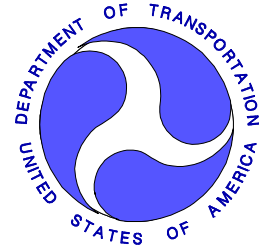


Maine Department of Transportation
I-395 / Route 9 Transportation Study
June 27, 2001
Public Advisory Committee Meeting



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

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, June 27

7:00-9:00 pm

PAC Meeting #7

Public Advisory Committee (PAC):

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

Not in attendance:

Sandi Duchesne
Scott A. Leach

Study Team:

John Derr
Mari Costanzo
Raymond Faucher
Peter Kleskovic
Susanna Liller
Jim Linker
Fred Michaud
William Plumpton

Not in Attendance

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

Susanna Liller introduced herself and thanked everyone for coming.

Bill Plumpton outlined the goal of the meeting, which was to review the 45 alternatives suggested be developed by the PAC at the May 2nd meeting and begin the preliminary screening process. Bill reminded the PAC of the result of the study: to identify the single alternative that best satisfies the transportation needs in the I-395 study area, satisfies the

purpose of the study, has the least overall adverse impact on human and environmental resources, at a cost that MDOT and FHWA can afford.

Bill began reviewing the range of alternatives suggested by the PAC by pointing out four observations the Study Team had immediately recognized.

1. All of the alternatives fit within the conceptual study area boundary.
2. Once assembled, the alternatives that the PAC suggested resulted in three broad concepts or families: a north/south route connecting I-395 to Rte. 9, alternatives that parallel Rte. 1A on both sides and to the east of Rte. 46 and alternatives with a more east/west direction connecting I-395 with Rte. 9 in the vicinity of East Eddington.
3. The family of east/west routes all fell within approximately 1500 feet of each other in the central portion of the study area. This gave the Study Team an opportunity to take the suggested alternatives and focus the development of eastern and western halves.
4. The alternatives that were suggested that parallel Rte. 46 were also similar enough to allow the Study Team to create a wider corridor to accommodate them all as another single option.

Bill explained that the Study Team divided all 45 alternatives into four families- families one, two, three and four- each representing a different theme. The bulk of the alternatives (36 out of 45) are within family three.

Bill added that the no-build alternative would be considered as a reasonable alternative. He added that there is always the opportunity to come up with a new alternative that could satisfy the study purpose and needs.

John Derr distributed a handout entitled “Summary of the Potential Impacts and Feasibility of the Range of Reasonable Alternatives” dated June 2001. This handout contained:

1. A written summary of the potential impacts and feasibility of the range of reasonable alternatives including a table showing MDOT’s design criteria for freeway.
2. A map showing the range of reasonable alternatives developed to date.
3. A tabular summary of the preliminary impacts and feasibility of the range of reasonable alternatives and segments comprising Alternative 3.

John also handed out and reviewed a typical cross section for Alternative 1, the upgrade alternative, and a typical cross section for the alternatives on new alignment.

The criteria for generating alignments are based on standard MDOT requirements for freeway design. There is some flexibility in later design stages when trying to avoid and minimize impacts to features and property, but the Study Team always starts by using standard design criteria. This also gives the Study Team a standard by which to compare

all alternatives. Design exceptions, or exceptions from standard design criteria to minimize impacts, would be considered during final design.

John explained that the criteria were met in part by having the PAC use the curved transparent templates in developing the corridors for consideration. These templates already meet the criteria for a freeway design. Also, the Study Team did its best to avoid impacts to natural resources and people, by adjusting the corridors that were suggested by the PAC at the previous meeting, where necessary and possible.

Bill reviewed the framework of the matrix used for comparing alternatives at this preliminary stage developed, in part, by the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE); the matrix is based on a simple methodology used by the Corps of Engineers to consider the ultimate permitting requirements for impacts to wetlands and waterways in the planning stages. To begin with, an alternative should satisfy the purpose and meet the needs of the study. At this time, only the no-build alternative does not do that. The upgrade alternative, that is required to be evaluated as part of the process, is different from no-build in that it includes improvements beyond the normal maintenance expected between now and the design year of 2030. The upgrade alternative looks at widening Rte. 1A and Rte. 46.

