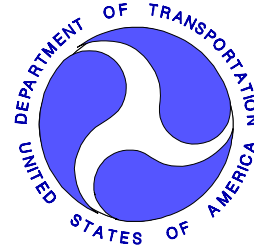




**Maine Department of
Transportation
I-395 / Route 9 Transportation
Study**

December 19, 2001
Public Advisory Committee Meeting



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

Meeting Minutes,

December 19th, 2001, at the Eddington School

7:00-9:00 pm

PAC Meeting #10

Public Advisory Committee (PAC):

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

Study Team:

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

Not in attendance:

Keith Guttormsen
Gerry Palmer
Al Skolfield

Susanna Liller opened the 10th PAC meeting. 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

Minutes from the last meeting

Bill Plumpton corrected a mistake on **page 2** of the minutes of the last meeting in October. It should read, 19% would exceed the design criteria of 3%.

Bill apologized for not sending materials for this evenings meeting in advance and distributed:

- A matrix showing the “Summary of Preliminary Impacts and Feasibility of the Range of Reasonable Alternatives Retained for Continued Screening”
- A map with the “Range of Reasonable Alternatives Retained for Continued Preliminary Screening”

Bill gave the PAC a few minutes to review the new material and said he would explain the changes when he reviewed Alternative 1-4B and its impacts, item 3 on the agenda.

Review Where We Are in the Study Process

Currently, the study team is in the refinement stage of analyzing ten build and a no build alternative.

AGENDA 2: REVIEW OF PAC FUNCTION AND OPERATING PROCEDURES

Susanna Liller reminded everyone that at the first PAC meeting, there was a lot of discussion about the ground rules and the importance of participation. The PAC had agreed on the importance of PAC members to make the commitment to be present at every meeting. PAC participation is important because the study team depends on these representatives to provide input to the study that the study team may otherwise be unaware. They are also responsible for providing the public with information gathered from committee meetings.

AGENDA 3: REVIEW OF ALTERNATIVE 1-4B AND ITS IMPACTS

Bill Plumpton explained that there have been two structural changes to the matrix and map. Alternative 1-4B was added and the alternatives were rearranged in numerical order. As a reminder, Bill reviewed the cross section used for alternatives on new alignment and the upgrade and partial upgrade alternatives. For alternatives on new alignment, MDOT would acquire the necessary right-of-way to ultimately accommodate a four-lane divided highway. MDOT would design and seek approvals for a four-lane divided highway as part of this study. Initially, MDOT would build two lanes and use them for both eastbound and westbound traffic. When traffic volumes increase to the point where additional highway capacity is needed, MDOT would construct the remaining two lanes within the right-of-way acquired as part of this study.

For Alternative 1, the upgrade alternative, a highway cross section using four lanes without a median or center turn lane has been used. For Alternative 1-4B, four lanes without a median or center turn lane was used for the portion on Route 1A; for the portion on new alignment, the new alignment configuration was used.

Ellen Campbell asked if it was appropriate to study a four lane roadway with an additional turning lane on Route 1A. Bill concurred that it wasn't appropriate as MDOT believes that an improved Route 1A would be a safer road without a dual center turn lane. Bill also said that MDOT would revisit the discussion of the cross section of Route 1A with the PAC if Alternative 1 and/or Alternative 1-4B are retained for detailed analysis.

Bill described the impacts of Alternative 1-4B:

- Wetland impacts are approximately 30.5 acres. This is important to note, = as the regulations governing the protection of waters generally requires that the alternative with the least impact to waters be identified as the preferred alternative for satisfying the study purpose and needs. Waters include wetlands
- Floodplain impacts are approximately 1.1 acres, low compared to other alternatives. Along with wetlands, there is also a need to avoid impact to floodplains
- With 9 residential displacements, this alternative incurs the highest impact to residents
- A total of approximately 221 acres would be required for this alternative
- Does not satisfy DOT's design criteria for slope
- 3.4 million cubic yards of earth would have to be moved to build Alternative 1-4B (lower than Alternative 4B)

At the last meeting, the Town of Holden asked MDOT to develop this alternative, using existing sections of Route 46, where possible. Bill said using existing sections of Route 46 was considered in the development of this alternative, however useable existing sections turned out to be very short in length and was not practical for this study given its purpose and needs.

Bill asked Alan Bromley if this is what the town had envisioned when they made this suggestion to the study team.

Initially, Mr. Bromley agreed but requested more time to review the details of the alternative.

Scott Leach questioned the total acreage listed in the matrix for Alternative 3E-2C. Bill Plumpton apologized for the mistake and said that it is supposed to be 166 acres.

AGENDA 4: REVIEW RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES AND DECISION-MAKING FRAMEWORK

The identification of a preferred alternative generally occurs after the Environmental Assessment has been circulated for public and agency review and comment, public hearing held, and responses made to comments offered on the Environmental Assessment.

