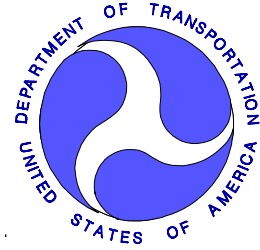




Maine Department of Transportation
I-395 / Route 9 Transportation Study
July 24, 2002
Public Advisory Committee Meeting



Contact Susanna Liller at 1-800-370-2458, extension 112
Meeting Minutes
July 24, 2002, at the Holbrook School
7:00-9:15 pm
PAC Meeting #13

Public Advisory Committee (PAC):

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

Study Team:

Raymond Faucher, MDOT
Richard Bostwick, MDOT
Dale Doughty, MDOT
Dale Mayo, MDOT
William Plumpton, Gannett Fleming
Jeraldine Chow Herrera, Barton &
Gingold
Susanna Liller, Barton & Gingold

Not in attendance:

Manley DeBeck, Jr.
Gerry Palmer
Al Skolfield

Susanna Liller opened the 13th PAC meeting. She introduced herself as the facilitator hired by the Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) to lead the Public Advisory Committee (PAC) and public meetings. She asked if everyone on the mailing list had received the minutes and began the meeting with the first item on the agenda.

AGENDA 1: OLD BUSINESS

Announcements

Gerry Palmer was unable to attend the meeting.

Minutes from the last meeting

No comment.

Review where we are in the study process

Bill Plumpton announced the study is still in the preliminary comparison stage.

Ray Faucher mentioned that he met, at their request, with the town officials in Holden on July 17th where he presented some of the same information that will be shared at this PAC meeting.

AGENDA 2: RESOLUTION FROM THE TOWN OF HOLDEN OTHER CORRESPONDANCE

Alan Bromley read a resolution in opposition to Alternatives 3EIK and 4B from the Town of Holden. *This document is attached.* He also gave Ray Faucher petitions signed by 968 residents.

Ellen Campbell received a letter that had been emailed to Ray. She distributed copies of this letter to the PAC and read it. *The letter is attached.*

NOTE:
These documents are not attached to the on-line version of the minutes.

AGENDA 3: RANGE OF REASONABLE ALTERNATIVES AND PRELIMINARY IMPACTS

The range of reasonable alternatives has grown with the suggestions made at the last meeting for alternatives that should be considered. There are now 13 possible alternatives, which include:

- No-build Alternative
- Alternative 1-4B-1 – Partial Upgrade Alternative
- Alternative 2B, 2BEF, 2BE3K
- Alternative 3EIK, 3EIK-1
- Alternative 3A-3EIK-1
- Alternative 4B
- Alternative 5A2EF, 5A2E3K, 5B2EF, 5B2E3K

Bill Plumpton reminded everyone the no-build alternative will always remain a reasonable alternative. MDOT must fully develop this alternative so that it can be used

as a basis of comparison with the other range of alternatives and to understand the consequences of taking no action.

In summarizing the overall difference between this matrix and the matrix used at the last PAC meeting, Bill said a new column has been added to the matrix – “Number of Buildings in Proximity”; in proximity was defined as within 500 feet of edge of the roadway (for a total width of approximately 1200 feet wide). The purpose of adding this column was to measure the impact of each alternative along the entire length of the alternative or affected area. This was done in response to the suggestions made at the last meeting that MDOT should not place an alternative too close to the majority of people. This also helps to illustrate the impact of Alternative 2B along the section of Route 9. The impact to neighbors in proximity are greater with Alternative 2B than the other alternatives.

Another column added to the matrix is “Length of Local Roads Created”. This column shows the amount of local road that would be created with Alternative 1-4B-1.

All alternative 5s are new. This was suggested at the last PAC meeting in May.

Alternative 1-4B-1 – Partial Upgrade Alternative

Bill passed around a very large map for the PAC members to review. He invited the public to come up to look at the map after the meeting.

Alternative 1-4B-1 is the only controlled access alternative. All other alternatives are limited access. It has been designed with no bridges going over the road. The flow of traffic would be controlled with seven jughandles to access area businesses and residences, or to reverse direction, and traffic signals at intersections created by the jughandles. The speed of traffic would be controlled in part by a system of pacer lights. This design was suggested by the town of Holden.

