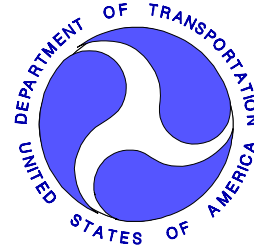




**Maine Department of
Transportation
I-395 / Route 9 Transportation
Study**

July 18, 2001
Public Advisory Committee Meeting



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

Meeting Minutes,

July 18, 2001

7:00-9:00 pm

PAC Meeting #8

Public Advisory Committee (PAC):

Alan Bromley
Rick Bronson
Joan Brooks
Rodney Buswell
Ellen Campbell
Sandi Duchesne
Keith Guttormsen
Ed Harrow (Maxine Harrow stand-in)
Linda Johns
Stan Moses
Melody Knadler
Gerry Palmer
Charles Plummer
Roger Raymond
Jim Ring

Study Team:

Richard Bostwick
Jeraldine Chow
Raymond Faucher
Susanna Liller
William Plumpton

Not in attendance:

Manley DeBeck, Jr.
Scott A. Leach
Al Skolfield

Susanna welcomed everyone and thanked them for coming.

Bill Plumpton stated that the study team had developed a new map showing alternatives retained for further consideration (for satisfying the purpose and needs of the study) and invited people to view the map and one-on-one

discussion at the end of the meeting. He reported that the PAC had suggested corridors for consideration by MDOT and FHWA for satisfying the purpose and needs of the study that resulted in approximately 46 alternatives or alignments, including the no-build alternative. This range of suggested corridors and alternatives has since been reduced to 11 alternatives, including the no build alternative. Now there is work to do in evaluating these 11 alternatives, and possibly other alternatives that not been identified to date, and how they could address the transportation problems in the study area. This evaluation will include detailed traffic analyses.

For context, Bill quickly reviewed the Purpose and Needs of the I-395 / Route 9 Transportation study:

Study Purpose

The purpose of the study is to: 1) improve a section of Maine's National Highway System from I-395 in Brewer to Route 9, consistent with current American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) policy on design; 2) improve regional system linkage; 3) improve safety on Routes 9, 46 and 1A; and 4) improve the current and future flow of traffic and shipment of goods to the interstate system.

Study Needs

The need for the study is based on poor roadway geometry in the study area coupled with an increase in commercial, local, and regional traffic. The result has been:

- Poor system linkage
- Safety hazards
- Traffic congestion

The DOT's job is to identify the alternative that best satisfies the purpose and needs of the study, has the least impact to the environment (natural resources and manmade and people considered equally) and is at a cost that is affordable to both MDOT and the FHWA.

Bill outlined the agenda for the evening:

1. Identify alternatives that were retained for further study from the last PAC meeting
2. Identify and review other alternatives that were suggested at the last meeting for satisfying the purpose and needs of the study
3. Further reduce the list of alternatives retained for further consideration and study

Bill noted a few items from the last meeting:

- It was suggested in June that the conceptual design for widening Route 9 to four lanes and the resultant impacts to natural and manmade feature be calculated, so that the results could be compared equally to the other alternatives developed. The study team reviewed the existing and future traffic volumes for Route 9 and determined that the traffic volumes did not warrant major widening in the foreseeable future. At this macro level for comparing the preliminary impacts of alternatives, the alternatives identified to date have been developed to an equal and consistent level of detail.
- The study is still in a macro stage of identifying the preliminary impacts from alternatives identified for satisfying the purpose and needs and screening alternatives suggested to date. There will be a lot of refining of alternatives in the future to avoid and minimize impacts to natural resources and people. Bill reminded the PAC that the impacts to both natural resource and people are considered equally.

How are alternatives evaluated?

They are evaluated based on their ability to satisfy the purpose and needs of the study, the potential impacts to natural and manmade resources and on cost. The result of this study is intended to be the single alternative that best satisfies the purpose and needs of the study, results in the least impact to natural resource and people, at affordable cost. The reasons for dismissing an alternative from further consideration must be documented. In the absence of sufficient data, an alternative cannot be dismissed from further consideration.