Ellen Campbell asked for the permission of Michael R. Waugh, a traffic and transportation engineer, to ask a question?

Michael Waugh, Surry: Going through some of the data provided to the PAC, I noticed that the study was conducted using 10-foot contour intervals. In our review, we have found several instances where the 3% grade criteria do not seem to match evidence in the field. We feel the study team does not have enough data to throw out Alternative 1.

Ray Faucher acknowledged the letter Mr. Waugh had sent to MDOT addressing this issue. He apologized for not having responded to the Town of Holden to date but assured him that the Town would receive a written response.

Bill acknowledged that the alternatives were developed using a 10-foot contour interval. This information was supplement with elevation data that was collected for this study. The approach used in this study for developing alternatives is consistent with other studies and industry standards. The same approach or methodology was used for all of the alternatives developed to date to allow an equal comparison of potential impacts to all alternatives. To develop an alternative using a different methodology or to a different level of detail would not allow an equal comparison between alternatives. Bill added that neither Alternative 1 nor Alternative 1-4B has been dismissed from further consideration. Charles Plummer asked if a new alternative could be advanced, at any time, by anyone. Also, he asked the study team to inform the public of the decision making power of the resource agencies.

Bill Plumpton said that any time someone has a suggestion for a new alternative for satisfying the study purpose and needs with less adverse impact than those being considered, MDOT has to study it to the point of dismissing it, and documenting the reasons why it was dismissed, or retaining it for detailed analysis. In response to his second question, Bill commented that during the final design stage, MDOT would complete permit applications required by the natural resource agencies. The agencies that govern the protection of surface waters and wetlands have considerable influence over the identification of the preferred alternative.

AGENDA 5: SUMMARY OF TRAFFIC FORECASTING AND LEVEL OF SERVICE 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>.

Building on his presentation in October, Mike made the following points:

- Alternatives 3AI and 3AIK have the shortest travel distance and time for travel between Route 9E and I-395 via Route 46 and between Route 9E and Route 1A W via Route 46
- Alternatives 3AI and 3AIK will have the shortest miles and hours traveled in the year 2030
- Traffic predictions show it would warrant a four lane roadway on Route 1A in the year 2030
- The through movement of traffic on Route 1A between Ellsworth and Bar Harbor will be heavy in the year 2030. With improvements to Route 1A, the level of service (LOS) can be improved from a LOS F to C
- All alternatives except for the upgrade, would make traffic take the same turns on Route 1A and Route 46
- The time horizon of the projected volumes of traffic warranting a four lane roadway for location 1 is 10 years and 20 years in location 2

Ed Harrow: Under diagram D, if you're doing any one of those alternatives, would it still be a level of service C on Route 1A and Route 46?

Mike agreed. He said both intersections would be brought up to a level of service C no matter which alternative is selected.

AGENDA 6: RESOLUTION FROM THE CITY OF BREWER

Manley DeBeck read a resolution from the City of Brewer, to MDOT. The essence of the resolution is as follows: At the November meeting, the City Council unanimously voted to express their support for a limited access connector between I-395 and Route 9 to address local and regional transportation needs. They are not supporting any one alternative because it is too early in the process.

Ray Faucher thanked the City of Brewer for their support.

Ed Harrow: Is it fair to say that the no build alternative was not considered?

Mr. DeBeck: The no-build alternative does not solve the problem. It is not a consideration for the City of Brewer.

Ellen Campbell asked if the upgrade alternative would be considered by the City of Brewer. As she read the resolution, it mentions only alternatives on new alignment, although she said she might be reading the resolution too literally.

Manly said that she may be reading the resolution too literally and the City of Brewer has not dismissed the possibility that existing roads could be improved to the point of satisfying the purpose of this study.

Bill Plumpton mentioned that by law, the no-build alternative has to be studied and its consequences fully developed. Impacts have to be developed for all alternatives, including the no build for the year 2030.

AGENDA 7: NEXT STEPS AND ACTIVITIES

Bill explained that MDOT needs to narrow down the number of alternatives prior to starting detailed analysis; ideally only a couple of alternatives, in addition to the no-build alternative, are considered in detail. To date, MDOT has tried to keep the best member of each family of alternatives: No-build, Alternatives 1, 1-4B, 2B, 4B and one from the family of 3s. Bill suggested dismissing Alternatives 3E-2C and 3E-2C-2E because, in terms of vehicle miles and hours traveled, it is far less effective than some of the other alternatives in the family of 3s and these two alternatives would result in some of the largest impact to people.

Rick Bronson: I suggest dismissing Alternative 2B.

