

## Context Sensitive Solutions for Redesign of Route 3 Gateway to Bar Harbor and Acadia National Park

A Project of Maine Department of Transportation and the Town of Bar Harbor

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**Figure 1 Aerial View of Bar Harbor Gateway Corridor**

For more information, contact

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## **Context Sensitive Solutions for Redesign of Route 3 Gateway to Bar Harbor and Acadia National Park**

### **Problem Statement (adopted 9/21/2010)**

*The Route 3 Corridor is the primary entrance to Bar Harbor, Acadia National Park and to our commercial centers, passing through several neighborhoods, the village of Hulls Cove and areas of impressive scenic beauty. This portion of Route 3 is designated as “An All-American Road, under the federal Scenic Byway Program. Its condition is rough and deteriorated. There is limited protection for pedestrians and the shoulders are not well suited for bicyclist. This does not present a positive or welcoming experience for the millions annual users of this corridor.*

*In this process for context sensitive solutions, we hope to improve safety and efficiency of travel for all users, while attending to the following in a redesign of the travel corridor:*

- *Roadway width and design*
- *Pedestrian ways and bike ways*
- *Access to local roads, businesses, and residences*
- *Drainage, lighting and other environmental impacts*
- *Historic and scenic quality*
- *Scenic turnouts, way-finding and interpretive signage*

### **Vision Statement (adopted 10/19/2010)**

We envision Bar Harbor Route 3, from Ireson Hill to Mount Desert Street, will provide a safe, efficient and aesthetically pleasing transportation corridor that encourages multiple uses and maintains or enhances the historic standards representative of Bar Harbor and Acadia National Park.

### **Projected Timeline**

The project advisory committee will make its final recommendations on context sensitive design concepts to Maine DOT, following a public meeting in Bar Harbor on April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2011. At this point, planning and engineering funds for the entire four mile project are included in Maine DOT budget for 2012-2013. Construction will likely be taken up in phases, with the section from Mount Desert Street to Duck Brook coming as early as 2013, and other sections funded through subsequent biennial work plans.

The committee strongly recommends that Maine DOT work with town officials, the Chamber of Commerce and Acadia National Park to determine a construction schedule and traffic management strategies that result in the least impact on residents, commuters and businesses that rely on tourism.

## **List of concerns to be addressed in redesign of Route 3**

*(Summarized from public meetings June 23 and October 25, 2010 and input from Project Advisory Committee Members)*

<b>Concerns</b>	<b>Ireson Hill</b>	<b>Hulls Cove</b>	<b>Acadia Entrance / Bluffs</b>	<b>Duck Brook to Town</b>
<b>1. Safe, efficient auto, truck bus traffic</b>	Improve safety without increasing speed (35 mph)	Address congestion, intersections	Clear priority for this area, better separation of traffic entering Acadia	Address congestion, intersections and access issues while maintaining flow of traffic
<b>2. Safe pedestrian use of corridor</b>	Explore pedestrian and bicycle options within road corridor, with possible off-road pedestrian walking routes, to connect commercial and residential uses to Hulls Cove	Sidewalks and walkways can connect to other neighborhoods, and to Acadia	Pedestrian linkages from Hulls Cove to Acadia National Park, loop road and carriage roads	Explore pedestrian walkways from Duck Brook/Sonogee into town, possibly using paths outside of and parallel to of travel corridor
<b>3. Safe bicycle use of corridor</b>	Include bikeway within road corridor where practical, open to off- road options	Explore off-road bike-path connections along the corridor to the village and ANP.	Include bikeway within road corridor	Provide bikeway within travel corridor
<b>4. Providing for Island Explorer</b>	Explore additional spots for pick-up and drop off of passengers—top and bottom of Ireson Hill and at Barton’s Motel	Enhance bus pull-offs	This is a pass-through area for Island Explorer	Enhance opportunities for regular bus pull-offs, for safety and passenger convenience
<b>5. Preserving access for water dependent uses</b>	Not applicable in this section	Possible recreational uses... future small boats access?	Not applicable in this section	Preserve option for return of ferry service or alternate water use

