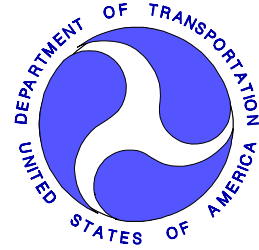


**Maine Department of
Transportation
I-395 / Route 9 Transportation
Study**

October 23, 2001
Public Advisory Committee Meeting



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

Meeting Minutes,

October 23rd, 2001, at the Holbrook School

7:00-9:00 pm

PAC Meeting #9

Public Advisory Committee (PAC):

Alan Bromley
Rick Bronson
Joan Brooks
Rodney Buswell
Ellen Campbell
Hewlette Crawford
Sandi Duchesne
Ed Harrow
Linda Johns
Melody Knadler
Scott A. Leach
Stan Moses
Gerry Palmer
Roger Raymond
Jim Ring
Al Skolfield

Study Team:

Jeraldine Chow, Barton & Gingold
Raymond Faucher, MDOT
Susanna Liller, Barton & Gingold
Fred Michaud, MDOT
Mike Morgan, MDOT
William Plumpton, Gannett Fleming

Not in attendance:

Manley DeBeck, Jr.
Charles Plummer
Keith Guttormsen

Susanna Liller opened the 9th PAC meeting. She mentioned that in response to complaints from the public of not being able to hear PAC members speak, microphones have been placed around the table. She reminded the public the meeting is for the PAC but the public is welcome to comment during the public question and answer session towards the end of the meeting.

AGENDA 1: OLD BUSINESS

Susanna introduced a new PAC member, Hewlette Crawford. Mr. Crawford is from Eddington.

Ellen asked if Mr. Crawford was replacing someone from the PAC.

Ray Faucher stated at the beginning of the process, each municipality was asked to provide a list of representatives from that community and PAC members were selected from that list. The town of Eddington recently submitted Mr. Crawford's name for inclusion on the PAC and the request was granted as the study is still in the refinement stage.

At the last PAC meeting in July, Roger asked how much of the upgrade alternative would exceed a 3% gradient. The study team did not have an answer to the question at that point in time but promised a response at a later time. Bill Plumpton responded to the request at this meeting saying, of the 10.2-mile upgrade alternative, 1.9 miles (13%) would exceed the design criteria of 3%.

Review Where We Are in the Study Process

Currently, the study team is in the refinement stage of analyzing nine build and a no build alternative. Following the refinement stage, the study team will analyze a few of these alternatives in detail to determine how well each alternative best meets the study purpose and needs at the least impact to the environment. So far, no new decisions have been made. The purpose of this meeting is to share information with the PAC.

AGENDA 2: REVIEW OF PUBLIC INFORMATIONAL MEETING ON SEPTEMBER 19TH

Bill said the public meeting held in September was well attended. About 250 people attended to listen to information presented on the study to date and comment on the alternatives being considered. Issues and concerns were expressed about individual alternatives. One new alternative was suggested for consideration. Grant Byers suggested, as a temporary improvement if funding was a concern, MDOT should consider building a new road parallel and to the east of Route 46 connecting Route 9 to Route 1A.

Bill said that MDOT did not have concerns over funding at present and was considering alternatives that fully satisfied the study purpose and needs. While Mr. Byer's suggestion has not been designed to date, this alternative would be tested and measured for effectiveness when the traffic forecasts are finalized and detailed design information was not necessary to test this alternative.

Bill Plumpton said that at the request of the public, the I-395 project website has been updated to include a link to the east-west study. Other information detailing existing traffic volumes was added.

AGENDA 3: REVIEW OF INTERAGENCY COORDINATION MEETING ON OCTOBER 9TH

Earlier in the month of October, Bill Plumpton and Ray Faucher presented the same information that was presented at the public meeting, to the federal and state agencies with direct or indirect jurisdiction over the study. The agencies concurred with the range of alternatives considered, the development of the alternatives and the preliminary screening of alternatives to date. The agencies did not ask that other alternatives be considered. Rick Bronson, a member of the PAC was present at the meeting.

