



Memo

To: Acme Township Board of Trustees and Planning Commission
From: Sharon E. Vreeland, Township Manager
Date: 01/17/11
Re: VGT-Phase I SUP #2009-1P Status Update

A letter dated January 6, 2011 from Beckett & Raeder/OHM containing feedback about the 11/2010 version of the Traffic Impact Study (TIS) was provided to the applicant. \

On January 11, 2011, a meeting was held at MDOT headquarters in Lansing. Attending were the applicant and their traffic consultant from Progressive AE, MDOT representatives from the Northern Region and from the Lansing units where the VGT traffic-related proposals will be reviewed in detail (most notably the signalization and roundabout units), township representatives including me, Jay Zollinger and Jeff Jocks, John Iacoangeli from Beckett & Raeder and Steve Dearing from OHM. The meeting lasted about 2 ½ hours. The group is working on notes that memorialize a common understanding of what was discussed and next steps which I will forward when complete. In the meantime, here is a very brief overview (which could be subject to some change if my understanding varies from the group consensus significantly);

- The approved VGT Conceptual site plan shows four access points on M-72 East, with one being a full-access “main” drive and three being for right-in/right-out movements only. The applicant asked a few months ago if consideration would be given to what I call $\frac{3}{4}$ access: right-out/right-in/left-in (no left-out). MDOT and the township indicated we would review a comparative analysis of both treatments. The TIS as submitted contained only an analysis of the $\frac{3}{4}$ access option. MDOT Lansing officials indicated that they are not open to this option, so at this time it appears that those access points would be right-in/right-out only as depicted on the Conceptual site plan.
- MDOT Lansing engineers appear to potentially be favoring the use of context-appropriate roundabout design to potential signalization for the M-72/Lautner intersection and the M-72/main entrance intersection. I understand this to be based largely on a projection that signalization would require dual-left turns or more to handle anticipated project buildout traffic flows, and that such a configuration is not desirable.
- With either signalization or roundabouts, there was significant discussion about the use of a median to separate the east and westbound lanes of M-72 between US 31 and Lautner to control traffic flow (prevent inappropriate left turns and u-turns). There was also discussion under signalized designs about using “Michigan lefts” as an alternative to direct left turn options.
- One question MDOT asked was whether Acme would tend to view the area between US 31 and Lautner as one where a 55 mph speed should be maintained, or where we might prefer to see slower speeds. Design is very much tied to this question. I stated

that because we value placemaking, and traffic calming headed into the US 31 intersection that I believe the township would prefer to encourage lower speeds along this stretch.

- Several times all parties expressed concerns about the future stresses on the US 31/M-72 intersection. I had a sense that currently there are no hypothetical solutions to this question.
- MDOT stressed that under new state laws, design for improvements to the M-72 Corridor must be of a “complete streets” nature. I mentioned that this rose to the top as a township preference during the December 20 Planning Commission meeting as well.

In addition, on January 6 MDOT facilitated a meeting between MDOT, the township and representatives from BATA, Antrim County Transportation and the Kalkaska Public Transit Authority. All three transit agencies have expressed strong interest in having a conveniently-located transfer station in Acme Township. Apparently, in the short-term this can effectively be as simple as a waiting room in an existing facility with room for busses to park. Several of the agencies feel that it would be mutually beneficial if Meijer made space for a small waiting room for this purpose, as people could then shop while they wait for their next bus. We also discussed other possible locations within the township. I have mentioned the transit authority interest to my counterpart on the applicant’s team so that he in turn may pass along the interest to Meijer. Perhaps we can start a discussion.

Beckett & Raeder’s preliminary review of the overall VGT Phase I application as submitted on November 29, 2010 will be ready later this week and distributed to all parties.

The township is also in the process of contracting with an engineer to evaluate the current capacity of the relevant portions of the regional sanitary sewer system to handle anticipated new sanitary flows from a Meijer store. I am currently project an answer to this question to be available in about a month.