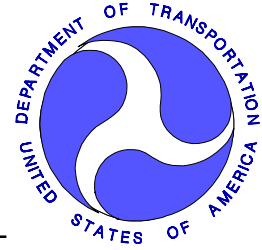


**Maine Department of
Transportation
I-395 / Route 9 Transportation
Study
February 20, 2002
Public Advisory Committee Meeting**



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

Meeting Minutes,

February 20, 2002, at the Holbrook School

7:00-9:00 pm

PAC Meeting #11

Public Advisory Committee (PAC):

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

Study Team:

Richard Bostwick, MDOT
Raymond Faucher, MDOT
Dale Mayo, MDOT
Reddington Robbins, MDOT
William Plumpton, Gannett Fleming
Susanna Liller, Barton & Gingold
Andrew Gilmore, Barton & Gingold

Not in attendance:

Keith Guttormsen
Al Skolfield
Joan Brooks
Scott A. Leach

Susanna Liller opened the 11th PAC meeting and introduced PAC and Study Team members.

AGENDA 1: OLD BUSINESS

Minutes from last meeting

- No discussion

Announcements

- Sandi Duschesne made arrangements for televising PAC meetings on Cable TV but needs a volunteer from the public to run camera.
- Susanna Liller recognized special guests: University of Maine - Orono Natural Resources students.
- Ellen Campbell distributed two letters to PAC members sent to Ray Faucher (*attached*)

Review of where we are in study

Bill Plumpton gave a brief overview of where the PAC is in the process and previewed upcoming necessary steps to advance. Bill reminded the PAC that the study is in the refinement stage; typically only a couple of alternatives are studied in detail during the final comparison stage.

AGENDA 2: Review of Naming and Location of Alternatives

Review of alternatives

- No-build, 1, 1-4b, 2B, 3AI, 3EI, 3EIK, 3AIK and 4B

Bill Plumpton reviewed the alternatives under consideration. He explained that MDOT and the PAC had reviewed the content of the comprehensive plans for the study area during the assembly of social and natural features in the area and prior to the development of alternatives and had considered many of their elements in the formation of alternatives. It was suggested at the last meeting, in an effort to further marry transportation and comprehensive planning together, that an overview of comprehensive planning for the study area be presented.

AGENDA 3: Review of Comprehensive Plans

Susanna Liller asked 4 PAC members to deliver presentations on their jurisdiction's comprehensive plans.

[BACTS]

Sandi Duschene, Bangor Area Comprehensive Transportation System (BACTS) gave a PowerPoint presentation outlining the mission and structure of the metro planning organization designated by the federal and state governments to conduct transportation planning for Greater Bangor. (see attached)

[Eddington]

Tania McIntyre, Eddington Planning Board, explained that Eddington is in the midst of developing a comprehensive plan and is working diligently to that end. May 13th is the next public meeting in the planning process with only 2 meetings left.

Questions for Tania included what the town's intent was for the Rte 9 corridor; what kinds of businesses Eddington is planning to attract; and the timeline for completing the comprehensive plan.

Tania responded that there are too many variables at this point to say definitively what the recommendation for Rte. 9 will be and said the town is open to businesses that do not negatively impact the environment or character of town. She said that she expects the planning process to take another year.

[Holden]

John Bryant Planning Board Chair, Holden gave a PowerPoint presentation and said that Holden has had a comprehensive plan since the late 1970s with it's most recent revision in 1995.

Questions for John included asking his opinion of the impacts a proposed Rte 1A and Rte 46 alternative would have on Holden with regard to managing growth in that area; and, what the divisive impacts would be of splitting the town of Holden such as Rte 1A.

John said that Holden officials believe they can manage the growth and development along a limited access alternative effectively. However, John said that Rte 1A in the summer months is very difficult to cross back and forth to the two sides of town and the road and traffic creates a barrier. Therefore they are not in support of an alternative further splitting the town again.

[Brewer]

Manley DeBeck, Jr. outlined Brewer's comprehensive plan and said they need to reconvene the committee to address new issues. The most important accomplishment to date, Manley said, was getting waterfront development started.

Questions for Manley included how the alternatives will impact 1A; how far Brewer has gone to evaluate traffic studies to examine impacts on the lower part of 1A towards Rte 46; and a request for him to comment on I-395's impact on the Wilson Street area.

Manley said Brewer studied the zoning of that area and a number of improvements were determined to be necessary. He said the reason for the I-395 extension construction was massive traffic congestion with tourists heading out to Acadia running into local traffic. He said although he thinks the focus was shortsighted, the impact on Wilson Street has been positive due to increased accessibility making land more valuable and opening up back land previously inaccessible. He said the only problem with I-395 is that it didn't go far enough.