<b>Concerns</b>	<b>Ireson Hill</b>	<b>Hulls Cove</b>	<b>Acadia Entrance / Bluffs</b>	<b>Duck Brook to Town</b>
<b>6. Keeping the welcoming, tree-lined feel to the corridor</b>	Really important consideration for this section of the corridor	Important to keep the rural feeling while improving safety and traffic flow	This segment has high scenic values... important to maintain, enhance	Important consideration, especially from College of the Atlantic into town enhance
<b>7. Protecting the scenic views of ocean, harbor, fields and mountains</b>	Some views of fields and distant hills are part of the “feel” of this section	Very important views of the cove and Frenchman Bay	Provide safe scenic overlook at the Bluffs for northbound cars and buses	View of Duck Brook Bridge and reflecting pool between Sonogee and hotel can be enhanced
<b>8. Providing good buffers between residences and travel corridor</b>	There are many residences in this section, buffering will be important	Many homes close to road, good buffers essential	Provide buffers for the residences in this section	Critical concern for residences in this section of corridor
<b>9. Providing access to commercial uses within the corridor</b>	Good sight lines and road width provide good access for most commercial use	Hulls Cove is attractive mini-commercial center... improve safety of this access	Not applicable in this section	Hotels and restaurants in this section need safe access to Route 3
<b>10. Showcasing historic buildings and landscapes</b>	Not a high priority for this section	Not an obvious priority for this section	Not a high priority for this section	There may be some specific concerns to be addressed
<b>11. Solving drainage and erosion problems</b>	Problem areas include from Sea Breeze Motel to Barton’s Motel	There are drainage problems to be solved, including in front of Colony Motel	Stormwater management and stability of ledge, ice hazards	Drainage concerns for road and pedestrian walkways from College of the Atlantic into town
<b>12. Addressing visual impacts of signs and utilities</b>	Not an obvious problem for this section	Careful attention to details will preserve the scenic qualities of the village	Minimize signs and visual impact of utilities in this section	Address need for improved signage without impact on scenic values

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<b>13. Addressing environmental impacts during and after construction</b>	Drainage for storm water will be important	Several streams cross corridor, close proximity to Hulls Cove shoreline demands careful attention	Roadway is within Acadia for much of this section... need to address any environmental impacts	Bridges over Duck Brook and other streams may be of concern
<b>14. Providing opportunities for further economic development</b>	This section is mostly zoned for residential, but town water and sewer will increase residential construction and potential congestion	The corridor through Hulls Cove is already well developed, the intersection with Crooked Road an important feature for future development	Not applicable for this section	This is a mix of commercial and residential uses... note desire to preserve water dependent uses at ferry terminal
<b>15. Improving lighting without reducing our “dark skies” assets</b>	Not an obvious problem in this section	Opportunities to address dark skies goals by both public and private action	No street lights should be added in this section	Work to address dark skies goals by both public and private action within corridor
<b>16. Addressing traffic flow and safety issues without increasing average speed</b>	Important consideration for any redesign	Important that new design does not tend to increase speed through village. Preserve current low speeds or lower them further.	Important consideration, with speed reduced at entrance to Acadia and bluffs	Intersections and crosswalks need to be carefully designed to avoid bottlenecks. Preserve current low speeds or lower them further.
<b>17. Addressing possible impacts of climate change, sea level rise, storm intensity</b>	Stormwater drainage may be critical issue	Town utilities and roadway will be threatened by sea level rise... culverts need to handle storm water	Storm water considerations should be addressed	Increased stormwater drainage needs should be considered

# Draft Consensus Statements

## Maine Department of Transportation Bar Harbor Route 3 Gateway Project Advisory Committee (as of February 8, 2011 meeting of the committee)

### Preamble

The consensus-based recommendation below provide direction for further design and engineering work that will lead to final project plans. The committee is convinced that most of the redesign of Route 3 can happen within current Department of Transportation rights of way, and adhering to the current center line of Route 3. In addition, the committee urges that DOT and town officials give careful consideration to individual situations so as to maintain the overall rural and residential nature of the corridor, to calm traffic and discourage excessive speed, and prevent unnecessary encroachment of private property and loss of income to business owners. The committee believes waivers from federal highway standards should be sought, on a case by case basis, to make these aspirations possible. At the same time, the committee recognizes that federal funding will require that in addition to vehicular traffic, uses by bicyclists and pedestrians need to be accommodated safely in any redesign of Route 3.