Responding to Jim Ring’s question, Bill said approximately 4.9 miles of local roads would be created to provide access to residential and commercial property that would no longer have access from Route 1A. Bill said access to residential and commercial property would be from the rear of the building. Local roads would be constructed by the state and owned and maintained by the Town. Jughandles were placed between 2400 and 3500 feet apart. Because limited topographic information exists at this time in the study, the local roads created were buffered by three meters (10 feet) for purposes of calculating preliminary impacts.

Bill Plumpton pointed out that this alternative impacts approximately 42 acres of prime farmland which is protected under the Federal Farmlands Protection Policy Act. This alternative impacts more farmlands than other alternatives. Bill also drew attention to the number of residential and commercial displacements.

The study team recently met with the Boy Scouts of America at Camp Roosevelt. It was learned at this meeting that Alternatives 1-4B and 4B, as currently designed, would cross the western third of the scout reservation resulting in potentially substantial impacts to their operations and wilderness experience.

Bill pointed out a mistake in the matrix. The length of new roadway should be lower than 10.2 miles for this alternative (10.2 miles was the total length of the alternative). This will be fixed for the next meeting. He explained that most of the local roads created would end at a single property resulting in 'deadhead' time for school buses, snowplows, trash collection, etc.

Roger Raymond asked for the proposed speed limit. Bill said the roadway component ideally would be posted for 55 mph, but he was unsure if the technology proposed would be able to achieve this speed. Bill questioned the ability of the pacer lights to hold platoons of traffic together as intended, as trucks and cars, as well as individuals, accelerate at different speeds. Ray added that the objective at this point is to upgrade Route 1A so that it is comparable to operations on other principle arterial roads.

Ellen Campbell said that she didn't see a need for the pacer lights. She suggested using signs instead to control traffic. Bill asked Mike Waugh, a consultant for the town of Holden, if the pacer lights exist.

Mr. Waugh said all parts and technology exist but have yet to be put together as has been suggested by the Town of Holden. There is no highway where this is currently in place.

In response to Rick Bronson's question, Ray Faucher said the local community is usually responsible for the maintenance of the facilities after they have been installed by the State. An agreement between the local community and the State would be developed that would identify maintenance responsibilities.

Sandi Duchesne asked what would happen to the pacer lights when they failed to work. In particular, she wanted to know if weather, crashes, etc would impact their function. She also wondered how pacer lights would work for drivers who do not drive as fast or have trouble seeing the lights. Mike Waugh said they were in the process of installing a similar system at the Portland mall. When the system malfunctions, it can be fixed.

Responding to Roger Raymond's concerns, Mike Waugh said traffic lights would be installed at the jughandles to help preserve traffic capacity.

Mike Waugh said this alternative was suggested as an additional alternative to be looked at with the others. Ray added MDOT will evaluate all the pros and cons of this system and compare this to the full range of reasonable alternatives.

Joan Brooks said when new technology was introduced between Newport and Skowhegan to control traffic, it failed to operate as it was envisioned. Ellen Campbell thought it was never implemented despite the millions spent on this project.

Charles Plummer asked if the study team had any cost estimates for Alternative 1-4B-1. Bill Plumpton replied no cost estimates have yet been develop for the alternatives, but this would be done in the near future to help screen alternatives prior to detailed study of a few alternatives.

Bill recommended MDOT should further investigate the capability of the pacer light system. He also suggested that PAC members speak to their town members to talk about the advantages and disadvantages of this system and Alternative 1-4B. Selecting this alternative would be asking MDOT to adopt an alternative that would not solve the needs of this study as well as the other alternatives, and that this alternative may also result in greater impacts to people, the business community, and the environment than other alternatives.

Ellen Campbell said regardless of what happens, Route 1A will have to be upgraded in 10 years.

Alternatives 2B, 2BEF, 2BE3K

Except for the addition of a column in the matrix to quantify the number of people in proximity, Alternative 2B has not changed since the last meeting.

Alternative 2BEF consists of a section of 2B between the I-395 and the Holden / Eddington townline, and two sections of road parallel to the south of Route 9 called 2E and 2F.