Bill presented information about how some of the alternatives had changed with input received from the PAC and public at the last meeting.

- Alternative 1, the upgrade alternative, was reduced from five lanes (two lanes in each direction and a dual center turn lane) to four lanes (two lanes in each direction) on Route 1A at the request of the DOT. The DOT suggested this change to improve the safety associated with the upgrade of Route 1A. It was felt, with posted speed limits up to 45 mph, a greater risk of more severe head on collisions could result in the center turn lane.
- Following Alan Bromley's suggestion, alternatives 2B and 2C were extended across and to the north of Route 9, tying into Route 9 to the east of East Eddington, in a fashion similar to the section 3K. These additions were identified as 2D and 2E. Alternative 2D follows the alignment of 2B from the I-395 interchange to Route 9 and will continue to the north of

Route 9 to the east of East Eddington (2B starts at the I-395 interchange and ends at Route 9 near the Eddington School).

2E is a portion of other alternatives and will form a bypass to the north of a portion of Route 9. 2E connects to alternative 2C.

- It was also suggest at the last meeting that a portion of alternative 2C should be shifted closer to the western edge of Eastern Avenue and connected with a portion of 3E. This suggested change will be referred to as alternative 3E-2C. Another alternative this creates will be referred to as 3E-2C-2E.

As a result of the suggestions from the PAC and public before and at the June 27th meeting, the twelve alternatives retained for further study at this time are:

- The no-build (The no-build alternative needs to be fully studied and evaluated. This will determine the ramifications of taking no action and is necessary to measure the true impact of other alternatives)
- Alternative 1: the upgrade- includes the widening of Route 1A to five lanes and widening Route 46 to four lanes with no separation
- Alternative 3AI: an alternative connecting the 1-395 interchange with Route 9
- Alternative 3AIK: an alternative connecting the 1-395 interchange with Route 9 to the east of East Eddington.
- Alternative 3EI an alternative connecting I-395, with a bridge over Route 1A, to Route 9.
- Alternative 3EIK: an alternative connecting I-395, with a bridge over Route 1A, to Route 9 to the east of East Eddington Alternative 4B: an alternative paralleling Route 1A and Route 46.
- New Alternative 1: a variation of the upgrade alternative without a dual center turn lane. Routes 1A and 46 would be widened to two lanes in each direction with no center turn lane on Route 1A.
- Alternative 2D: connects I-395 with Route 9 to the east of East Eddington.
- Alternative 3E-2C: an alternative connecting I-395 to Route 9
- Alternative 3E-2C-2E: an alternative connecting I-395 to Route 9 to the east of East Eddington.

At this macro level of analysis, at least one alternative from each of the four families of alternatives has been retained for further consideration. Lots of analysis still needs to be performed, including the analysis of traffic and how well the alternatives satisfy the purpose and needs of the study.

Bill made a few comments on the alternatives at this time.

MDOT suggested dismissing (old) Alternative 1 (with the dual center turn lane) from further consideration. New Alternative 1 decreases the number of residential displacements from 19 to 3.

Bill suggested dismissing Alternative 2D from further consideration. It results in the greatest impact to wetlands (65 acres) of the alternatives being considered at this time. It also requires the acquisition of approximately 235 acres of property and 14 bridges with a total length of about 6,192 feet. These two figures are far more than other alternatives being considered at this time. The Study Team suggests dismissing this alternative, given that it would be nearly impossible to get a permit from the agencies to impact wetlands and waterways.

Bill made a couple other observations about the alternatives being considered.

Alternative 3E-2C has the least impact to wetlands (22.4 acres), which makes it promising from a permitting standpoint. This potential impact to wetlands is lower than the impact to wetlands that would result from Alternative 1, the upgrade alternative. The impact to floodplains (6.4 acres) is the lowest, with the exception of Alternatives 1 and 4B. There is also little impact to active farmland (3.2 acres) though there is a large impact to soils classified as prime farmland (125 acres). The total land area required for this alternative is 166 acres and the third lowest of the alternatives being considered. The total length of the road would be 7.8 miles; the only shorter alternative is Alternative 2B. The overall bridge length would be 3,600 feet. The deepest cut and fill would be 34 and 44 feet, respectively.