Figure 2 Recommendations Based on Five Corridor Sections

## 1. Ireson Hill (Pirates Cove to Barton’s Motel)

The committee recommends redesigning this section of the corridor to have two 11 foot travel ways, with 4-5 foot paved shoulders on both sides of the road. In this section, as throughout the corridor, paved shoulders would serve bicycle use and any other normal shoulder use, such as temporary parking for delivery trucks, breakdowns, etc. In this section, the paved shoulders would also accommodate pedestrian uses.

There is also committee support for bus stops / turnouts on both sides of Route 3, at a minimum, near the intersection with Sand Point Road.



Figure 3 Example of 5' Paved Shoulders

## 2. Barton’s Motel into Hulls Cove, including the Church of Our Father and Hulls Cove School House

The committee recommends two 11 foot travel ways with 4-5 foot paved shoulders and a pedestrian sidewalk on the westerly side, using a small esplanade where conditions allow. In the section by the Church of Our Father and the Hulls Cove School House, this may require removal of existing concrete walls (determined not to be “historical”) to allow for better sight lines, aesthetics and decreased traffic noise. Improvements may also require purchase of easements for utilities and drainage.

The committee also recommends locating appropriate bus stops near the Church of Our Father for north bound passengers, and somewhere between Barton’s Motel and the Hulls Cove School House, for passengers headed toward Bar Harbor.

To increase safety for pedestrians, there is committee support to determine optimum location and design for a crosswalk linking the parking areas of Church of Our Father to a new sidewalk opposite, serving participants in activities held at the Hulls Cove School House.



**Figure 4 Conceptual Illustration of Sidewalk and Shoulders**

### **3. Hulls Cove Village**

Hulls Cove Village has a mix of commercial and residential uses and is the location for a significant intersection with Crooked Road. Community meetings for residents and business owners in Hulls Cove have led the Bar Harbor Planning Department to look for ways to improve streetscapes (signage, landscaping, dark-skies compliant lighting, sidewalks and crosswalks) and consider other measures that create an enhanced sense of connection for both residents and visitors within the village.

Consistent with these views, the committee recommends two 11 foot travel ways with 4-5 foot paved shoulders, and that we improve pedestrian safety in the village by providing a walk way from near Barton’s Motel, past the Hulls Cove General Store and on to the current service road to Acadia National Park, with appropriate crosswalks across the Crooked Road and Route 3. Where conditions make it possible, it makes sense to separate the sidewalk from the roadway via an esplanade.

Good design of the intersection of Route 3 and Crooked Road, and the intersection of Route 3 and Breakneck Road are critical to the overall success of this portion of the project. The committee recommends that engineers look for ways to provide a left hand turn lane for traffic heading from Bar Harbor onto the Crooked Road, and to work with property owners to design a safe and logical intersection at Breakneck Road with access to the Hulls Cove Post Office and General Store.

The committee recommends designing a combined bike and pedestrian path (achieved by abandoning the current right turn lane on Route 3 that starts just south of the Hulls Cove General Store and continuing to the service road to Acadia National Park visitor center parking area) with a grass or “hardscaped” esplanade to separate bike and pedestrian



users from the roadway. Some also feel it would be good to provide appropriate pedestrian access and amenities (steps and benches) to the gravel shore of Hulls Cove.

There is also support for locating appropriate bus stops/ turnouts on both sides of Route 3 in the village of Hulls Cove, serving residents and visitors to commercial establishments.



**Figure 5 Conceptual Illustration of Sidewalk, Esplanade and Shoulders in Hulls Cove**

#### 4. Hulls Cove through the Bluffs and to Duck Brook

The committee recommends two 11 foot travel ways, with paved shoulders of at least five feet, with no separate pedestrian walk way in this section. There is support for improving safe and aesthetic automobile access from Route 3 to the entrance to Acadia National Park, via improved signage supporting use of the right turn lane heading south, and for signage and left turn lane arrangement for traffic heading north.