AGENDA 4: SUMMARY OF REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS AND CONNECTED ACTIONS

In response to requests from the PAC and the public for a description of other projects in the region, Fred Michaud, MDOT Bureau of Planning, told the PAC that there are a number of projects that may have an impact on this area. The updates on those projects are as follows:

- 3.5-mile construction of a segment of Route 9 should be completed by 2003. The Calais / St. Stephen crossing study is continuing.
- Study on public transit into Bar Harbor due to be released on Oct 25th. A meeting will be held at the Brewer auditorium at 1:30pm and at City Hall at 6:30pm to discuss the findings of the study and if the projects should be moved to Phase II.
- Reestablishment of the Calais railroad branch from Brewer to Ellsworth and subsequently to Cherryfield. Studies have been done to show that freight is not a self-sustaining project at this time.
- 1.2 million dollars to resurface 3.5 miles of Route 1A from I-395 to Bagaduce Road. The section of Route 1A from .5 mile north of Green Lake Road to Rabbit Road is scheduled to be resurfaced in the summer of 2003. This section is 3.3 miles long and the cost for resurfacing will be 6.1 million dollars.
- On Route 46 near Hatcase Pond, the ²/₁₀-mile section of bad sight lines will be fixed in the next year.
- Traffic on I-95 to Bangor is growing. However, traffic volumes do not currently pose a problem.
- Nov 13th DOT meeting in Ellsworth to discuss traffic congestion problems.
- Access management rules to control access for entrances and driveways, will be posted November 1st, 2001 and will be out into effect January 1st, 2002. Information will be made available on the MDOT web page.

AGENDA 5: SUMMARY OF TRAFFIC FORECASTING AND ANALYSIS FOR THE ALTERNATIVES RETAINED FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

Mike Morgan, MDOT Planning Division, presented the traffic analysis. Please refer to his presentation attached and also available on the project website, <http://www.i395-rt9-study.com>

Ed Harrow expressed disbelief in the six fold increases in overall traffic forecasts and four fold increase in truck traffic forecasts, under the proposed possible alternatives. Mike Morgan said the increases are in diversions and not overall traffic. Mike said that the next step in preparing traffic forecasts for the study will be to take these traffic diversion, combine them with the preliminary traffic forecasts that were prepared as part of the needs for this study that was presented at a PAC meeting this past spring, and develop a complete summary of the traffic forecasts for the area. Most future growth consists of trips from Route 9 to I-395. The highest level of growth comes from Route 1 and 1A west of Route 46. Diversion projections would be reduced if the existing traffic volume were included in the analysis.

Ed Harrow asked if only diversion traffic was considered in the analysis, what would be the absolute increase over 30 years. Mike referred him back to his presentation in May where data for 1998 and 2030 projections were presented. The presentation is available on the project website.

Roger Raymond asked Mike to explain the diversion of 6,600 vehicles a day. Using data presented in May, the analysis shows the impact of diverting traffic under the proposed alternatives. Additional trips have been added to the data due to the establishment of a Wal-Mart in the area.

AGENDA 6: SUMMARY OF DOT'S RIGHT-OF-WAY AND APPRAISAL PROCESS

At the public meeting in September, Ray Faucher made available copies of the DOT's informational booklet on the appraisal process. He asked anyone who would like a copy to let him know.

Once a project has been defined, DOT informs each potentially affected property owner. If it is found that an individual's property is directly impacted, MDOT would begin its right-of-way acquisition and appraisal process. All land on which a highway is built, if not already owned by the DOT, has to be acquired. DOT will make an assessment of the property to be acquired and assemble an offer based on fair market value. The offer would be based on recent sales figures of similar properties and the amount of property to be acquired. If a residence is to be acquired, DOT will work with an affected property owner early on in the process to look for suitable relocation so as not to delay the process. However, a proposed construction project cannot be advertised for bids until all of the needed property has been acquired through a condemnation process. MDOT tries to

minimize the displacements of residences wherever possible. MDOT compensates individuals for direct impacts only and does not compensate individuals for indirect or proximity impacts.

Melody Knadler asked what the procedure is for businesses affected by a new highway. Ray Faucher said the rules which cover businesses are similar to those that govern residential relocations.