The framework of the matrix developed to facilitate the comparison and preliminary screening of alternatives includes space for data on wetlands, land use, cultural resources, overall engineering feasibility, and other items. The earthwork numbers refer to the material that would have to be excavated and the space that would need to be filled (with excavated material) as a net gain or a net loss of earth. The grades refer to road slopes and these average between one and two percent. All of the alternatives meet the necessary criteria from an engineering perspective.

The land use category includes an “other land” column; this column includes primarily existing bridges, roads, pipelines, easements, etc. The proposed bridges are located at perennial streams, roadways and the railroad. Some of the bridges go under roads, rather than over, in an effort to minimize impacts and disturbance. The land use numbers do not include any areas for mitigation of natural resource impacts, borrow areas for fill material, construction staging or stockpiling materials. These areas would be identified later in the study process or during final design.

Discussion on first look at matrices:

- Ellen Campbell pointed out that the deepest cut, around the Mann Hill area, could be as much as 68 feet.
- John explained that the areas sited in the calculation of impacts provide for proposed paved travel lanes, paved shoulders, and the necessary slope work to match existing ground. They also include an added 20 meters on each side to accommodate areas for drainage structures, stormwater management, erosion and sedimentation control and other items that are typically developed during final design.

- Ed Harrow speculated that none of the alternatives present anything unusual from an engineering perspective, although family four includes steep topography and more substantial excavation and filling of material.
- Ray agreed with Ed's speculation, but added that highway costs are up so that a chosen alternative could potentially be very expensive, especially when earthwork is considered.
- John explained that the Study Team tried to balance cuts and fills through whole alignments, so that the net result would be a project that would have very little surplus material or the need for very little borrow material to construct the project.
- Bill clarified that the slopes for the alignments are at a maximum of a three percent grade for now. Route 46 has higher grades, but MDOT likes to start from a more optimal standpoint.
- Stan Moses commented that the matrices do not give a sense of impacts on any nearby routes. Bill agreed but said that would be easier to look at when some of the 45 alternatives had been eliminated.

Bill and John began a review of all of the alternatives. Ray clarified that the resource agencies may bring back an alternative even if the Study Team suggests that it be eliminated from further consideration. The regulatory and resource agencies may also suggest alternatives or variations or modifications of these alternatives for consideration.

Alternative 1: This alternative must be studied, but is not an ideal solution for satisfying the purpose and needs of the study. It would require approximately 19 residential displacements, result in impacts to the front of the Holbrook school property, and a lower-than-optimal design speed.

- The 16 roadway crossings include culverts, bridges, etc.
- Residential impact means full displacement of a home
- The center line for this upgrade alternative is currently the same as the existing center line
- The fifth lane on Rte. 1A is currently proposed as a turning lane for traffic traveling in both directions

Ray Faucher suggested revising Alternative 1 to eliminate the center turn lane to improve safety. Alternative 1 will be revised and discussed at the next meeting.

Family Two: Alternative 2C is physically more intrusive than 2A and 2B. Alternative 2A has several more residential impacts than Alternatives 2B and 2C. It was suggested and the PAC agreed to move forward with only Alternative 2B.

Family Four: Alternative 4D would be very expensive and could seriously impact water quality and quantity. Alternative 4A would require the greatest improvements on Rte. 1A resulting in substantial impacts to the business community. Alternative 4C has more

residential displacements and a greater wetland impact than Alternative 4B. It was suggested and the PAC agreed to move forward with only Alternative 4B.

Family Three, Subsets A-F: Section 3B has a large impact on waters of the US, specifically wetlands. Section 3F is the longest component and would require the most earthwork. Sections 3C and 3D have higher residential displacements than 3A and 3E. Section 3A is more intrusive than 3E, but moving the alignment slightly could potentially solve that. It was suggested and the PAC agreed to move forward with Sections 3A and 3E.

Family Three, Subsets G-K: Sections 3G and 3H have higher wetland impacts than 3I and 3J while having no greater benefits. Section 3J results in more displacements than 3I. Section 3K cannot be compared to any of the others. It was suggested and the PAC agreed to move forward with Sections 3I and 3K. Allan Bromley also made the point that a section of roadway could be designed similar to Section 3K to connect Alternative 2C to Route 9 in the vicinity of East Eddington, although 2C was eliminated. It was agreed that the Study Team would look at this option as well as the option of connecting Section 3K with Alternative 2B and this would be discussed at the next meeting.

