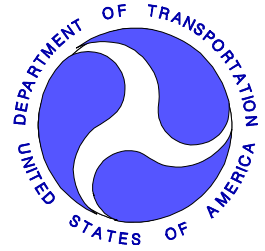


Maine Department of Transportation
I-395 / Route 9 Connector Road Study
November 15, 2000
Public Advisory Committee Meeting



Happy Holidays
from the Study Team
to all of the PAC members

Contact Susanna Liller at 1-800-370-2458, extension 112
Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, November 15
Holbrook School
7:00-9:00 pm
PAC Meeting #3

Public Advisory Committee (PAC):

Joseph Baldacci
Allan Bromley
Rick Bronson
Joan Brooks
Rodney Buswell
Ellen Campbell
Manley DeBeck, Jr.
Sandi Duchesne
Keith Guttormsen
Ed Harrow
Linda Johns
Scott A. Leach
Stan Moses
Melody Knadler
Charles Plummer
Roger Raymond
Jim Ring

Not in attendance:

Joseph Baldacci
Al Skolfield
Peter Waas

Study Team:

Andrew Bickmore
Terry Blair, Sr.
Richard Bostwick
Bill Coombs
Mari Costanzo
Michael Davies
Dale Doughty
Philip A. Dunn
Raymond Faucher
Bill Leet
Susanna Liller
Jim Linker
Dale Mayo
Fred Michaud
William Plumptre
Redington Robbins

Not in attendance:

Andrew Bickmore
Terry Blair, Sr.
Bill Coombs
Dale Doughty
Philip A. Dunn
Bill Leet

Susanna Liller welcomed everyone to the third PAC meeting and asked for introductions around the room. She told everyone that the last ten to fifteen minutes of the meeting would be reserved for public comment.

Susanna reported on updates since the last PAC meeting. They were:

1. Bion Foster's resignation from the PAC
2. Al Skolfield had called to report he would be absent at this meeting
3. General response to changing the meeting time had been negative, therefore the 7pm-9pm time slot would stand

Mike Davies announced the cancellation of the December 18th PAC meeting. Susanna and the PAC clarified that a schedule had been tentatively laid out for 2001 and that the next meeting would be held on January 17th.

Ed Harrow questioned the rule on missing PAC meetings. Susanna responded that the PAC had decided that no member should miss more than two meetings without calling in ahead of time. Mike added that sending a proxy is acceptable.

Mike asked if everyone had reviewed the crash history and if there were any questions. Ed said he had missed getting the information at the previous meeting.

Bill Plumpton: I have a question. The crash data is specific to Route 46. Is there a need for crash information anywhere else?

Mike Davies: Routes 9 and 1A will have some analysis, but three intersections brought attention to Route 46. Specifically, there are vertical and horizontal deficiencies along Mountain Road and steps are being taken through the Bureau of Planning and Safety for possible upgrades. Truck growth is responsible for 14% of accidents in this area, which is twice the state average.

Bill: But there will be a study of Routes 9 and 1A?

Mike: Yes. The data is being gathered and will be given to the PAC.

Charles Plummer: This is Route 9 from 46 to Brewer?

Mike: Yes. Slightly up from the intersection with Route 46.

Ed Harrow: Do you factor into your analysis vehicle size and things like hazardous materials?

Mike: Yes.

Mike and Bill clarified that data exists now for 1999, and that data is being gathered for current conditions and projections for the year 2030.

Mike went on to define the perceived needs of the study as the following:

1. Safety
2. Capacity
3. System Linkage

He asked if anyone had others to add.

Manley DeBeck: Is the department looking at increases in traffic due to development?

Mike: Yes. Future development is figured in to the traffic models.

Ed: How do you factor in the effect of traffic on residential areas? As in quality of life changes?

Mike: We consider economic and social impacts on the community.

Bill Plumpton: Quality of life really breaks down into smaller pieces, like noise, air quality and land use. I suggest we table that discussion for later.

Linda Johns: We should consider the possibility of some transportation solutions moving traffic away from businesses. For example, Route 1A traffic has helped businesses so far.

Mike Davies: That is part of the economic impact that has to be studied.