AGENDA 7: NEXT STEPS AND ACTIVITIES

- Revisions had been made to the map since the last PAC meeting in July. The range of alternatives is the same but the satellite image was cleaned up so that the same range of alternatives can be seen on the map a little more clearly. The 1000 feet wide corridors originally developed to guide the development of alternatives have been removed, as they no longer serve a purpose. This revised map will be made available on the project website and copies will be provided to Brewer, Holden, Eddington, and Clifton.
- Noise measurements were taken on September 24th. This data will be used in conjunction with the complete traffic forecasts to quantitatively predict future noise levels.
- After completing an analysis of traffic forecast and level of service (a measure of the quality of the traffic flow), the study will proceed with the detailed analysis of the few remaining alternatives retained for further consideration.
- The Maine Historic Preservation Commission is in the process of identifying features that may be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Bill mentioned many people have visited the project website. Should the PAC or public have any questions, they can call Ray Faucher, whose phone number is on the project website.

Several people have sent Ray Faucher emails. He noted that he knew he was a little late in responding to some emails but he would respond to all of them.

Jim Ring asked if an alternative could be included to compensate for the fact that most of the proposed alternatives only remove traffic off Route 46 and Route 1A. Mike Morgan said the study team will analyze the impact of traffic on each alternative.

Gerry Palmer asked if the study team planned on taking more noise measurements to give a better representation of the level of noise through the year. Bill said there is no plans to do so because traffic counts were also taken at the time the noise measurements were taken. . The traffic counts taken at the time of the noise measurements will be compared to the peak traffic counts for the year and the noise results measured would be adjusted accordingly. The measurements were taken on a sunny day in the fall, before the leaves fell – an ideal time. Measurements during and after rain can affect noise levels.

Alan Bromley informed the study team and the PAC that he had met with the Holden planning board and joint selectmen committee. They request an alternative be added to those being considered: upgrade Route 1A and bypass Route 46. Bill Plumpton said the study team would study this suggestion.

AGENDA 7: QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

Ken Rogers, Holden: I'm astounded by what I've heard tonight and at the public informational meeting in September. Millions of dollars will be spent to build a highway just to save truckers from Calais 6 minutes. Many acres of wetland and habitat will be destroyed in the process. Why should such a proposal be considered? The biggest traffic problem is on Route 1A and it is not addressed. Referring to the handout, how can there be an 8-fold increase in the annual average daily traffic between Route 9 east of Route 46 and Route 1A west, via Route 46. How many PAC members own property on land which could be impacted by the proposed alternatives?

4 PAC members raised their hands. To respond to Mr. Rogers's questions on the expected increase in traffic, Ray Faucher reiterated the figures presented are the diversions of traffic only and not the total traffic volumes. Mike Morgan added the projections across corridors were made by using the expected growth rates from the east-west corridors. Mike referred him back to his presentation from the meeting in May.

Susan Piers: One of the proposed alternatives runs through my patio. How do you define impact and what is a level of service?

Ray defined impact as an alignment directly touching someone's property. Level of service refers to the quantitative measure of the delay in flow of traffic. The DOT aims to achieve a level of C.

Sharon Byers, Holden: I own property along a proposed alternative. I have made requests to be on the Public Advisory Committee. Why was I denied permission to serve on the PAC when I now see someone new on the PAC? Holden needs to be better represented.

Ray Faucher explained that the PAC process is not a requirement. At the beginning of the study, PAC members were identified from a list of individuals in each community who were willing to serve on the advisory committee. Each town was provided with the list and was asked to suggest two to three representatives who could represent their community. Mr. Crawford went to his town officials and asked to become a PAC member. If your town asked for you to be invited to be a member of the PAC, we would

consider adding you to the PAC while keeping in mind our need to keep the group a manageable size. However, having a personal agenda is not good reason to be on the committee. The role of a PAC member is to identify local issues and concern and help DOT understand what is best for the entire community. They are a liaison to their community. This is why we try to have equal representation of each community on the PAC.

Ms. Byers: The PAC is not a good liaison. I see members coming late to meetings, some are not present at meeting and do not keep up to date with the process. The public should be given more chances to interact. I will speak to my town officials.

Anthony Pelegree, Holden: Earlier in the process, the town of Holden met and came to a consensus greatly favoring an alternative that has now been dismissed. The town government of Holden represents the interest of the entire town. Their stance should be given great weight. On another note, the traffic presentation is confusing. How can you take away 1,100 cars when there are only 325 today?

Mike Morgan explained that 775 trips are diverted from the trip between Route 9 and I-395 and 325 trips are diverted from the trip between Route 9 and Route 1A, adding to a total of 1,100.

