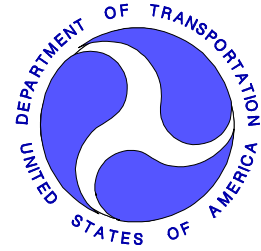


**Maine Department of Transportation
I-395 / Route 9 Transportation Study**
February 28, 2001
Public Advisory Committee Meeting



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

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, February 28th

Holbrook School

7:00-9:00 pm

PAC Meeting #5

Public Advisory Committee (PAC):

Allan Bromley
Rick Bronson
Joan Brooks
Rodney Buswell
Ellen Campbell
Manley DeBeck, Jr.
Sandy Duchesne
Keith Guttormsen
Ed Harrow
Linda Johns
Scott A. Leach
Stan Moses
Melody Knadler
Gerry Palmer
Charles Plummer
Jim Ring
Al Skolfield

Study Team:

Richard Bostwick
Mari Costanzo
Raymond Faucher
Susanna Liller
William Plumpton
Redington Robbins

Not in Attendance

Andrew Bickmore
Terry Blair, Sr.
Bill Coombs
Dale Doughty
Phillip A. Dunn
Bill Leet
Jim Linker
Dale Mayo
Fred Michaud

Not in attendance:

Roger Raymond

Susanna Liller welcomed everyone to the 5th PAC meeting and started with announcements. She reminded everyone that the last 10-15 minutes would be set aside for public comments and informed everyone that Roger Raymond had called to say he would not be at the meeting. Jim Ring then introduced city councilman Gerry Palmer as a new PAC member replacing Joseph Baldacci.

Susanna went over one change to the agenda; the discussion on preliminary alternatives development would be moved to the end of the meeting, time permitting.

Bill Plumpton reviewed the results of the interagency meeting. The agencies met on February 13th and four PAC members were present, including: Charles Plummer, Rick Bronson, Sandy Duchesne and Manley DeBeck. The Study Team presented Needs, Purpose and natural and social features to the resource agencies. The agencies had no issues with the information developed to date. The Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) will be developing a draft ACOE purpose statement that will be included in the Draft and Final Environmental Assessment.

Rick Bronson commented that at the agency meeting the Study Team made an effort to sell its position, while in PAC meetings Study Team members are always trying to get the PAC to think smaller. He said it was useful to see that shift.

Bill moved on to talk about where the PAC is in the NEPA process. The PAC is moving into the development phase where alternatives will be developed. The one thing that remains to be done first is to hold the public scoping and informational meeting. The process will speed up at this point.

Bill mentioned a few corrections to the Needs information presented at the previous meeting. First, there is no gap in system linkage between Routes 1A and 9. There is actually an overlap within Brewer and Bangor at the Chamberlain Bridge and Main Street in Bangor. However, it is not an ideal linkage, as these principal arterial routes function more like local roads due to the volume of traffic. There is an opportunity to realign or reallocate some roads designated as part of the national highway system to different locations.

Stan Moses: That overlap doesn't get double funding?

Ray Faucher: No. Different classifications mean different pots of money. If we can get more national highway, we get more federal dollars.

Jim Ring: If we have a change in classification or inclusion of the national highway system, does that have funding implications for the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)?

Ray: I'm not sure. But I would probably say no. One of the handicaps of the national highway system is the roads have to be built to a higher standard, which costs more money.

Bill: Because of the change, we need to make one change to the purpose statement. We said, "... complete the national highway system." We need to change "complete" to "improve". We heard that at the interagency meeting.

The second correction Bill made involved the number of high crash locations. It was originally thought there were five, but that has been revised to four. The four locations are: the intersection of Routes 46 and 9, a section of Route 46 from Mann Hill Road to Holden/Eddington town line, the intersections of Routes 9 and 178, and the intersection of Route 1A and Copeland Hill Road.

Ed Harrow: Almost every high crash area is a place where roads come together. Doesn't that naturally imply more crashes?

Ray: A rate factor compares each crash area to similar locations within the state.

Ed: Is there any weight given to the severity of accident?

Ray: No.

Stan Moses: Did you look at in-town locations in Brewer?

Bill: We looked at everything in the study area.

