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SouthField parkway extension could get spring start

The long awaited extension of the William Delahunt Parkway at the former South Weymouth Naval Air Station to Trotter Road could get underway next spring according to MassDOT project manager Gautum Sen.



Unfinished roads in SouthField will become busy intersections when the Bill Delahunt Parkway is completed. The street hockey rink at SouthField is visible to the right along the parkway.

Wicked Local photo/ Bradford Randall

The long awaited extension of the William Delahunt Parkway at the former South Weymouth Naval Air Station to Trotter Road could get underway next spring according to MassDOT project manager Gautum Sen.

Sen said a design for the project is 25 percent complete and the sketch should be done by December.

“The project is still in a design state,” Sen said during a public hearing Wednesday. “We will take your comments into consideration when completing the project design.”

Sen said the parkway extension, which is considered vital for attracting commercial entities to SouthField, would cost \$6.5 million and said it would be financed by MassDOT.

Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. project manager Tracie Lenhardt said the parkway extension would start approximately 100-feet west of the Calnan Road intersection and extend 3,000 feet to a traffic signal at Shea Memorial Drive.

“It will finally connect the parkway all the way through,” Lenhardt said.

Completion of the parkway would give people a 2.4 mile roadway into SouthField from Route 18 in Weymouth and to Hingham Street in Rockland.

Construction of the parkway’s first phase cost approximately \$42.5 million and was largely paid for with state aid and federal stimulus funds when it opened in August 2013.

This portion of the parkway has two passing lanes in each direction, sidewalks and a bicycle lane for people to access SouthField.

The new portion of the parkway to be built would have one travel lane in each direction, a bicycle lane and a buffer lane where visitors could park.

Lenhardt said the design allows for the parking lane to be removed and have an additional travel lane if development at SouthField increases traffic into the site.

“The parkway (design) has a landscaped median in the middle with one lane in each direction, a 5-foot bicycle lane and on street parking,” Lenhardt said. “When the second lane is needed it could become a second thoroughfare. We are proposing a single-land roundabout at the Memorial Grove in the future and then it will go to a two-lane roundabout.”

The SouthField Redevelopment Authority and LStar Management, which is responsible for developing the site, is proposing zoning changes that would allow upwards to 3 million square feet off commercial development at SouthField.

Weymouth Town Council is reviewing the proposed zoning which would create a neighborhood sub district on Shea Memorial Drive near the closed White Street entrance to accommodate 1,000 homes for people age 55 and over.

The proposed zoning changes would create an overlay district where a town center could accommodate a variety of shops, restaurants, bars, a hockey rink and stadium to seat upwards to 10,000 people.

LStar additionally hopes to create a discovery district to accommodate a medical or bio-science firm if councilors approve the zoning changes.

District 6 Councilor Michael Smart said he likes the option of having an additional travel lane available when future development increases traffic but he questioned whether the traffic signal where the parkway adjoins Shea Memorial Drive should be replaced with a roundabout.

“The state started eliminating most roundabouts in the 1950’s,” Smart said. “We have had experiences with roundabouts in Columbian Square. Is the (proposed) roundabout designed to handle the traffic volumes you expect?”

VHB senior traffic manager Erin Thompason said the curbing around the roundabout could accommodate four travel lanes.

“We could do some curbing modification to go to four lanes,” Thompson said.

LStar Managing partner Kyle Corkum said he is proud of how MassDOT and its project planners are trying to get the parkway completed.

“We benefit from this road and we are proud of the work you have done,” Corkum said. “We have people who are anticipating future growth.”

Corkum said the ideal setup for the parkway would allow for people to have access to a planned parking garage where they can access the planned town center.

“When the day comes when there are traffic concerns we can increase the lanes from the off street parking,” Corkum said. “This is evidence of a talented team that is working together. We are proud of this situation and would not dream of getting any more money from the state.”

Weymouth District 2 Councilor Thomas J. Lacey said he is impressed with the parkway extension design.

“Is the funding for it 100 percent sure,?” Lacey said.

Gautman said the state funding is guaranteed.

Weymouth council president Patrick O’Connor said he is impressed with how a parking lane on the parkway extension could be utilized for travel if traffic volumes increase.

“The design looks excellent and it is very creative to use a parking lane as a potential lane,” O’Connor said. “I think it is unique and I have never seen that before. I want to thank MassDOT for making this project a priority and for the aggressive timeline for getting this done.”

Rockland resident Mary Parsons said the design includes a water retention pond in the Rockland portion of SouthField to handle surface water runoff and she would like to see it relocated.

“Is there enough room for it to be moved up the parkway,?” Parsons said. “It is grassland and I like to see it kept as grassland.”

Lenhardt said project planners are studying the basin where the proposed retention pond would be put.

“That is an area most talked about,” Lenhardt said. “The proposed retention pond is not in the final FEIR.” (final environmental impact report)

Lenhardt said officials with the state’s National Heritage & Endangered Species program did not have initial objections with locating the retention pond in the grasslands.

“We are looking at moving it and it may not be an issue,” Lenhardt said.

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