Alternative 2BE3K consists of a section of 2B between the I-395 and the Holden / Eddington townline, a section of road parallel to the south of Route 9 called 2E, and 3K.

Looking at the matrix, Bill highlighted the fact that Alternative 2BEF impacts approximately 65 acres of wetlands. Under federal and state protection acts, MDOT has to select the alternative with the least impact to wetlands. With this in mind, this alternative should be dismissed from further consideration.

Alternatives 3EIK, 3EIK-1

At the last PAC meeting in May, it was suggested that the alternatives were too close to residential property along Eastern Avenue and that MDOT should consider moving Alternative 3EIK further to the south and east away from residential areas. Alternative 3EIK was originally proposed to be approximately 500 feet, at its closest point, to the rear property line of residents within Eaton Ridge; this alternative was shifted and is currently proposed to be about 1500 feet from the rear property line. Alternative 3EIK-1 is approximately 1200 feet from the rear property line.

Alternative 3A-3EIK-1

This alternative was designed in response to suggestions at the last PAC meeting from some Holden businesses to use the existing interchange of I-395. Alternative 3A-3EIK-1 comes off the existing interchange and ties into 3EIK-1 as described above.

Bill mentioned the department is not ready to dismiss any of the family of 3s based on the information gathered.

Sandi Duchesne asked if Alternative 3EIK could be eliminated. Bill said no, as more information from the federal and state resource agencies is needed to conclusively eliminate this alternative from further study.

Alternative 4B

This alternative has not changed. However, it was pointed out that this alternative, as well as Alternative 1-4B, would be the most disruptive to the operations of Camp Roosevelt and is thought to be the most costly to construct.

Alternative 5A2EF, 5A2E3K, 5B2EF, 5B2E3K

It was suggested at the last PAC meeting that MDOT should develop a series of alternatives parallel to the existing utility corridors to minimize the impact of introducing a new road to the area. The family of 5s were designed to follow the two corridors of electric lines and the gas line to the south of Route 9. The side of the utility corridor chosen was the side that minimized the impact to people.

Alan Bromley asked if there would be an interchange or an overpass where Alternative 5B2EF and 5B2E3K cross Route 1A. Ray said MDOT has not yet designed the interchanges and intersections of alternatives but believes the existing interchange would be maintained and doubts there would be two interchanges within proximity to one another.

In studying the impacts of the family of Alternative 5s, Bill Plumpton observed far greater impacts to wetlands and a greater number of residential displacements. He suggested to Ray Faucher that MDOT consider dismissing the family of Alternative 5s from further consideration.

Summary

MDOT will dismiss Alternatives 2BEF and the family of Alternative 5s from further consideration, pending coordination with the federal and state regulatory and resource agencies.

Jim Ring expressed his frustration with Alternative 1-4B-1 as it leads to the highest number of residential and commercial displacements. He suggested dismissing this alternative. Bill noted his comment but said they would need to further develop this alternative and a couple of modifications of it prior to further analysis and discussion. Bill encouraged the Town of Holden to assess how its people and businesses would react to Alternative 1-4B and to speak to the DOT with one voice.

Linda Johns asked if “Roadway Crossings” in the matrix includes bridge crossings. Bill said that it was the number of roads crossed by an alternative, whether at grade or with a bridge.

Sandi Duchesne asked if Camp Roosevelt’s concerns could be addressed if the alternative were tweaked. Bill said they would try.

Seeing how intrusive Alternative 1-4B-1 is, Ed Harrow asked why it needed further investigation. Bill Plumpton said the alternative was suggested as a reasonable alternative and it would need to be a little more fully developed prior to further comparison to other alternatives.

Alan Bromley noted the town of Holden has for the most part been focusing on the Route 1A portion, not 4B of the alternative proposed. He added there were portions of existing Route 46 that the study team has treated similar to Route 9. A combined upgrade route will look more attractive. MDOT will develop alternatives that use Route 46 with a similar section to the improved portions of Route 9 for the next meeting.

Ray Faucher said when Route 1A was looked at as a 4 lane upgrade, they used freeway standards of 3-4% grade. Route 46 would be reevaluated from the same template as Route 9. It would likely reduce the amount of cut and fills and result in less impact.