Public Comment:

Verne Olson from Rte. 1A in Holden suggested there would be less traffic impact if an alternative was chosen that moves along Rte. 1A. That would also keep cars near local businesses.

Judy Sullivan from Rte. 9 in Eddington questioned why the PAC is not looking more at the impacts on Rte. 9 such as the impact to the school there under Alternative 2A. She suggested that the PAC is not considering the impacts to the people on Rte. 9 as seriously as they are considering the impacts on other people. She also wondered if the impacts to houses across the road were being considered. Ray responded that those impacts would be considered later in the process.

Jim Linker from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) suggested incorporating such impacts for presentation at the next PAC meeting. The Study Team agreed.

Terry Pangburn from Holden asked if the economic impact is as critical as the impact on wetlands. He said he would like to see MDOT continue up Rte. 1A and simply move the school parking lot if necessary.

Bengi Grant in Holden asked when the road is built if it would become a federal highway and part of the interstate system. Ray responded that it is already a federal highway and therefore gets federal funds. It would not become part of the interstate system.

Brad Hock from Eddington asked what impact cost would have over other considerations. Ray responded that cost is a consideration in that alternative must fall

within a feasible budget. There is room to add a few million if necessary, but any more than that would require a very compelling reason.

Verne Olson commented that given cost issues, wouldn't it make more sense to stay on an existing route?

Ralph McCloud, a selectman from Holden gave his support for joining Alternatives 2C and 2K. He suggested it would get trucks through the area more quickly.

Sharon Byres from Holden commented that it looks like the group is on its way to building an east/west highway. She stated her disapproval by pointing out that people who pay taxes but do not have children (who use the schools) would be forced out in this area. She concluded that the town would therefore lose revenue.

Jeff Sandford from Eaton Ridge in Holden asked if there is any intention to add interchanges between the two endpoints of each of the alternatives. Ray responded that the current plan is to have interchanges only at routed highways, if at all.

Robert from Holden asked if there would be an interchange with Alternative 4B that would allow people going to Bar Harbor to bypass Rte. 1A. Ray responded that there would probably be one interchange at the most appropriate place.

Diggy Wilgate from Eddington asked about moving truck traffic versus all traffic. Bill responded that the Study Team is looking at the total traffic stream.

Jack Healy from Holden asked if Mr. McCloud's comments were his own or if they represented the Town of Holden. Mr. McCloud responded that they were his own.

Jeff Sanford from Eaton Ridge commented that he hopes the PAC is looking at the regional situation so that time and money aren't wasted.

Terry Pangorn from Holden suggested that extending Rte. 1A and then making it a four-lane highway that picks up to Rte. 46 would accomplish traffic improvement a good part of the way from Bangor to Bar Harbor.

Steve Conan from Holden supported the comment that he hopes a regional solution is being considered.

Levi Ross from Eaton Ridge in Holden commented that with an interchange, trucks would continue to go up Main Street in Brewer. He said this would make the financial investment a loss.

Ellen Campbell, representing Holden on the PAC clarified that one of the PAC's concerns is the commercial activity on Rte. 1A. She pointed out that economic development has slowed because of uncertainty about where a road may be built.

Curt Bevis from Holden wanted to know who is in charge of keeping track of the larger picture.

Fred Michaud from the DOT responded that the Study Team is studying the big picture. He said that concurrent studies of different areas are being incorporated into the process. He also mentioned that the public transit studies from Bangor to Ellsworth are particularly worth looking at.

Benji Grant asked if there would be any development on a new road if such a road is built rather than a continuation along Rte. 1A or Rte. 46. Ray said there would be none allowed. Any road built would be limited access.

Mike Walk from Holden asked if the DOT plans to limit access and provide frontage roads for the alignments in Families Three and Four. Ray said it would depend on the frontage roads. The DOT might try to limit or combine some of the access points in the long run. The cost and relocation numbers do not consider that at the moment.

Susanna thanked everyone for coming and reminded everyone that the next meeting is scheduled for July 18.