Ray: I think we looked mainly at main routes.

Bill summarized the information concerning the third need for this study: existing and future traffic congestion. Bill passed out and reviewed a summary of the existing and future traffic volumes in the study area.

Allan Bromley: How did you come up with those numbers?

Ray: We worked with BACTS to project average annual growth based on past numbers.

Sandy Duchesne: This is outside of the BACTS number area, so Mike (Mike Morgan of MDOT's Planning Division) worked up his numbers with the state model and then compared them to our model and then we also compared that against actual figures from the last ten years or so. It's a rough science, but it passed the straight face test.

Jim Ring: A 1.5 to 2% traffic volume increase sounds right. But I see one point that looks like it's less than 1%. Why?

Ray: I think that a lot of the traffic that's coming westbound on Route 9 does not continue on Route 9. Route 46 draws the traffic away.

Sandy: I think the 2,000-car difference on Route 9 before Route 178 is wrong.

Allan Bromley: Would all engineers come up with these same levels of service?

Bill: Ideally, yes.

Stan Moses: From the 30th hour in 2030, if we back out the traffic from I-395 to Route 9, what happens to Route 1A?

Bill: If you take out the change in traffic- the level of service is as it exists today. If you take out more, you'll see improvements on the 1998 numbers.

Ray: Future traffic on Rt. 46 (5400 vehicles) shows that Route 1A is going to have unacceptable levels of service if no improvements are undertaken, especially between I-395 and the Route 46 intersection.

Richard Bostwick: Looking at improving the connectivity, how much impact would we really have on 1A east of Route 46? Is that something we're looking at trying to improve?

Bill: That's looking at solutions. Right now, we're just defining problems.

Ray: Route 1A is growing significantly. Even if we had capacity to better Route 9, we also realize that Route 1A towards Ellsworth will still need future improvements.

Keith Guttormsen: Isn't that one of the reasons they proposed opening the Calais branch again?

Bill: The Calais branch has too many unfixed variables. I don't know that a Calais branch solution would fix both of these.

Ed Harrow: I'd like to point out that the Long Island Expressway was designed based on the 30th hour and that is a huge parking lot. How do we know that the 30th hour is a reasonable number for Year 2030 guesses?

Ray explained that the engineers do the best they can with the information that exists. The Maine Mall changed expected conditions when that was built. On the Waterville-Winslow connector, the traffic has not materialized. MDOT works with BACTS and also

tries to look at any extraneous factors, like the exchange rate with Canada. The 2030-year is used now, but in the future there may be a different number.

Charles Plummer: How much of an impact does highway signage have on directing traffic up or down 1A as opposed to letting it head towards Calais?

Ray: In heavy tourist corridors there may be a big effect. In other areas there may be very little effect.

Charles: Don't the signs on 395 direct you to Ellsworth?

Bill: There's a choice to travel on either Route 9 or Route 1A and the sign gives distances.

Stan Moses: During the planning phase we're using the 30th hour as 2030. What do you use when you get to the design stage?

Ray: When MDOT develops construction plans, they are based on a 20-year design that will probably be different than the 2030 traffic figures that are being developed for the study.

Stan: So we could end up designing a highway for numbers less than what we see here.

Ray: We design 20 years ahead, but that doesn't mean the road will be at capacity in 20 years.

Allan Bromley: How do you get to the number of lanes required?

Ray: The rule of thumb is if Design Hour Volume (DHV) is greater than 2,000, then we construct a 4-lane road. That changes if the road is a limited access facility- then the DHV may approach 2800 vehicles before consideration of 4-lane roadway. We're going to do that in the next phase-model based on DHV numbers in 2030.

Rick Bronson: I think the 2030 Annual Average Daily Traffic numbers are still insufficient where they measure Route 9 west of Route 46. My guess is there is no consideration of traffic from Edmonton.

Ray: I think the possibility of a crossing at Calais is being considered in these numbers.

Rick: I could see these numbers doubling.

Ray: I think you're right, but it's a lot of speculation and we don't have anything that can support that. The agencies would hang us if we tried to do things based on speculation.

Rick: I assume these numbers are based on historic Maine-based growth.