Stan Moses: The purpose of highways is to get people to destinations. How do compatibility of corridors and destination issues fit in to the picture?

Mike: That comes back to system linkage.

Bill broke in to try to explain what issues they were looking for the PAC to raise at this time. He identified three examples.

1. A PAC member might know of a Phish concert that takes place every year and should be considered in any transportation planning.
2. A PAC member might know of a particular pond that demands attention to water quality.

3. A PAC member might be aware of an economic development impediment that the study team has not discovered.

Jim Linker commented that a very specific area is being looked at, and that everyone needs to be mindful of the impacts of new construction on areas farther out. Mike responded that this project must compliment future projects and Roger Raymond added that this issue fits well under system linkage.

Roger: What isn't well covered under the three categories is quality of life. I think we need to emphasize this in any economic development planning.

Bill: Protection of the environment can be listed as a need if the problem already exists and a transportation solution might help to fix it.

Sandi Duchesne: If preservation of the environment is a need, then why not preservation of a community?

Mike: What problem already exists?

Sandi: Road crossing safety.

Joan Brooks jumped in to ask people to be wary of the NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) syndrome, i.e., that changes will occur no matter what and they will have to be handled.

Mike responded that from the traffic data already, change had occurred and had created problems that need to be solved.

Richard Bostwick tried to clarify what the PAC was saying here by pointing out that transportation plans need to be compatible with any other town plans.

Roger Raymond: Can you clarify the term capacity?

Mike: The traffic definition is volume over capacity, or the V/C ratio, i.e. the ability to handle more traffic efficiently. The ratio has to be less than 1.

Alan Bromley: Does capacity include the condition of roads and the cost of maintenance?

Mike: That falls under safety as well as capacity.

Charles Plummer: The town (of Eddington) pays for some of the maintenance.

Stan Moses: Is the average ratio taken over long periods or are shorter periods considered too?

Mike: It's taken on an hourly basis.

Stan: Because major deficiencies will show up under high volumes of traffic. Does the methodology account for this?

Ray Faucher stepped in to explain that it is not cost efficient to design for peak volumes. He said that roads are generally designed for a twenty-year life. Mike added that roads are essentially over-designed for the beginning of their life so they can wear over the years.

Susanna Liller suggested moving on at this point but added that any ideas that came up later could be put on the list of needs.

Roger Raymond: I'd like to have an opportunity at some point to add, "enhance existing traffic conditions" to our list.

Mike Davies: We can add that now.

Ed Harrow: I'd like to follow up and say that if quality of life fits in *under* one of the other categories, it may not get the weight it deserves.

Mike: The needs should be a litmus test under the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) process. They have to be measurable to determine if the needs have been met. It's hard to measure quality of life.

Bill Plumpton: What is the quality of life problem that exists now and needs to be fixed?

Ed: Noise is not under the big three.

Susanna: We may be able to clear some of this confusion up if we move on to the next step.

Bill: Before we start having fun drawing with markers on maps and defining transportation alternatives, we need to prioritize the problems we want fixed. The reason for this is that we may find out that we can't build an alternative that fixes everything, given the environmental impact involved and/or the high cost of the project. At that point we would have to fall back on a less-than-perfect transportation solution.

Susanna asked the PAC to begin brainstorming a Priority Elements list. She said there was to be no judging of other people's ideas. The PAC came up with the following list.

Priority Elements- Initial List:

1. Protect rural character of the neighborhoods on Route 46. (Charles Plummer)
2. Create bicycle and pedestrian access. (Sandi Duchesne)
3. Minimize impacts on developing areas. (Jim Linker)
4. Minimize impacts on unique natural features (Jim Linker)
5. Create safer travel from 395 to Route 9. (Scott Leach)
6. Create more efficient travel from 395 to Route 9. (Scott Leach)
7. Minimize negative economic effects to existing businesses. (Linda Johns)
8. Protect deeryards and bird nesting habitats. (Sandi Duchesne)
9. Accomplish true regional connectivity. (Rick Bronson)
10. Protect existing and *proposed* commercial areas. (Joan Brooks)
11. Protect Holbrook Pond. (Linda Johns)
12. Consider long-range patterns and travel demands. (Jim Linker)
13. Make sure not to divide neighborhoods with highways, reducing accessibility. (Alan Bromley)
14. Preserve cemeteries and historic buildings. (Linda Johns)
15. Minimize noise in proximity to residential areas. (Ed Harrow)
16. Make sure any building is compatible with proposed East/West highway plans. (Scott Leach)
17. Find balance between preserving natural areas and providing access to transportation- i.e., limited access. (Stan Moses)
18. Find balance between natural wetlands and needs of the people. (Charles Plummer)
19. Maximize utility received from investment. (Rick Bronson)
20. Enhance overall travel conditions and travel routes. (Roger Raymond)
21. Provide emergency access. (Joan Brooks)
22. Make sure benefits are worth the expenditures. (Stan Moses)
23. Connect Bangor with the Bar Harbor area. (Richard Bostwick)
24. Connections at Routes 1A, 9 and 395 must be made safer and easier. (Sandi Duchesne)

Ellen Campbell questioned the need to look at the abandoned railroad going from Brewer to Calais via Ellsworth.

Sandi Duchesne: There is potential for a bike trail there.

Ed Harrow: Why are we only looking as far as Ellsworth?

Keith Guttormsen: The rail also goes down to Eastport.

Mike Davies: The study area is from Brewer to Eddington because we want to take things in manageable bits. Extending the study area would extend the study time significantly.

Bill Plumpton broke in at this point to say that Mike and Susanna would condense the PAC's list while he explained a few more things. Bill then passed around a handout with the table of contents for an Environmental Assessment (EA). He asked if there were any questions.

Stan Moses: Does the no-build option consider alternative uses for the time and money saved?

Bill: We will assess the Return on Investment, so in a sense, any resources saved here will simply go to competing projects around the state.

Ray Faucher: The emphasis needs to be on relative gains. The no-build option gives us a good base for comparison. Also, in talking about cost and construction issues, there is always the possibility of building in stages while amassing more money.

Ed Harrow: Everything seems to be included on this EA list. I guess our earlier discussion was just a learning exercise for us.

Stan Moses: What does "Determine environmental justice" mean?

Bill: There was a presidential order in 1997 that said we have to consider equally and fairly the impact on minorities and low-income people.

With no more questions from the PAC, Susanna turned attention to the list she and Mike had synthesized.

Priority Elements- Synthesized List:

1. Environmental
2. Safety
3. Access
4. Travel efficiency
5. Neighborhood integration
6. Long-range, comprehensive planning
7. Financial
8. Connectivity
9. Economic Development
10. Historic/Archeological preservation

- Stan Moses: Do these items meet the concerns of the engineers?
- Mike: I think we can accommodate all these needs.
- Susanna: Is the railroads issue included in this list?
- Mike: It's in the long-range, comprehensive planning. Now, is there anything on the EA list that's not on our list?
- Joan Brooks: We could have saved 45 minutes if we'd just had the list to begin with.
- Susanna: The exercise is done just to make sure we meet all of your needs.
- Richard Bostwick: The EA list is the things that might be affected by this study, not what you consider to be important. Your list must be integrated with the Army Corps permit process under Section 404. They will ask why we're doing this and we will present these reasons.
- Bill Plumpton: Now, are there any strong feelings? Are all of these factors created equally?
- Ellen Campbell: If you're asking could I drop any of these factors, no, I couldn't.

Susanna explained that none of the factors would be dropped; they would simply be prioritized. She then introduced the dot method. Each PAC member was given four dots to place next to items on the list of needs. Susanna elaborated, saying that dots could go anywhere and that anyone could put more than one dot next to the same item. Joan Brooks asked for clarification on the difference between access and connectivity on the list. Mike responded that connectivity deals with the regional structure, and access specifically means getting on and off the road. The PAC then had the opportunity to place their dots.

Results of Prioritizing- Dot Method

- Environmental- 8
- Safety- 15
- Access- 2
- Travel efficiency- 11
- Neighborhood integration- 9
- Long-range, comprehensive planning- 6
- Financial- 0
- Connectivity- 5
- Economic development- 8
- Historical/archeological preservation- 0

The top vote getters were:

1. Safety
2. Travel efficiency
3. Neighborhood integration

Bill: Is everybody okay on needs? We'll lock these away and bring them out later.

