

I-395/Route 9 Transportation Study PAC Meeting Summary

**November 19, 2008
7:00 to 9:00 PM
Eddington School, 440 Main Road Eddington, Maine**

Overview of Meeting

1. Welcome and Introductions of Study Team and Committee Members

Twelve of thirteen PAC members were in attendance.
Kat Fuller, Chief of Planning for MaineDOT, attended the early part of the meeting.

2. Town of Holden resolution expressing opposition to the study

Based on its understanding of the prospects for construction and operation, the Town of Holden opposes continuation of the study.

3. Traffic Data

Truck traffic traveling Route 178 to I-395 is nominal; therefore a connection of the alternatives to Route 178 is not being considered.

4./5./6. Conceptual Design, Discussion on the Range of Alternatives Being Considered, and Further Avoidance and Minimization of Impacts

Conceptual design of the build alternatives, including connectors, interchanges and intersections, was discussed.

PAC suggestions for additional connectors should be submitted to the DOT.

7. Review of Short-term Activities

Continued analysis of impacts and preparation of permit application and DEIS.

8. Next Meeting: Anticipated Agenda and Timeframe

Spring 2009 focused on a preview of the DEIS document.

9. Questions from the Public

- Questions or clarification and comments on the study.

Meeting Details

Attendance	PAC Members	Representing
✓	Alan Bromley	Holden
✓	Rick Bronson, Fire Chief	Brewer
✓	Joan Brooks	Eddington
✓	John Bryant	Holden
absent	John Butts	Holden
✓	Manley DeBeck, Jr.	Brewer
✓	Rob Kenerson	BACTS
✓	Linda Johns, City Planner	Brewer, Clifton
✓	Rodney Lane, Lane Construction	Regional Development Trends
✓	Charles Plummer	Eddington
✓	Roger Raymond, Bucksport Town Manager	Bucksport
✓	Jim Ring, Bangor City Engineer	Bangor
	Study Team	
✓	Ray Faucher	MaineDOT
✓	Kat Fuller	MaineDOT
✓	Mark Hasselmann	FHWA
✓	Bill Plumpton	Gannett Fleming, Inc.
✓	Michelle Brummer	Gannett Fleming, Inc.
✓	Dave Hamlet	Gannett Fleming, Inc.

1. Welcome and Introductions of Study Team and Committee Members

Michelle Brummer welcomed attendees to the public advisory committee meeting (PAC) for the I-395/Route 9 Transportation Study. She asked the study team, members of the PAC, and elected officials to introduce themselves.

Michelle briefly reviewed the purpose of the PAC, its responsibilities, and ground rules to the meeting. These items were presented in detail at the August 20th PAC meeting and associated handout.

Bill Plumpton reported on the status of follow-up items to the August 20th meeting.

- Regarding the request for the results and/or data from the 2001 license plate study, Bill reported that the study compared the license plates of vehicles exiting I-395 to Route 1A southbound to license plates on Route 1A south of Route 46. This study found that approximately 30% of vehicles exiting I-395 continued on Route 1A south of Route 46. He asked if this information satisfied the request. Rob stated that he wondered about the nature of the study and its results, and yes

this information was sufficient. Ray Faucher added that a 1998 origin and destination study supplemented these results.

2. Bill thanked Linda Johns and Rick Bronson for their communications regarding the location of the natural gas station.
3. Regarding the request for vernal pool mapping, Bill reported that data had been sent to Brewer and Holden. Linda Johns and John Bryant confirmed receipt.
4. Regarding the request to consider trails when designing the alternatives, Bill stated that data from the Maine Snowmobile Association was collected at the beginning of the study and that a request was submitted for updated trails data.
5. Bill noted that the handouts and maps from the August meeting were posted on the study website.
6. Bill stated that information posters displaying a large map of the alternatives were sent to each town or city office. PAC members reported that the posters have had a lot of attention.
7. Finally, the regarding the request for a link to the MaineDOT's traffic data, Bill directed attention to the link provided on this meeting's agenda.

2. Town of Holden resolution expressing opposition to the study

Bill stated that the Town of Holden's resolution has been made part of the MaineDOT administrative record.

John Bryant summarized the three points of the resolution. John stated that the Town of Holden had been discussing its' concerns about the study and decided to issue this resolution to make its position known. The town has three concerns:

1. The lack of current funding for construction, as reported throughout the media, suggests it is a poor use of limited funds to continue this study.
2. 100,000 pound trucks would not be permitted to use the road.
3. Ongoing discussion of a privately funded east-west highway suggests that private interests may address the problem sooner than state and federal funds can be made available.

The Town believes that whichever alternative is funded and built, it should be a regional solution. At this time, it is not wise to continue this study. The Town issued this resolution to share its point of view with other communities.