In response to the first question, Ray Faucher said that the study team will go back to look at that alternative. The range of possible alternatives has to be considered equally and no alternative should be given greater weight because a political body favors it. The preferred alternative should be one which best meets the study purpose and needs at the least impact to both natural and man-made resources, that DOT can afford to build and can be supported by the local communities.

Mr. Pelegree: The town reports what is best for its community. This should be included in the study purpose and need.

Ray Faucher said that there are federal rules and regulations by which the MDOT has to abide. The proposed alternative has to be supported by an analysis showing that this alternative best meets the study purpose and need at the least impact to the human and natural environmental. Preferences of a community alone are not an acceptable standard for approval of an alternative.

Mr. Byers said the study team should provide everyone, especially PAC members with the traffic data instead of referring them to the meeting in May.

Judy Sullivan: (Referencing page 5 of Mike Morgan's presentation) I don't understand why there is no change in annual average daily traffic

between Route 9 east of Route 46 and I-395 via Route 9 in the year 2030.

Mike Morgan referred her back to page 3. In 1998, there were 775 trips made between Route 9E and I-395 via Route 46. The same trip via Route 9 (page 5) saw 1085 vehicles (excluding heavy trucks). Using the traffic demand model from the east/west study, forecasts were made for 2030. The model only includes the fastest travel time and distance.

Ms. Sullivan: Before the PAC was formed, a meeting was held where citizens expressed their concern over safety on Route 46. Is the PAC organized to address this concern?

The need to improve safety on Route 46 has been acknowledged and is part of the safety need for this study.

Sue Dawes from Holden asked if the study team is familiar with the details of the comprehensive plan for Holden.

Bill Plumpton informed her that the study team assembles information on people and the natural environment from comprehensive plans and uses it as a basis in developing a comprehensive understanding of people, features and trends in an area. Ray Faucher added there are federal laws established by NEPA instructing DOT on the process to follow. Ultimately, the proposed alternative is one that minimizes the impact to people and the natural environment. The proposal is accompanied by supporting results from the analysis.

Steve, the Development Director of Holden, asked the study team if he could be provided with a more detailed report of the upgrade of Route 1A and 4B between Route 1A and Route 9?

Ray said this alternative would be developed to the same level of detail of the other alternatives being considered and the information would be provided.

Judy Sullivan: Based on your experience, which takes greater precedence - Impact on wetlands or to property?

Ray explained that neither resource is favored and that discussions concerning impact balancing have not taken place. The agencies look for a balance of minimal impact to both the natural and human environment.

Hewlette Crawford asked about the accuracy of the traffic projections.

Mike Morgan said he was not involved in the east/west corridor study. As he mentioned in May, there was a team of 5 to 6 consultants who analyzed the traffic and economic

impact along that corridor. Corridor B was shown to be preferable in improving east/west traffic flow across the State of Maine.

Ed Harrow: Is it true that the purpose of the PAC is to advise and the ultimate decision is made by the DOT and Army Corp of Engineers?

Ray Faucher informed him it is FHWA who makes the final decision. Again, other states don't use a PAC process but MDOT values the input from citizens and communities. The PAC was formed to act as a community representative to inform the study team of issues affecting their community.

Sandi Duchesne: At the first PAC meeting, we established a few rules. Among them is one that states that no one new should be allowed to join the PAC unless someone else leaves.

Ray Faucher apologized for not being made aware of this. He took over the project after it had begun. He would like to keep the group manageable, with 2-3 members representing each community.

Scott Leach: Holden has spent a lot of time trying to reach a decision on the preferred alternative. If we are to make an informed decision, it would be helpful for PAC members to find out how they arrived at that conclusion.

Bill Plumpton said the study team welcomes suggestions and will study the feasibility of an alternative fairly. If the suggestion is not practicable, it would be dismissed with documented reasons. He reminded everyone that there is lots of work to be performed and people should try to avoid forming and discussing decisions too early in the study process before all information used in decision-making is available.

Stan Moses: Is there any new information, maps or spreadsheets other than what the PAC has received?

Bill Plumpton mentioned there is no new material for the PAC.

Joan Brooks: No offense to Mr. Crawford but it's my understanding is the board of selectmen for Eddington did not initiate the request to add someone new to the PAC. He approached the board.

Ray Faucher said Mr. Crawford said that he had indeed approached town officials and he didn't think it would be a problem to add one person to the PAC this early in the process. On other studies, a request like this has been rejected as it was made too late in the process.

The next PAC meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, December 19th.