

**Public Workshop Minutes**  
Walden Passage Feasibility Study  
Public Workshop 3: Recommendations  
June 2, 2007, 2-5 pm  
Concord Peabody Middle School, Concord, Massachusetts

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**Agenda**

This was the final of three workshops held as part of the Walden Passage Feasibility Study. This final workshop focused on presenting the findings of the study to date and presenting the preferred alternative that will be recommended in the study. The comments and questions raised by the public during this meeting will be considered by the project team in drafting the final recommendations for the project report.

Workshop Agenda:

1. Introduction: Personnel, Scope, Schedule
2. Project Review (Scope, Goals, Schedule, Study Area)
3. Summary of Wildlife Monitoring/Tracking (Noah Charney)
4. Alternative Crossing Locations
5. Discussion of Preferred Alternative
6. Next Steps, Opportunities for Comment

Introduction, Project Review, and Location Alternatives Presented by Jack Ahern, UMass

Meeting mediation by John Mullin, UMass

Meeting called to order at 2:15 pm by Jack Ahern

**Project Review**

Jack Ahern introduced the project background. In 2004, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) awarded a Transportation, Community and System Preservation Program (TCSP) grant to fund a feasibility study of a highway overpass for a recreational and wildlife crossing of Route 2 in Concord, Massachusetts. The feasibility study, initially proposed by the Walden Woods Project, is now managed by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), the Regional Planning Council for the Boston Metropolitan region. The MAPC has contracted with an interdisciplinary team from UMass Amherst to examine the feasibility of establishing a *combined wildlife-recreation passage* within a *pre-defined* study area: Crosby's Corner to the Sudbury River centered on State Route 2 in Concord MA. The study will consider alternatives and recommend a *preferred alternative*.

Project goals: To explore and analyze the feasibility of establishing a combined wildlife and pedestrian crossing of Mass. State Route 2 in Concord, MA. The study will examine the proposed crossing in neighborhood, town, region and national perspectives and consider associated benefits and impacts on: transportation; wildlife movement; community/neighborhood issues, concerns and opportunities; recreational use; the economy of the host communities and the region.

In summary, there are multiple perspectives that will be considered on this project: wildlife, vehicular and pedestrian safety, community issues, and access and aesthetics.

### ***Summary of Wildlife Monitoring/Tracking***

Noah Charney, Wildlife Biologist from UMass, presented the importance of connectivity for wildlife, and presented research findings and tracking data collected with assistance from the Wildlife Passage Task Force and Mass Audubon.

Introduction:

- Past wildlife crossing structures in the study area have been very effective (currently four mitigation tunnels exist in the study area)
- Combined human-wildlife crossing as an urban solution to highway-wildlife conflicts is promising
- Walden passage project holds great potential as high profile educational opportunity to raise awareness
- Walden project certainly has worthwhile cultural/recreational benefits

Our task:

Evaluate the direct benefits to wildlife within study area

The types of species known to, or likely to exist in the study area, and the type of passage structure they likely use were presented (based on literature review). The potential marginal benefit of adding another large crossing structure to the study area was discussed by looking at 3 scales and assessing the impacts of Route 2 as a barrier to wildlife:

3 Scales of Wildlife Populations:

Metapopulation – increased connectivity for genetics, re-colonization, occur across broad areas and regions.

Population – breeding habitat for interacting populations, occur across small regions/neighborhoods.

Individual Species– access to habitat for individual species, occurs at a very local scale.

Noah presented a list of species and home range that has been compiled based on literature reviews. He also presented data on current tunnel usage. Of the species that are likely to be abundant in the study area and are easy to discern via track beds or camera traps, coyote, striped skunk, and eastern mole are the ones not observed using the four mitigation tunnels. Only two rare species were previously identified in the study area (Mystic Valley Amphipod and Elderberry Long Horned Beetle). However, these species are no longer state listed and would not likely use or benefit from additional passage structures.

Noah also presented an example of innovative solutions for arboreal species: arbor or rope bridge over the passage structure.

There were no questions or comments raised by the public following Noah's presentation.