Sandy: Mike Morgan would be better able to explain some of these numbers. I don't think he's as optimistic as Rick, but certainly traffic from the Maritimes will come this way.

Rick: I think we are still simply counting the southbound component and not the westbound.

Sandy: Maybe it would be worth having Mike come to talk to us.

Linda Johns: I have a question on the projected AADT. Why on Route 9 is there such a big difference west of 46 if it doesn't include 178?

Bill: That was my guess. But we'll get Mike down to clear this up.

Jim Ring: To the extent that Rick is right, I think it further strengthens the case for this connector. If the numbers are even higher, that just makes it a better idea. We just have to make sure we have sufficient Right-Of-Way purchased.

Bill: Let's move on to talk about the conceptual study area boundaries. The Study Team believes that the *physical solution* lies within the boundaries shown on our map.

Charles Plummer: I don't believe that west of the intersection at Route 9 and Route 46 is a logical solution. I think the solution is further to the east than is shown on the map.

Bill: Comment noted. And if we find a solution outside that boundary, DOT will go back and develop the information on the natural and social features of the areas before we go forward with further alternative development.

Ed Harrow: But it seems if he's right, the only way we're going to get there is if we go through the development of alternatives. That's a problem.

Bill: This is a horse and cart situation. Do we define an area first, or find solutions first? We've found that defining an area first works best. That way, when alternatives are developed, we can see the preliminary impacts right away. To develop alternatives prior to having an understanding of the natural and social features first presents a difficult problem. We could not be confident that we have developed alternatives that avoid and minimize impacts to the extent possible.

Sandy: If you look at the topography map, I'd say it's not the Study Team that's limiting us but Mother Nature. To the east are major cliffs and hills.

Bill moved on to discuss changes to the features maps since the last meeting. The changes are as follows:

- Eaton brook has the potential to support Atlantic salmon, according to the Atlantic Salmon Commission
- Holbrook and Davis ponds have the potential to support two endangered grasses
- Well locations have been added as reported by drillers
- Hazardous waste locations have been added mainly in the northwest area
- Properties have been digitized and added

Bill said there were a few things still to be added. They are:

- Community facilities and services- schools, healthcare facilities, churches, etc.
- Zoning information
- Historic properties

Stan Moses: At what future point do we identify improvements on properties and the value of those improvements?

Bill: First we'll identify broad corridors, then the Study Team will narrow those down based on preliminary impacts including land use.

Stan: As I look at the end of 395, going to Route 9, I run into Eaton Ridge. Doesn't it behoove us to consider those types of impacts now as opposed to at the end of the process?

Bill: Broad corridors will be developed with an understanding of the natural and social features in the area. This is why we have developed this information prior to developing alternatives. Once we've developed broad corridors, we'll

look at every individual property in those 300 meter corridors and enter all that information in our database to keep as part of the decision making process.

Ray: We have to look at all resources, natural and manmade, and balance the impacts in the decision making process.

Sandy: Eaton Ridge is a high-end housing development. You don't go through there because it would cost a lot of money to buy it. There is a presidential executive order on environmental justice that stipulates that we can't go through a low-income neighborhood because it's cheaper than a high-income one.

Bill announced that the website is up and running and gave out magnets with the web address. Information developed on the study will be posted on the site: news, overall study goals, laws governing the process, who's involved in the process, information on public meetings, meeting minutes and agendas, maps and publications. There is also a section for comments. The DOT will put a link on its web page to the website and site managers will control back-ups of all information as a security measure.

Bill next announced that the first public meeting has been scheduled for April 11th at 7pm in the Holbrook School Auditorium. The Study Team will present needs and purpose of the study and ask for comments. Ray added that a notice would be published in all local newspapers and that a stenographer would be present at the meeting to record the proceedings.

Bill reviewed the agenda for the next PAC meeting. He said the Study Team would probably have zoning done and the PAC would have the opportunity to begin developing broad corridors for alternatives. He also passed out an informational sheet for PAC members to read before the next meeting and said that he would ask Mike Morgan to attend to answer traffic questions.

The next meeting was scheduled for May 2nd, 6-9 pm with sandwiches.

Susanna turned to the public for questions and comments, but there were none. Susanna adjourned the meeting.