In response to Joan Brooks, Bill reiterated the list of alternatives that remain for consideration. They are:

- No-build Alternative
- Alternative 1-4B-1 – Partial Upgrade Alternative
- Alternative 2B, 2BE3K
- Alternative 3EIK, 3EIK-1
- Alternative 3A-3EIK-1
- Alternative 4B

He said more alternatives will be added as a result of the discussion at this meeting.

Alan Bromley asked if the no-build alternative had to be kept. Bill concurred and said that the no-build alternative would be kept for detailed study, and its consequences on taking no action fully developed and compared to other alternatives.

Jim Ring reminded everyone not to lose sight of one of the original purposes and needs of this study of finding a way to move traffic through this 50 square mile area. It is necessary to compare the ultimate traffic operations desired. Bill agreed with him.

Rick Bronson commented on the accident rates in the town of Holden. From the Holden Town cemetery to Holden Town Line, it has been reported that an accident takes place a little more frequently than every 20 days – a rise from years past. He pointed out the study is now in its second year. Dr. Harrow remembers discussing this same transportation issue over 10 years ago. He noted that all the time spent discussing this issue is at the cost of promptly addressing the safety issue.

Ed Harrow said Alternative 1-4B-1 results in many residential and commercial displacements thereby causing certain areas to be more congested. It does not make sense to improve Route 46 so as to make Alternative 1-4B more palatable.

AGENDA 4: QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

Dick from Holden asked the study team to reconsider Alternative 5B. Ray Faucher said it would have to be presented to the resource agencies before it can be dismissed. Based on his experience, an alternative with high impact to the natural environment will not be permissible. Studying this alternative further would be wasteful.

Judy Sullivan said Alternative 2B does not satisfy the purpose and needs of this study. She does not feel safe trying to get in and out of her driveway when there are 80,000 lb trucks on that road. She thinks that the study team has been ignoring the issue of safety. In response, Bill Plumpton reminded everyone that despite safety being the overriding general concern, there were four specific areas identified in the study purpose and need that were identified as high crash locations warranting improvement. Alternative 2B was developed with the idea of satisfying linkage, traffic needs and safety at those four specific high crash locations. Alternative 2B is a practicable alternative that needs to be studied further.

Ms. Sullivan added there are many households affected by this alternative and it did not make sense to focus on the impact to wetlands. She reiterated the danger of trying to get into her driveway with an 80,000 lb truck behind her. Bill Plumpton said Alternative 2B did meet the design criteria. This study process, which is directed by NEPA, requires federal agencies to consider an alternative which satisfies, at the least cost, the study purpose and need with the least impact to people and the environment. It would be difficult to obtain a permit for an alternative that has more impact to wetlands. Ray Faucher added that no matter which alternative is selected, impacts to people and natural resources are unavoidable.

Mike Waugh asked what roadway standards were still being used. Bill Plumpton said the original analysis was based on freeway criteria.

Mr. Waugh told the PAC that although Alternative 1-4B-1 is a costly option, it may qualify for funding which is not typically available to the DOT. Ray agreed but pointed out that while funding for demonstration projects is available, this project would need to compete with other demonstration projects and demonstration project funding is not guaranteed.

Ralph McCloud from Holden explained the route of Alternative 2F and the areas this alternative would impact. He urged the study team to go out and take a look at each proposed route.

Elizabeth Umphray asked about changing design criteria midway through the study. She wanted to know what happened to routes that had been dismissed before freeway criteria for slope were changed. She also asked if the team would study the section of Alternative 2BE3K that crosses over the southern end of the Holden line. Bill Plumpton said the study team tweaked the design criteria for slope for Alternative 4B in an effort to create an alternative with less impact to people and the environment. Bill said that he did not think it would be necessary to study the alternatives that have been dismissed because the slope of other alternatives did not approach the limits of the design criteria. In response to her second concern, Ray Faucher said they would try to get the portion that runs parallel to Route 9 as close to the Eddington town line as possible. In many cases, property lines run concurrent to town lines so that only edges of land parcels would be affected.

The next PAC meeting is scheduled for September 18, 2002.