Kat Fuller, Chief of Planning for MaineDOT, commented on the state of this study and the state of funding at the DOT in general. Kat began by saying that, as a result of limited funding, the DOT needs to determine the next best step. This next step will be decided in the coming months. The legislature has asked the DOT for a prioritized list and status report of all studies. Kat stated that the DOT has insufficient funding to maintain its current highway system and therefore insufficient funding to expand (or add to) the current highway system. The DOT was asked to cut \$39 million from its 2010-2011 budget with specific direction not to cut certain areas (e.g., urban/rural programs, and debt service). Kat stated that the DOT would like to hear from communities on the status of studies. Community leaders and residents may contact Kat directly by phone or in writing, or contact Ray.

Charles Plummer asked what the Town of Holden's resolution addressed. Kat responded that the resolution expressed a position not to continue the study.

Rob Kenerson asked how long the study's conclusions would remain in effect, if the study proceeded to conclusion. Kat replied, for the conclusions to remain in effect, that funds for some facets of project development (i.e., the next steps) would need to be programmed.

Roger Raymond stated that if the continuation of the study impacts the DOT's funding for maintenance, he believes the study should be discontinued.

Rod Lane asked how much DOT budgeted for this study. Ray replied that the study cost was estimated at \$1.75 million and approximately \$0.5 million remains. (Post-meeting correction: Actual amounts are \$2.5 million budgeted with approximately \$0.65 million remaining.)

Jim Ring states that he understands the struggle of limited funding and would like confirmation that monies used to complete this study will not impact maintenance funds. He cautioned, if DOT determines to discontinue the study, that traffic congestion would continue to deteriorate.

Chris Pilot, a new resident of Holden, asked if the study was discontinued, how residents could be assured that it would not be continued at some future time, thus impacting their property value in the coming years. Kat responded that the DOT cannot make guarantees. If the study comes to conclusion and it is decided not to move forward, it will not be revisited. If the study is discontinued and the economy rebounds, the DOT could begin the conversation of potential improvements anew.

Bill added that the purpose and needs identified at the beginning of the study still exists. The needs for reducing congestion, improving safety and improving system linkage won't fix themselves.

Michael Celli of Brewer stated that truck traffic is getting worse in Brewer. A new connector would alleviate truck traffic and improve safety in the City.

Dave Link of Holden and Eddington asked about the cost of construction in relation to the DOT's budget. Ray responded that the DOT has seen recent average construction costs of \$7-8 million per mile. For a 10 to 11-mile connector as studied here, construction would likely cost \$70 to \$80 million. This amount is one-half of DOT's budget for one year. Kat added that the DOT is one-half billion short on funds needed to meet its current needs.

Margie, a resident near Davis Pond, expressed support for continuing the study.

Jim Russell, a resident of Eddington, expressed support for continuing the study, emphasizing that not continuing to reach a conclusion would be money wasted.

Russ Coulter, son of Dorothy Coulter, an Eddington resident, preferred to end the study until the outcome is economically feasible.

Chris Pilot made a similar statement.

Benji Grant, a resident of Holden, asked if the DOT could really afford to build the connector, since projections of future traffic show only 7,000 vehicles per day in 2030.

Hugh Crawford, a resident of Eddington, expressed interest in the prospect of a privately funded highway and stated that the final alignment of a new road might impact future traffic volumes.

Dave Lakeman, a resident of Holden, stated that communities are being hurt economically by not deciding which route to take. Industry doesn't know where to site new development and are staying away. It would be a poor decision not to continue the study.

Linda Johns asked how long it will take to complete the study. Bill and Ray replied that the final EIS could be completed within about a year and a half.

Malcolm Coulter, Jr., a resident of Holden and son of a resident of Eddington, asked for clarification that if a preferred route would be identified in about a year and half, what would happen next. Bill said that once a preferred alternative is identified, communities could update their comprehensive plans to embody the preferred alternative. Ray added that the DOT would seek and put funding in place for final design and property acquisition.

Michael Celli emphasized that without the study, there could be no further funding. Therefore, the study should continue to the point that funding could be sought.

Bill directed the conversation to the point of the Town of Holden's resolution regarding weight limits. Ray clarified that the DOT continues to pressure the congressional delegation to allow trucks weighing 100,000 pounds to be able to use the Interstate System, however, trucks with weights up to 100,000 pounds would be permitted to use the proposed new roadway.

Kat thanked the PAC and audience for participating in the study and departed.

John Bryant stated that if funding for construction and the barrier of weight limits can be resolved, then the Town of Holden would reconsider its position on the study.

3. Traffic Data

Bill stated that two six-hour truck counts were conducted at the intersection of Route 178 and Route 9 in September 2008. The first was from 12pm to 6pm and the second from 6am to 12pm the following day. This is a typical data collection approach. This data was factored up to yield a 24-hour estimate of 320 trucks per day. The truck counters tallied the number of axles as an indicator of truck weight and the counter observed whether

they were loaded, empty, or not known. For every 100 trucks, 98 were six axle, heavy (100,000 pound) trucks. The remaining two were five axle 80,000 pound trucks.