At the Bluffs, there also seems to be a desire to retain/improve some form of safe scenic overlook, but the primary concern is to improve safety for road traffic and for bicyclists and infrequent pedestrians using the paved shoulders, and to improve drainage and reduce rock and ice fall from the ledges on the western side of the road (opposite Frenchman Bay).



**Figure 6 Conceptual Illustration of Sidewalk, Esplanade and Shoulders on Hill to Park Entrance**

The committee recommends further exploration of solutions, including possible provision of limited parking off the north bound lane, at the north and/or south ends of the Bluffs area, with pedestrian walks to viewing points in the center of the bluffs view, on the easterly (water side) of the road. Maine DOT and representatives of Acadia National Park should continue to work together to present context sensitive options for public comment during the design phase of the project.

## 5. Duck Brook to Mount Desert Street

The committee recommends two 11 foot travel ways, with paved shoulders of four to five feet on both sides. In this section, as in others, bicyclists would be accommodated on these paved shoulders. In addition, starting at Sonogee (or south of Duck Brook) there is support for a combined bike-pedestrian way of eight feet, on the easterly side of Route 3, separated from the paved shoulder by an esplanade, or with landowner agreement, via rights of way across private land. This bike and pedestrian way would follow the lines of the existing sidewalk from the ferry terminal, continuing to West Street.<sup>1</sup>

In addition, the committee recommends a “collector” sidewalk and esplanade on the westerly side of Route 3 (away from the ocean side) will better accommodate pedestrian use from Jack Russell’s, the Bar Harbor Motel and Acadia Inn to Highbrook Road, with a crosswalk to route pedestrians to the easterly side of Route 3 for the rest of the way into town.

There is support for providing bus stops/turnouts and benches for north bound buses at College of the Atlantic, (near the community gardens) and at Atlantic Oceanside. For passengers desiring to go into Bar Harbor village, there is a need for a stop at the Acadia Inn, and another just above the Highbrook Motel driveway entrance. The latter is not part of the Gateway Project, and can be established simply with a post and bus stop sign. But for College of the Atlantic students and visitors attempting to use this stop will be served by the proposed new sidewalk and a crosswalk near this location.

From the north entrance to College of the Atlantic, opposite Highbrook Road, to West Street, the committee recommends improvements to the existing sidewalk on the easterly side, while accommodating nearly all existing and healthy trees and rebuilding historic granite walls (some sections of walls may be need to be relocated and rebuilt to restore visual and aesthetic relationships to the sidewalk and roadway). Additional rights of way to allow for such improvements would be sought from adjacent landowners.

To improve safety for motor vehicle traffic, pedestrians and bicyclists, the committee recommends further design work on three key intersections:

- 1) at West Street and West Street extension;
- 2) at Cottage Street, where a left hand turning lane would be desirable for traffic heading toward Bar Harbor; and
- 3) at the intersection of Route 3, Mt. Desert Street, Eagle Lake Road and Kebo Street, which is the termination point of this project.

The committee calls Maine DOT attention to a recent Safe Streets to Schools grant to improve safety and access from Route 3 to the Connors-Emerson School grounds, design and construction for which will take place in 2011.

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<sup>1</sup> One committee member expresses reservations about this recommendation, but believes those concerns might be resolved as the Maine DOT meets with property owners in this section of the project to determine the best design, given the principles of context sensitive solutions to “exercise flexibility and creativity to shape effective transportation solutions, while preserving and enhancing community and natural environments,” that are especially important in this section of the corridor.



**Figure 7 Conceptual Illustration of Sidewalk and Shoulders by COA**



**Figure 8 Conceptual Illustration of Route 3 Curve Near Harbor Lane**

**6. The role of the Project Advisory Committee during the design and pre-construction phases**

The committee recommends that Maine DOT continue to utilize the members of the current project advisory committee to provide local advice and experience during the design phase, and in decisions leading up to a construction time-table.