AGENDA 4: Dismissal of Alternatives and Reasons Why

Bill Plumpton gave an overview of the MDOT process of review and logic to reduce the number of alternatives for final comparison and detailed analysis (see attached). To fully satisfy the study purpose and need of improved system linkage, Bill said an alternative has to tie into Rte 9 east of Rte 46. Consideration of all the needs narrowed the range of alternatives to:

- No-build;
- 3EIK; and,
- 4B.

Ray Faucher explained to the PAC that MDOT looked at the East-West highway study and the Governor's message of improving east-west travel across the state. He said that upgrade options wouldn't satisfy the purpose and needs of this study because the result would not be a limited access facility.

Ellen Campbell said it looks like the State wants to carve Holden diagonally through the woods and the comprehensive planning presentations seemed to be just going through the motions. She said Holden believes that alternative 4B is not an option, as traffic volumes won't reach a threshold required for a by-pass until 2030. She also said that not addressing 1A at this time is shortsighted and the MDOT needs to give a Rte 1A upgrade much more consideration. Bill Plumpton responded that the MDOT has no preferred alternative and has not concluded that Alternative 3EIK is best. He also responded that the study team had an understanding of comprehensive planning prior to the development of alternatives. Ray Faucher then went on to say the MDOT looked at a number of scenarios and realize they can't stop development on 1A. Ray said that in the future, upgrading 1A to 4 lanes is inevitable due to growth rate, in addition to providing a limited access facility to satisfy the purpose and needs of this study.

Next, responding to Roger Raymond's question, Ray said all known development was considered in their traffic projections, including Wal-Mart and the medical center.

Ed Harrow then made a couple of observations: when the PAC first looked at the study criteria, the first issue was safety. He said the PAC liked the idea of a limited access highway as the number of fatal accidents is increasing by virtue of increasing traffic volume. He said current alternatives on the table satisfy this concern and we need to balance impacts on individuals. Ed said that alternatives inviting development will impact individual community character in residential areas and others will impact the environment. He then said we can't have it both ways and the only alternative to meet both concerns is to move the project to an entirely different area.

Then, responding to Rick Bronson's suggestion that the MDOT look to Canadian developments that over-builds to protect local traffic and pedestrian usage, Ray said the MDOT has done exactly that in Waterville/Winslow.

Next, in response to Ed Harrow's question, Bill Plumpton said the MDOT is indeed looking at the feasibility of moving 3EIK farther east to reduce impacts to residential areas. He said the study is at a broad planning stage and they will look more closely at specifics in the next phase when alternatives are developed and studied in detail. He said as the alignment is moved east,

wetland and floodplain impacts increase. Bill said if moved too far east, it wouldn't be permitted because an alternative would then exist that has fewer impacts to wetlands. MDOT doesn't have that level of information yet; this information will be developed when alternatives are developed and studied in detail.

Then, in response to Charles Plummer, Bill and Ray said the MDOT does not expect leniency from agencies with regard to environmental impacts and regulatory issues and that while wetlands will definitely be impacted, the MDOT needs strong justification with regard to balancing environmental with residential impact.

Sandi Duchesne asked if the MDOT will have enough right of way for future expansion to a divided highway and Ray responded affirmatively. At this time, two lanes would be constructed within a 200-foot limited access right-of-way. When traffic levels increase, MDOT would construct the remaining two lanes.

Next, Stanley Moses asked if the MDOT had expanded the study area far enough to the east to accommodate the alternatives to which Ray responded that further expansion of the study area would not yield much difference in the amount of growth and development projections.

Linda Johns then asked to see aerial photos expanded in Clifton because of lakes and other concerns and also to look farther down Rte 9 to see impacts since the town's only economic development asset, the mill, is in that area. Ray and Bill stated they would.

AGENDA 5: Next Steps and Activities

Bill Plumpton outlined the following for the MDOT to perform next:

- Meet with state, federal agencies to review the alternatives analysis process;
- Redesign alternatives to incorporate interchanges, further avoid and minimize impacts, and facilitate detailed analysis;
- 3-D visualization; and,
- Perform noise analysis.

Ray Faucher said the Environmental Assessment may be completed by late summer/early fall 2002 and Bill suggested the PAC wait on further clarification of remaining alternatives until the redesigns are complete so the PAC can discuss specifics with better models.

**** Next meeting: April 24 to allow time to revise design of alternatives 3EIK and 4B.**

AGENDA 6: Questions from the Public

Mike Waugh, consultant for Holden began the public comment period by saying the MDOT is looking to spend multi-millions of dollars to serve 7,000 vehicles in the year 2030. He said it doesn't make fiscal sense and urged the MDOT to reconsider 1-4B and work to make it safe. He

asserted it could be done at the same cost or less than a limited access highway plus future improvements by constructing frontage roads

Tania McIntye then asked for clarification on term, “east of 46,” to which Ray said the MDOT hasn’t specifically defined exact touchdown points but it’s close to the town line and he could answer that in more detail at the next meeting.