### ***Location Alternatives***

The three alternative locations that are the focus of the study were presented along with the strengths/opportunities and weaknesses/threats that were compiled during the

January public workshop were presented. *Conceptual* design visualizations of the passage structures were also presented.

**Location 1:** Adjacent to Sudbury River – this proposed location would involve replacing the existing Sudbury River Route 2 bridge to allow for passage under Route 2 on both sides of the river.

**Location 2:** Existing Railroad Underpass – this proposed location would include widening the existing underpass to provide a wildlife/pedestrian passage on one or both sides of the tracks with a fence or wall separation from the railroad tracks for safety. .

**Location 3:** Goose Pond area, adjacent to the Concord Landfill - this location would involve a combined recreational/wildlife overpass structure.

The evaluation matrix used to determine the *preliminary* preferred alternative was provided in a handout to the attendees (see attached). Location 3, Goose Pond, was presented as the preferred location, based on the following:

- Best meets the goals of the FHWA TCSP program in terms of “reducing community and environmental impacts”;
- Significant potential to link Walden Pond and Walden Woods Area with other historic and cultural opportunities in Concord and Lincoln, including the Bay Circuit Trail, the Emerson-Thoreau Amble, and potential connections with Minute man National Historic Park;
- Potential to provide alternative Rte. 2 passage for other wildlife species;
- Minimal impact on Walden Pond State Reservation.

Jack Ahern emphasized that this recommendation is preliminary, and is open for discussion and comment. A map of existing connections to cultural resources and parking was presented. Additional assessment of parking in the area will be completed by UMass.

Based on the findings of the research and comments from previous Public Workshops and Advisory Board meetings, the following related recommendations for the Study Area will be presented in the study report:

1. Assure that a new crossing structure NOT be installed at the expense, or delay, of the Crosby's Corner Rte. 2 alignment project
2. Elevate the Rte. 2 roadbed when the existing Sudbury River bridge is rebuilt to enable flood stage passage on both sides of the river by large animals.
3. Provide safe pedestrian passage, separated from the RR tracks on one or both sides at the Fitchburg RR underpass when this structure is rebuilt.
4. Modify the jersey barriers on Rte. 2 to provide possibilities for wildlife crossing (over, under and in-between options exist)
5. Continue to monitor the existing tunnels and establish long-term monitoring for any new passages that are established or improved.
6. Continue to coordinate with the Walden Pond State Reservation to assure that crossings do not exacerbate existing challenges with capacity and access management to the reservation.

**Discussion of the Preferred Location** (John Mullin, mediator)

Location 3: Goose Pond was presented as the preferred location. However, it was emphasized that this recommendation is preliminary, and is open for discussion and comment. Should the responses from the public meeting and second draft indicate that this alternative is not-preferred; UMass will re-evaluate the preferred alternative. John Mullin stated that that a passage can strengthen connectivity for wildlife, although many species are crossing the highway successfully at the present. The floor was opened for comments/concerns over the preferred location.

Notes on comments raised during discussion:

-Alan French (Bay Circuit Trail Alliance): Excited about this project, the original intent of the Bay Circuit was to create a Greenbelt around the metropolitan area. There are currently 4000+ acres of open space in the vicinity of the trail, and linkage of open space is very important. He would like to see a project that mitigates the automobile's impact on the open space/trail network and how they can co-exist.

-Nancy Burnham (resident): Think about winter activities. Skiers, etc., currently use the RR underpass to cross Rte. 2. She thinks an overpass would be a tremendous benefit for winter recreation, keeping users from the RR tracks.

-Jane Herlacher (Lincoln resident): Get it on the agenda, don't let this opportunity pass. Likes the idea of keeping people away from the Sudbury River and flood plain. Used to be opposed to the idea of this project, but now supports it. Would like to consider a separate wildlife structure.

-Delia Kaye (Town of Concord): Likes the idea of the project from the cultural standpoint, there's lots of potential. Thinks the arboreal bridge is a 'cool' idea. But, not sure of the wildlife value, concern of directing wildlife to downtown area, agrees with Sudbury River recommendation.

-Dinny McIntyre (Town of Concord): Crosby's Corner is at 75% design stage, and stuck over new underpass for Sandy Pond Road. Thinks the idea of overpass at Goose Pond would cover the need for underpass and would save a lot of money for Crosby's Corner project if it happens. As for design, hopes for rural/pedestrian design, not a wide paved trail/crossing.

