public Outreach Plan** for additional information.

Task 3: Analyze Existing Traffic and Future Travel Demand Conditions

A traffic analysis of major corridors, in the study area, will be completed. This will include Middlesex Road, Daniel Webster Highway, Spit Brook Road and US Route 3. The goal of this analysis is to quantify the benefits of Exit 36S to the existing road network in the project area.

Task 4: Apply Land Use and Economic Development Planning Tools to High Growth Areas

The area represents an economic center for the region on both sides of the border, due to the significant amount of commercial, retail and high density residential development. In addition, the expansion of Route 3 in Massachusetts and New Hampshire has provided additional untapped economic development opportunities for this region. This task will apply planning tools to boost the economic competitiveness, while preserving community character and system capacity.

Task 5: Analyze Transportation Planning Techniques like Complete Streets, Access Management, and Alternative Transportation Opportunities

The Transportation, Community, and System Preservation program highlights the need to preserve and enhance system capacity through demand management and a multimodal approach. Therefore this analysis will consider the benefits of improvements to transit, non-motorized modes and managed access as well as local and regional alternative transportation.

Task 6: Develop a Conceptual Layout and Planning Level Cost Estimates

An important goal of this study is to develop a conceptual layout of the Exit 36S Ramp. Although there will be no engineering evaluation, a planning level cost estimate to construct the proposed Exit 36S Ramp will be completed by an engineering consultant. The cost estimate will provide adequate detail so that the project could be programmed in the NMCOG Regional Transportation Plan and NRPC Metropolitan Transportation Plan.

Task 7: Create a Final Report with Recommended Layout, Cost Estimates and Public Comments

NRPC and NMCOG will cooperatively prepare a draft and final report documenting the study's technical methodology, the public outreach effort, findings and recommendations, and shall present copies of both the draft and final report with all accompanying documents to the project Steering Committee, NHDOT and MassDOT.