Comments and questions on alternatives:

Ellen Campbell pointed out that while there may be only six residents displaced by the new alternative 3E-2C, it would have a negative impact on a number of homes nearby. Bill agreed and responded that impacts to these residents still need to be studied, including potential noise impact.

Linda Johns stated that Alternative 2C comes close to a cemetery.

Richard Bostwick asked how Alternative 3E crosses Route 1A. Bill answered that the DOT has made no decision whether to build a bridge over Route 9 or an interchange. This decision would be made later in the study process when more information exists on the future traffic volumes in the area and how well the various alternatives handle these future traffic volumes. Bill said his guess was that a bridge would be appropriate because traffic would be able to access Route 1A from the existing I-395 interchange about a mile to the west.

Bill gave a little more information on Alternative 3E-2C-2E in comparison to Alternative 3E-2C. With Alternative 3E-2C-2E, wetland impacts would increase

by seven acres and approximately 70 more acres of properties would need to be acquired. This alternative may include a bridge over Route 9.

Comments on the range of alternatives:

Stan Moses and Sandy Duchesne asked why the turn lane option on Route 1A had been eliminated in favor of two through-lanes in each direction. Ray answered that safety is a big consideration. With a speed limit of 40-55 mph, a turn lane is not recommended. Jim Ring suggested narrowing the travel lanes to slow traffic and still allow for the turn lane, as cars in the left lane waiting to make a left turn (without a center turn lane) would create a safety hazard that is as big or bigger than the center turn lane. Bill responded that the turn lane does not satisfy DOT design criteria, and that area needed by the center turn lane resulted in greater impacts to residences and wetlands. Rick Bronson suggested the center turn lane be added back to Alternative 1. It was agreed to table the discussion of the upgrade alternative; it was agreed to revisit this discussion of upgrade alternative if it was identified as the preferred alternative for satisfying the purpose and needs of the study.

Roger Raymond asked for clarification on the new Alternative 1 and whether three individual wetlands are affected or three acres of wetlands. Bill said that three individual wetlands, according to the US Fish and Wildlife Service's National Wetland Inventory, are affected. Alternative 1 would impact approximately 28.7 acres of wetlands. He added that this is not unreasonable, but that other alternatives have lesser impacts to wetlands.

Roger asked why the upgrade alternative does not satisfy design criteria. Bill explained that the design for the upgrade alternative mirrors the existing topography, in an effort to minimize impacts to adjacent properties, and that the existing topography exceeds DOT criteria for percent grades in some locations. DOT design criteria require no more than a 3% grade; the grades of the existing topography are more than 6% in several locations. It is possible to exceed DOT criteria, but the goal is to do that as little as possible.

Bill Plumpton promised he would have measurements of the actual length of alternative 1 that exceed the design criteria for % slope, at the next meeting.

Joan Brooks commented that one of the requirements of the study is to create a limited access facility. The upgrade alternative does not meet this and neither does Alternative 2B or 2C. Bill said Alternatives 2B and 2C would be constructed as limited access facilities by either bridging over local roads or reconstructing local roads over the alternative. Ray added that recent legislative policy instructs DOT to limit access on most major arterials in the state. The idea is to increase efficiency and reduce costs. However, this does not mean the upgrade alternative dismissed from further consideration.

Ed Harrow pointed out again the impacts of a new road on residents- not just on residents that would be displaced, but also on residents that would feel the effects of greater noise and greater activity nearby.

Bill went on to ask for more specifics from the PAC on things the DOT should be aware of as these alternatives are evaluated. The following comments resulted.

1. Joan wanted to clarify the source of the wetlands information. It is the National Wetland Inventory from the Fish and Wildlife Service? Bill responded that anything labeled as wetland or hydric soil by them is considered a wetland for the purposes of this study.
2. Ellen emphasized again that it is important that the Study Team be aware of all of the residences affected by a new road, and not just the ones that would be displaced.
3. Alan emphasized that neighborhood cohesion is important in the evaluation process. Bill clarified that such factors would be considered closely with a smaller set of alternatives.