-Unknown (Lincoln resident): Concern that this is a "pie in the sky" idea since they've been waiting so long for Crosby's Corner. Only cares about the wildlife, thinks there are enough pedestrian paths.

-Jane H.: look at 20 to 40 vision plan for Rte. 2

-Patty Hecht (resident): talked at the selectman's meeting regarding the "scary" tunnel at Crosby's Corner, thinks this is a better alternative to look at (in combination with Crosby's Corner) for crossing Route 2. Concerned that its off the beaten path, where will people park if this is meant to be a destination?

-Allen F.: this is not meant to be a destination, and believes there is a big misconception over this. In the spirit of Thoreau, its part of the amble/saunter experience. Discussed that parking is not the priority when looking at such projects as the B.C. trail and this project.

(John Mullin response: this is complimentary, not an addition)

-Lydia Rogers (Concord resident, Wildlife Passage Task Force) – parking is not an issue for Bay Circuit Trail; wants to keep proposed wildlife underpass at Crosby's Corner (doesn't think this should replace); what is the cost?

(John Mullin response: UMass is having talks regarding the cost/benefit analysis)

-Dinny M.: did we look at the hourglass shaped structure presented by Richard Forman?

(Jack Ahern response: once wildlife data indicated that this structure was not needed, we scaled back the design)

-Delia K.: Just do the wildlife crossing at Crosby's Corner, use this as a pedestrian crossing.

-Harry Beter (Concord resident): NRC has just received funding to complete the Emerson-Thoreau Amble. What is the approximate width of structure? (Jack A.: 20')

-Matt Burne (Walden Woods Project): really pleased with the whole approach of this study. Surprised at how permeable Rte. 2 is to wildlife. Glad we now have data that shows the existing underpasses are working. Wants to reiterate the unique character of this internationally significant landscape, please do not do a generic pedestrian bridge.

-Jane Layton: Width of structure is a concern: animals may feel trapped, dogs chasing wildlife, etc. (John M. response: these designs are only for conceptualization purposes only)

-Avram Kality (Lincoln Resident): Likes the idea, preferred this location based on January workshop. Lincoln residents are concerned about the impacts of the Crosby's Corner, the entire process has impacted them a lot already. Would hate to have it delayed by even mentioning a connection to this project (Jack A. response: one of the top goals/recommendations is to not impact Crosby's Corner project in any way)

-Lydia R.: there is a big drive for people to cross Rte. 2, would like to see a structure so that people do not use the existing wildlife passages. They do not publicize these passages for the reason that they do not want people using them.

### **Conclusion**

At the conclusion of the meeting, meeting attendees were asked to provide final advice to the UMass team:

- Go for all the grants
- Animals not people (3 people gave this comment)
- Look at all the options for money
- Think about stewardship, where will this connection bring people
- Go to it!
- Sort things out with the DCR, meet with them separately before presenting the final report
- Put announcement of draft report availability in local newspapers

### **Next Steps**

The second Draft report will be submitted to the Advisory Board, be available in Concord and Lincoln public libraries and be posted on the web-site

([www.umass.edu/waldenpassage](http://www.umass.edu/waldenpassage)) for review after June 15. Comments can be submitted via email at [jfa@larp.umass.edu](mailto:jfa@larp.umass.edu), or via postal mail:

Jack Ahern,  
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**Please visit the project website for updates:**

[www.umass.edu/waldenpassage](http://www.umass.edu/waldenpassage)

***Attendees:***

**Public:** Lydia Rogers, Steve Winter, Patty Hecht, Harry Beter, Jane Layton, Jane Herlacher, Larry Kroin, Avram Kality, Diana Abrashkin, Nancy Burnham

**Project Advisory Board Members Present:** Matt Burne, Allen French, Delia Kaye, Dinny McIntyre

**UMass attendees:** Jack Ahern, Noah Charney, Scott Civjan, Beth Fenstermacher, Lee Jennings, Zenia Kotval, and John Mullin

Meeting Minutes by Beth Fenstermacher, UMass