Sharon Byers of Holden said that every time she’s attended a PAC meeting, alternatives “mysteriously disappear.” She wanted to know “who’s been voting alternatives off the table” and what role the PAC plays as the MDOT seems to be making all the decisions. Ray said that the MDOT has taken the input from the PAC and public comment and factored that into consideration of eliminating routes. Susanna Liller stated that the PAC is an advisory committee and never had the expectation of being a voting body.

Carol Smith said she was interested in knowing how much of each town’s comprehensive plan the MDOT knew about before the process started and if MDOT spoke to town officials when the study began. Bill responded that the MDOT collected and used information from the comprehensive plans prior to the formation of alternatives with the exception of Eddington, because of its age. For information on the Town of Eddington, the study team used information provided by PAC members and town officials. He said the MDOT collected plans before beginning the study and factored in just about everything in them including land-use, shore land zoning, facilities, plans, etc.

Larry Adams, Brewer, asked if the MDOT would be building the new road to Rte 9 standards and why not just take Rte 9 over the river and leave everyone alone. Ray responded that the PAC and MDOT already looked at that option and several others; I-395 has already been built and federal funds are no longer available to build new interstate-type highways. He said the MDOT is looking to build a similar road to Rte 9 beginning at I-395 and extending to Rte 9. Bill added the MDOT looked at this early in the study process and a river crossing was a non-starter because the I-95 is at capacity and I-395 is under capacity.

John Bryant, Holden, asked if building Rte 1A to 4-lanes is inevitable, why doesn’t the MDOT do it now? Ray responded that expanding 1A now doesn’t meet the need for this study and if the MDOT had plenty of money, they would expand it now. He said the first thing to do is identify the most appropriate locations for upgrades and then identify funding sources.

Rachel, East Holden, asked what the underground storage areas on the map were storing. She also asked someone to explain why the MDOT is doing this for 7,000 vehicles. Bill said the DEP provided data to the study team with other data; upon checking with the DEP, no records for these tanks were available. It appeared that this data was in error and the labels for the tanks would be removed. With regard to the reason for the study, he said there are traffic congestion, safety and crash problems that need to be addressed. Ray added that it is a recommendation for improvement from a study in late 90’s as part of improving the east/west highway system in Maine and part of a regional system linkage.

Jeff Sanford, Holden, said MDOT would repeat I-395 mistakes if it doesn't do something with Rte 1A right now. He said addressing a few thousand vehicles on Rte 46 vs. several thousand on Rte 1A is backwards as it will cut Holden in half for 5,000 vehicles but ignore 20,000 vehicles.

Steve, CD & ED Director, Holden said they had sent a letter to Ray Faucher from Mike Waugh that pointed out errors in the MDOT study and said flawed data is continuing to be used and that their engineer is telling the MDOT the data is flawed. Ray said the MDOT responded to that letter and reiterated the need to use the same level of information and methodology to evaluate the alternatives. He said the contour lines and other elevation data have nothing to do with the decision to eliminate the Rte 1A Upgrade alternative. Bill added that his comment, "flawed data" is not accurate. He said the MDOT used USGS data in the entire study area and the upgrade alternative had not been dismissed based on rigid interpretation of design data and resultant impacts. It simply does not satisfy part of the purpose and the need of improved system linkage of this study. Sandi Duchesne added the upgrade alternative is not being dismissed because of roadway geometry. The reason it was being dismissed was that it is not a limited access road. Access management is the reason. She also said that Holden is in the same exact situation as Brewer was with I-395 and it's helped them.

Linda Johns asked why MDOT can't upgrade 1A first and then decide if an alternative is necessary. Ed Harrow responded to Linda Johns and Mike Waugh saying that one of the main reasons for beginning to look at the problem more than 10 years ago was traffic congestion and the potential for accidents on Rte 46 as a consequence of the I-395 Bridge. He said any suggestion to upgrade Rte 46 would obliterate the residential community on Rte 46.

Grant Byers, Holden, said the MDOT is throwing things out that don't fit. He said system linkage is a want, not a need and that safety and access are needs.

Adjournment

Susanna Liller thanked everybody for their comments and encouraged one-on-one discussions after the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 9:15 PM

***** There is no I-395 PAC meeting in March. The next tentatively scheduled PAC meeting, unless otherwise noted, will be the evening of April 24 at the Holbrook School.***