Stan Moses asked for confirmation that existing routes will not be truncated or impeded in any way when an alternative is eventually chosen. Bill confirmed and said that bridges will be built where necessary to avoid this situation. Possible exceptions could include ending a road at the preferred alternative if only a house or two were on the other side.

Bill and Ray outlined the next steps for the study.

1. Traffic information – The DOT has started the forecasting of future traffic volumes using their statewide travel demand model and will bring figures and charts to the PAC in the next several months.
2. Interagency meeting- There is a meeting scheduled for August 14th in Augusta. Members of the PAC are invited. It is possible the agencies will reach different conclusions from the data the study team provides and they may have suggestions for other alternatives that should be considered for satisfying the study purpose and needs. .
3. Noise studies- The study team will get quantitative information on existing noise levels in the study area and predict the future noise levels from the alternatives being considered. The consideration of noise abatement measure is required at locations above or approaching 67 decibels. As a reference, dishwashers usually produce noise of about 80 decibels. Freeways usually result in noise levels between 55 and 70 decibels. It is anticipated that a considerable portion of a future PAC meeting would be dedicated to the results and conclusions of the noise analysis.
4. Maine Historic Preservation Commission- The MHPC will begin considering the potential impact to potential historic resources and archaeological resources. This work will start with studies of above ground historic resources this summer. There is much to be done and it will take some time.

5. Public meeting- A public meeting will be scheduled in the near future. The purpose of this public meeting will be to review the alternative analysis work performed to date and to solicit suggestions from the public for other alternatives that should be considered for satisfying the purpose and needs of this study. The public will have the opportunity to provide input on issues and concerns and the DOT must consider reasonable suggestions for alternatives. This informational public meeting will be held in mid-September.

Public Comment:

Ronald Wade from the Chickhill area in Clifton stated that there has been no noise abatement since the new road was built ten years ago. He has put out “No Jake Braking” signs and contacted the state police and these measures have been ineffective. Ray suggested contacting the local maintenance division.

Doug Schmidt from Holden asked if people are considered less important than the environment in terms of impacts and the selection of a preferred alternative. Bill responded that both are equally important and get equal consideration in the decision-making process. He added that cost is also considered.

Grant Byers from Holden asked why the public could not go to the meeting in Augusta. He was concerned that the study team spent 45 minutes discussing wetlands and cut off the PAC when the discussion moved to people. Ray responded that the Augusta meeting is open to the public; however, the public is **only** allowed to listen to the presentations and discussions and not allowed to ask questions or make comments. It was reiterated that both people and the environment are considered equally in this process. Grant said he would like to meet with members of the PAC both before and after the meeting.

Sally Black on Chickhill Road supported the earlier statement that there is a serious noise problem in the area.

George Bubler from Eddington asked for clarification on the noise abatement question. Ray said that if noise levels were above acceptable standards, the DOT would have to look at how to bring them down to acceptable levels.

Barbara Cox from Holden asked why Alternative 2C was shifted so close to Eastern Avenue. Bill said that few people live on the east side along a portion of Eastern Avenue, but the study team will go back and look at it.

Judy Sullivan from Eddington expressed her concerns around safety and quality of life if Route 9 is built on. She pointed out that it takes time for vehicles to slow down when coming off the highway and this would quadruple the traffic on Route 9. A lot of people live in the area. Ray replied that the Study Team has not

decided to connect to Route 9. That is just one viable option. When more study is done, it may be eliminated from consideration, but the Study Team cannot eliminate that option yet.

Rosen Thompson from Holden asked about the timeline for any road being built. Ray said the study should be finalized this next year. Once that is done and an alternative is considered practical, fundraising can begin to purchase the right-of-way. There might not be enough money in the legislature. All of these factors taken into consideration, it could be at least five years before anything is built.

Susanna thanked everyone for attending the meeting. There is no PAC meeting scheduled for August. There will be a public informational meeting in September.

Announcements

- At the next meeting, Bill Plumpton will have the measurements of the actual length of the alternative.