## **Members of Route 3 Gateway Project Advisory Committee**

(Note: While all committee members were selected and agreed to serve as representatives of all community members of Bar Harbor and beyond, who have a stake in the outcome of the project, we have listed other “affiliations” that are held by committee members to illustrate their experience and interests)

- Anne Krieg, Planner, Town of Bar Harbor
- Bonnie Lyons, Residential Property Owner
- Chris Fogg, Bar Harbor Chamber of Commerce
- Dean Read, YMCA and Bicycle Coalition
- Deborah Dyer, Bar Harbor Historical Society
- Dick Cough, Commercial Property Owner (The Bayview)
- Edith Milbury, Resident
- Elsie Flemings, State Representative and Healthy Acadia
- Francis Russell, Resident
- James Blanchard, Resident
- Joe Minutolo, Commercial Property Owner (Bar Harbor Bicycle Shop)
- John Kelly, Planner, Acadia National Park
- Kim Harty, MDI YMCA
- Kyle A. Johnson, Commercial Property Owner (The Colony)
- Lewis “Sonny” Gerrish, Commercial Property Owner (Hutchin's Mountain View Cottages)
- Millard Dority, College of the Atlantic
- Paul MacQuinn, Resident, Commercial Property Owner (Bar Harbor Convenience)
- Sharon Tate, The Jackson Laboratory
- Stephanie Clement, Friends of Acadia
- Terri Needham, Commercial Property Owner (The Chart Room)

### ***Project Staff***

Fred Michaud, Project Coordinator, Maine Department of Transportation  
Ron Beard, Facilitator, University of Maine Cooperative Extension  
James Fisher, Technical support, Hancock County Planning Commission

Minutes and other documents supporting the committee process are maintained on the Hancock County Planning Commission website: [www.hcpcme.org/barharbor/css](http://www.hcpcme.org/barharbor/css)

## Background on Context Solutions

From: <http://www.contextsensitivesolutions.org/> (see this website for more info)

### Core Principles of Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS)

These core CSS principles apply to transportation processes, outcomes, and decision-making.

- Strive towards a shared stakeholder vision to provide a basis for decisions.
- Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of contexts.
- Foster continuing communication and collaboration to achieve consensus.
- Exercise flexibility and creativity to shape effective transportation solutions, while preserving and enhancing community and natural environments.
  - Results of Joint AASHTO/FHWA Context Sensitive Solutions Strategic Planning Process Summary Report, March 2007

### CSS Qualities

Context sensitive solutions is guided by a process which:

- Establishes an interdisciplinary team early, including a full range of stakeholders, with skills based on the needs of the transportation activity.
- Seeks to understand the landscape, the community, valued resources, and the role of all appropriate modes of transportation in each unique context before developing engineering solutions.
- Communicates early and continuously with all stakeholders in an open, honest, and respectful manner, and tailors public involvement to the context and phase.
- Utilizes a clearly defined decision-making process.
- Tracks and honors commitments through the life cycle of projects.
- Involves a full range of stakeholders (including transportation officials) in all phases of a transportation program.
- Clearly defines the purpose and seeks consensus on the shared stakeholder vision and scope of projects and activities, while incorporating transportation, community, and environmental elements.
- Secures commitments to the process from local leaders.
- Tailors the transportation development process to the circumstances and uses a process that examines multiple alternatives, including all appropriate modes of transportation, and results in consensus.
- Encourages agency and stakeholder participants to jointly monitor how well the agreed-upon process is working, to improve it as needed, and when completed, to identify any lessons learned.
- Encourages mutually supportive and coordinated multimodal transportation and land-use decisions.
- Draws upon a full range of communication and visualization tools to better inform stakeholders, encourage dialogue, and increase credibility of the process.
  - Results of Joint AASHTO/FHWA Context Sensitive Solutions Strategic Planning Process Summary Report, March 2007

## **CSS Outcomes**

Context sensitive solutions leads to outcomes that:

- Are in harmony with the community and preserve the *environmental, scenic, aesthetic, historic, and natural resource values* of the area.
- Are safe for all users.
- Solve problems that are agreed upon by a full range of stakeholders
- Meet or exceed the expectations of both designers and stakeholders, thereby adding lasting value to the community, the environment, and the transportation system.
- Demonstrate effective and efficient use of resources (people, time, budget,) among all parties.

- Results of Joint AASHTO/FHWA Context Sensitive Solutions Strategic Planning Process Summary Report, March 2007