Ed Harrow: When we talk about environmental impacts, are we talking about natural or social?

Bill: The answer is yes. We consider all of the impacts equally.

The DOT is working on a better map of the study area and the study team is completing research on natural and social environmental data. We will present this information to the PAC when we have it and we will ask for your input.

Rick Bronson: Can we contest the study area?

Bill: If you have significant objections we'll consider them.

Rick: The area does not go far enough to the east.

Mike Davies: As I said before, we have to consider things in manageable bits. To include Ellsworth would take this from a two-year to an eight-year study.

Rick: I think the solution is off this map.

Alan Bromley: What about including I-95 west of Penobscot?

Mike: The boundary is the Penobscot river.

Alan: Yes, but what about an alternative connection of Route 9 to 95?

Mike: That's been considered.

Alan: Can't the PAC consider it too?

Alan and Mike agreed to continue discussing that option over email.

Charles Plummer: Has MDOT ever projected a route from 395 to Route 9?

Mike: It's been mentioned internally, but we've never considered it publicly.

Ray Faucher: We've never studied it extensively.

Charles: Was there a study done when I-95 was built into Brewer?

Ray: Not that I'm aware of, but I'll look.

At this point Joan Brooks expressed concern over not getting to everything on the agenda and commented that she thought the meeting time slot should extend to three hours. Bill replied that the agendas are always ambitious and went on to lay out the agenda for the next meeting.

Bill said that at the next meeting there would be feature identification on the maps and conceptual boundaries considering natural and social issues. He added that there would hopefully be more traffic projection data and that the PAC would add on to what the study team presented. Bill finally mentioned that the DOT is in the process of developing a project-specific website.

Susanna officially concluded the PAC portion of the meeting and asked the public for comments. The rules: one question at a time, and say your name and where you're from.

Judy Sullivan: I'm from Eddington and I'd like to know where the people on the PAC live.

It was determined that two live on Route 9, two live on Route 46, and zero live on Route 1A.

Jack Healy: I'm from Holden and I'm upset that preservation of open areas is not on the priority list. We are going to end up rewarding the developers instead of the preservers.

Mike Davies: Doesn't that come under quality of life?

Jack: I'm not sure. It probably goes under environmental, but it wasn't mentioned.

Fred Michaud: Farmland is an element in the parameters Bill laid out.

Jack: Correct. But I wish the PAC had come up with it.

Sandi Duchesne: I think that falls under rural character.

- Jack: It could be interpreted that way, but it was never stated explicitly. Also, Route 46, which is listed in preserving neighborhoods, does not include everything.
- Susanna: Let's change Route 46 to protection of neighborhoods in the entire study area.
- Brian: I'm from Holden. The discussion of the study area sounds like it's drawing the box tighter and tighter and it should be extended both north and east.
- Jack: I want to say to Mr. Plumpton that I was offended when he called it "fun" to draw with markers lines that might go through my kitchen.
- Bill: I'm sorry. I mean no disrespect and no offense.
- Candace Healy: We have heard about the quality of life concerns on Route 46, but people knowingly built their homes there on state funded roads. We did not and had no way of anticipating this.
- Mike Davies: We do not mean to focus only on Route 46. It is not the driving force. I wish I could alleviate all impacts here. But there are always impacts.
- Candace: I agree, but we have to look at the big picture, not go for a quick solution.
- Mike: This is not going to be a quick solution. The communities and agencies have to support whatever decision we make. We also have to deal with these problems in manageable bits, i.e. what the state can afford. We could expand the study area, but then the money would go way out of bounds.
- Candace: I'm just saying that in 1975 when they were designing 395, there were issues even then about the problems of ending 95 in Holden. There just can't be a quick and easy solution.
- Mike: Agreed.
- Susanna: To clarify what you're saying, there have been suggestions to expand the study area to the north and east. That is being noted.

Susanna asked for any more questions and there were none. She officially adjourned the meeting.