Frank Higgins of Eddington asked Ray to restate the hours of the truck counts.

Bill restated that the link to the DOT's online traffic data was printed on the agenda.

4./5./6. Conceptual Design, Discussion on the Range of Alternatives Being Considered, and Further Avoidance and Minimization of Impacts

Bill began the discussion of alternatives by stating that no new alternatives have been added and none would be added during the remainder of this study. Tonight's presentation will focus on connections between alternatives to attempt to further minimize impacts, interchanges with I-395 and intersections with non-interstate highways.

Dave Hamlet gave an overview the alternatives, their possible connections, interchanges and intersections, as shown on the meeting handout.

Chris Pilot asked if costs for each of the options are available for comparison purposes. Dave responded that 2B-2 is the shortest alternative and therefore requires the least new construction and would be the cheapest to construct. Estimates for the cost of constructing the build alternatives will be prepared.

Dave highlighted a typical section of right-of-way, showing the area for the initial two lanes of new roadway and, ultimately, the two additional lanes for a four lane roadway. This diagram was included in the meeting handout.

Charles Plummer asked how much of an impact the abandoned railroad has on the alternatives. Dave responded that the alternative will need to bridge over the railroad. Bridging, of course, adds costs.

Charles added that the railroad has no interested in upgrading the line. Ray replied that the DOT has seen railroad lines brought back into service after abandonment. This line is currently owned by the State of Maine and Maine DOT wants to maintain this corridor for potential future train service.

Bill asked if there were other connectors between alternatives to consider. Linda Johns agreed that all reasonable connectors had been identified. Joan Brooks commented on the placement of the Route 178 and Route 9 connectors in regard to the location of the Eddington School, advocating for an alternative that keeps truck traffic away from the school.

Regarding the interchanges and intersections, Bill asked if there were other locations or conceptual designs that were not considered. Dave Link asked about upgrades to the Route 46 / Route 9 intersection. Ray said that the Route 46 / Route 9 intersection would be straightened. Charles Plummer commented that trucks traveling north on Route 46 and turning east on Route 9 use all of the available pavement to make the turn.

Jim Marley asked if roundabouts and/or rotaries were considered for the intersections. Ray responded that roundabouts have not been considered to date but have been used in other locations in Maine.

Benji Grant asked for clarification on roundabouts and rotaries. Ray responded that roundabouts are designed to slow traffic to 20-25 mph while rotaries are designed for higher speed travel.

Michael Celli suggested extending alternative 5B2E3K to connect to Route 178 and Route 9.

Jim Ring asked if some of the connectors would be challenging to construct because of the existing topography and the need to create suitable grades for truck traffic. Dave replied that these connectors would come at a higher cost and would have a much wider footprint, but the engineering is possible. Ray added that while possible, they may not be practicable.

Linda Johns asked, for the 20 trucks per hour traveling south on Route 178 into Brewer, how many are destined for Brewer or the Interstate vs. those headed for Bucksport. The study team did not know the answer, but speculated that few are headed to Bucksport.

Bill indicated that at 20 trucks per hour, the cost of making the Route 178 connection is not reasonable and the DOT is not interested in pursuing a connection to Route 178.

Linda asked how many trucks westbound on Route 9 would take I-395 vs. Main Street in Brewer. Bill said that he did not recall but would provide it in the meeting summary as a follow-up.

John Bryant indicated that he believes there may be another option for connecting 2B-2 with Route 9, acknowledging that heavy trucks through north Brewer are a regional problem. Michael Celli indicated that he has observed 1 truck every two minutes in north Brewer, and that a Route 178 connection is important. Bill asked that John sketch the location and send it to Ray.

7. Review of Short-term Activities

Bill outlined the next steps in the study:

1. Share the analysis and impacts with the federal and state agencies.
2. Refine the alternatives to further minimize impacts (e.g. with bridges).
3. Continue study of the alternatives.
4. Narrow the range of connectors.
5. Update property owner information with new homes, new subdivisions, etc.
6. Develop cost estimates.
7. Analyze utility impacts.
8. Submit the Section 404 permit application to the Army Corps of Engineers.
9. Prepare the DEIS document presenting all alternatives equally

Roger Raymond stated that the handout included no information on connectors for the family of three alternatives. Bill responded that no changes or connectors had been studies for this family.

8. Next Meeting: Anticipated Agenda and Timeframe

Bill estimated that the next PAC meeting would be scheduled for Spring 2009. That meeting would provide the PAC with a preview of the DEIS.

Bill asked if the study's communications methods (i.e., website, newsletter, and posters) were sufficient for the communities. Linda, John, Joan, and Manley indicated that these were adequate.

