

CONLEY

ASSOCIATES

December 29, 2010

Ms. Anne Kitchell, LEED AP
Sr. Environmental Planner
Horsley Witten Group
90 Route 6A
Sandwich, MA 02563

Re: Peer Review Traffic Impact Study
BJ's Wholesale Club
Seekonk, Massachusetts

Dear Ms. Kitchell:

Conley Associates, Inc. was asked to review the Traffic Impact Study (TIS) prepared by RAB Professional Engineers from September 2010 for the proposed BJ's Wholesale Club at Seekonk Crossings in Seekonk, Massachusetts. Conley Associates, Inc. has received and reviewed each of the sections of the TIS and offers the following comments:

1. Study Area

The study area included in the TIS only includes internal roadways. Typically a municipality is concerned with the impacts a project will have on the public infrastructure. The TIS indicates that there is more than adequate capacity on Highland Street (Route 6) to accommodate the new traffic from this development. The TIS uses this as its basis for only studying the internal driveways. By definition, internal driveways are more of a site operation concern and experience much lower traffic volumes than the adjacent roadway. Conley Associates, Inc. is not aware of past studies that have been completed on Highland Street in order to confirm that the infrastructure is in place to accommodate the additional traffic associated with the redevelopment. The Town of Seekonk will have to determine if they are willing to accept the assumption that the project will not have an impact on Highland Street and therefore, not require the analysis of the Site Driveway intersections with Highland Street or other offsite intersections. This is a concern because there will be an increase in the number of trips in to and out of the Site Driveway intersections with Highland Street due to the BJs and gas station (should one be constructed).

2. Existing Conditions

A. Seasonality

The TIS contains no seasonality discussion. Typically, traffic volumes are adjusted to an average month condition. Although August traffic volumes in Seekonk may be above average, there is not any data provided to verify the appropriateness of the traffic volumes.

B. Sight Distance

The site distances were reviewed and recommendations were made to create clearer sight lines. This is a very important safety improvement. The scope provided to Conley Associates, Inc. did not include verification of sight lines in the field.

3. Future Site Conditions

A. Gas Station Circulation

The TIS indicates that in the future a BJ's fueling station is proposed on the landscaped island near the Pier 1 Imports. The trip generation for this portion of the site was included in the TIS, but the fueling stations are not shown on the site plan included in the TIS. In the event that this is part of the proposed redevelopment (we have been informed that it is not at this time), the interaction of the entry and exit to the fueling positions with the access roadways will need to be reviewed in detail in order to reduce conflicts at the internal intersection I-1. This facility is not shown on the site plan included with the TIS, so the circulation cannot be reviewed at this time.

B. ITE vs Local Data

The TIS indicates that the ITE rates for a wholesale club were reviewed, however, those rates are not included in the TIS to see how those rates vary from the rates at the Atwood Avenue BJ's facility. In addition, the TIS does not explain how the Atwood facility is an appropriate facility to use to determine trip generation for this site. Typically if you are going to use locally collected data, it would be because the site is the same size and located in the same demographic as the proposed store or located on a street with the same traffic volume. No such comparison is provided.

C. Passby Trips

The TIS also includes a discussion of the trip generation of the BJs regarding passby trips, but states that it was assumed that no passby trips were assumed in this study for the BJs. This is an appropriate treatment of internal intersections as all trips passby and primary would be new trips at internal intersections. A passby trip is a vehicle already on the local roadways (Highland Street in this instance) that in the future will visit the proposed use, and then return to the local roadway in the same direction as originally traveled. Only if intersection operations analysis were performed at Highland Street intersections would passby trips be considered.

D. Internal Capture Trips

The TIS indicates that previous studies show that 96 percent of the trip generation of a BJs gas station are BJs members that are also shopping at the wholesale club. The TIS also indicates that only 50 percent of the gas station trips were assumed to be 'cross trips' or 'internal capture trips' (incorrectly labeled as passby trips in the TIS). We agree this is a conservative estimate. The use of the 96 percent cross trip rate for the gas station customers would accurately lessen the impact should the gas station be included as part of the redevelopment in the future.

4. Future Traffic Volumes

A. Growth Rates

There is no source provided to the one percent per year growth rate. In recent years, traffic has actually decreased in most areas, although some isolated areas are showing traffic growth. Typically, research is conducted into MassDOT traffic volumes which will indicate the annual traffic growth nearby. Without conducting research, it is impossible to know if one percent per year is appropriate for this area. In addition, retail plaza site trips are not typically increased to account for general area traffic growth. Because only internal intersections were analyzed, the use of a growth rate was not appropriate, but would be appropriate on Highland Street volumes if those intersections were analyzed.

B. Horizon Year

The typical horizon time frame for large retail development is five years. As is stated in the TIS, the BJ's fueling facility may not be constructed within their three year time frame. A five year horizon should be used if a growth rate is to be applied to off site traffic volumes.

C. Existing Uses Relocated Trip Generation

The TIS does not indicate how they have accounted for the trip generation for the uses that are relocating into the expanded building. There are no trip generation networks provided in the TIS in order for us to verify that the future year baseline and Build conditions are completed correctly.

D. Baseline Condition

The analysis results in the TIS are only presented for the Existing and Build conditions. The absence of a 'No Build' or 'Baseline' condition makes it difficult to determine whether the changes in level of service are due to background growth, relocated existing trips, or the additional traffic expected to visit the BJs.

E. On Site Mitigation

The TIS proposes a modification of the four way stop intersection at the easterly site access driveway to allow the southbound movement to move freely. Although this modification results in the exiting traffic approaching operating at LOS F, this recommendation would

address the concern raised about vehicles backing up to the signalized intersection. The assessment that traffic would likely divert to the westerly driveway is likely true.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The conclusion of the TIS provides the following statement “The results of the operational analyses completed indicate that the estimated traffic during the peak periods resulting from the proposed BJ’s Wholesale Club project will have a minimal effect on overall traffic operations along Route 6.” Because the TIS did not analyze any intersections along Route 6 this statement has no basis. In fact, the TIS only provides analysis and discussion of the impacts on the site’s internal intersections and it is not possible to evaluate the impact BJs will have on those intersections due to the lack of a Baseline condition which would account for relocated existing trips and the inaccurately applied growth rate.

Conley Associates, Inc. recommends the following additional analysis be conducted in order to more accurately determine the impact of this project to the Town of Seekonk:

1. Collect traffic volumes at the Site Driveway intersections with Highland Street.
2. Provide a network figure showing the changed trip distribution due to the relocated existing stores and a second network figure showing the trip generation of the new use(s).
3. Conduct intersection operations analysis for the Existing, Baseline, and Build conditions at these intersections.

Very truly yours,



Jennifer Conley, P.E., PTOE
President