Manley DeBeck supported Mr. Bronson's point. Bill Plumpton suggested concentrating on the family of 3s to dismiss all but the best one and revisiting Alternative 2B later in the study.

Ray Faucher said that if members of the PAC agree with the recommendations, the study team would present this decision to the resource agencies. The resource agencies should approve the elimination of these alternatives based on the evidence presented to them.

Bill explained that further study suggested that Alternatives 3AI and 3AIK are superior to Alternatives 3EI and 3EIK in terms of traffic and impacts to people.

Ellen Campbell: I think Alternative 3A is a problem. Alternative 3E may be a little more desirable than Alternative 3A.

Alan Bromley: Alternative 3A crosses Eastern Avenue twice.

Bill Plumpton said the cumulative effect of vehicle miles and hours traveled is an important factor to consider.

Rodney Buswell: What would happen with the existing section of Route 1A and I-395?

Bill answered that they would crossover, with no interchange or points of intersection. Ray added that when Alternative 3A was proposed, local roadways would be crossed with a bridge. No traffic would be able to enter or leave Eastern Avenue from that bridge.

Jim Ring: The numbers in terms of vehicle miles savings looks to be quite different.

The major difference between Alternatives 3AI and 3EI is the intersection at Route 1A. This is why there are additional vehicle miles traveled. There are also some major developments going in on Route 1A.

Ed Harrow: What effect do you anticipate from the Eastern Highway expansion and Wal-Mart?

Mike Morgan said he looked at new trips. The data presented would not have to be altered.

Alan Bromley: I'm not pushing to take Alternative 2B off the table. At least one member from each family of alternatives should remain on the table.

Bill said the study team would reflect on the differences between the alternatives beginning with 3A and 3E and that both would be retained at this time. He continued to explain the next steps of the study:

- Consider the effectiveness of the alternatives in satisfying the study purpose and needs. Some additional dismissal of alternatives needs to take place so that not all 9 remaining alternatives are studied in tremendous detail
- Examine secondary impacts
- Begin working on sections of the Environmental Assessment
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Sandi Duchesne: Whichever alternative is selected, everyone should keep in mind that it will inevitably go through someone's town. We can't simply eliminate an alternative because of this.

Manley DeBeck: The Chair of the Transportation Department responded to the letter from the City Council. He emphasized the need to make the decision in a timely fashion as there is now money allocated for this project.

AGENDA 8: QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

Terry, Holden: I want to make sure that when Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) builds this road, you realize that you are facilitating the ease of transporting goods throughout and between states at the expense of people's homes. What do we gain by this?

Dutch Smith, Holden: Alternative 3E goes through Bogg Pond, a habitat for several endangered species. He asked if how endangered species habitat is considered in this study.

Bill Plumpton said habitat for endangered species was given the highest priority, along with several other features, in the fundamental development of broad corridors. The charge was to avoid impacts to these areas during the development of the corridors for initial study. At this early point in the study, the study team relies on information from the federal and state agencies charged with protection of endangered species. Later in the study, when few alternatives are being considered in detail, additional field investigation into potential threatened and endangered species can be performed.

Steve, Holden: Regarding Alternative 4B, were you taking into account the traffic continuing on to Ellsworth?

Mike Morgan responded yes and that a 55 mph was assumed on the new facility. Ray Faucher added it is unlikely that the speed limit would be raised near the business district.

Mr. Gardner, Brewer: What does MDOT consider to be the top 3 alternatives? He said that, from his review of the matrices, that MDOT has plenty of information to identify a preferred alternative at this point. He suggested that the study team place weighting of importance to each factor and sum the results to identify a preferred alternative.

Ray Faucher said the study team is currently studying 9 alternatives without any preferences or biasness. There needs to be a balance between environmental impacts and transportation benefits to evaluate the different alternatives. Bill added that the industry use to depend on weighted rankings, but has discontinued this because it was forcing project sponsors to carry out projects that were not suitable. MDOT is trying to get feedback from the public to make an informed decision.

John Bryant, Holden: How do comprehensive plans factor into the study?

Ray mentioned that all comprehensive plans from towns have to be considered. In this study, information from the comprehensive plans was used to develop the baseline of features and facilities that were then considered and used prior to the development of alternatives for satisfying the study purpose and needs. He said that the comprehensive plans for the Towns could be reviewed in their entirety at some point in the study.

Ed YoungBlood, State Senator from Brewer:

Looking at Alternative 4B, would you have to take the old road if you want to go to Bucksport coming off Route 9?

Bill agreed that would be the case.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

There will not be a meeting in January. The PAC will continue to meet every 3rd Wednesday of the month, unless otherwise stated. The meetings for year 2002 will be held on the following nights:

Feb 20th

March 20th

April 17th

May 15th

June 19th

July 17th

August 21st

September 18th

October 16th

November 20th

December 18th