Charles Plummer added that many people do not have access to the website. Ray replied that the same information is provided in handout form to the town offices.

Alan Bromley stated that the maps mislabel Grange Hall as George Hall, and Cleweyville Road as Mann Hill Road. Bill will have the maps corrected.

9. Questions from the Public

Jim Russell stated that kids are important in every community. He suggested that the study remain focused on the east-west connection and revisit the option of connecting to Route 178 at a later point in time.

Malcolm Coulter, Jr. asked why such a large swing in some of the build alternatives is shown north of East Eddington. Ray responded that this eastern end of the study area is the most built up. The alternatives go around this village to avoid costly impacts to people and natural resources.

Don asked if the utility corridor was a suitable corridor for the alignment. Bill replied that the alternatives seek the path of least impact. Residential and wetland impacts are both high in this corridor.

Hugh Crawford suggested that there may be a corridor with fewer impacts south of the powerline corridor. The MaineDOT has considered the feasibility of locating this portion of the build alternatives along the utility easement and found it to result in greater impacts to people and natural resources but would take another look.

Nancy Asbury, daughter of Dorothy Coulter, expressed her preference for the no- build alternative, stating that the objective of getting trucks to I-395 is still not sufficiently achieved through these alternatives. She asked to see the conceptual design of an upgraded Route 46 / Route 9 intersection at the next meeting. Ray responded that the DOT was charged with improving east-west travel in the 1990s. Portions of the existing highway network have been improved but upgrades in a few areas, like this one, were more challenging.

Chris Pilot spoke against continuing the study based on cost effectiveness and potential impacts to wildlife and, in particular, to bald eagles. Ray replied that the state and federal agencies have not reported eagle nests in the central portion of the study area.

Benji Grant confirmed that alternative 5B2E3K requires five miles of new road plus the upgrade of 4.5 miles of existing road.

At 9:00pm, Ray thanked everyone for their attention and dismissed the meeting.

Action Items/Follow-ups

1. Provide data on the number of trucks using Route 9. Post-meeting follow-up: About 780 heavy trucks use the portion of Route 9 near Route 46 in 2006. About 1,090 heavy trucks use the portion of Route 9 near Route 178 in 2006.

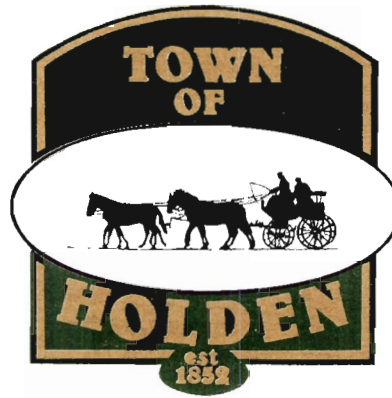
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TOWN MANAGER

John W. Butts



TOWN COUNCIL

John Bryant, Chairman
Robert Harvey, Vice Chairman
Paul Amoroso
Ralph McLeod
Joel Swanton

November 1, 2008

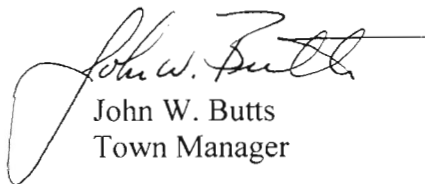
Mr. Raymond Faucher
Maine Department of Transportation
16 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333-0016

Mr. Ray Faucher,

On October 16, 2008 the Holden Town Council unanimously approved a position statement opposing the I-395/Route 9 Connector for reasons expressed in the attached Resolution and Position Statement. As stated in the last paragraph of the position statement, if the funding problem and weight restrictions are resolved and nothing becomes of the private investors proposal then the Council would support option 2B-2 as the preferred alternative to insure maximum regional benefits.

As stated in my previous correspondence a copy of the attached resolution and position statement has been forwarded to our Congressional Delegation, State Legislators, surrounding communities and the press. Please feel free to contact me at 843-5151 if you have any questions or comments regarding the Town of Holden's position regarding this matter.

Sincerely,


John W. Butts
Town Manager

Town of Holden
State Route 9 to I395 Connector Position Statement
August 11, 2008

MDOT plans to study five proposed routes and plans to finalize their decision to the Federal Highway Administration (FHA) by mid-2009. The Holden Town Council desires to communicate our position to the MDOT and the FHA to ensure optimum value for the region and provide leadership for Holden and the surrounding communities.

From the beginning, the I395 connector study had five goals;

1. Improve regional system linkage,
2. Improve safety,
3. Improve the flow of traffic and shipment of goods between I395 and Route 9,
4. Adhere to MDOT's budget, and
5. Minimize social and environmental impacts

The Holden Town Council opposes MDOT's continuation of this planning process and further waste of state and local personal and financial resources for the following reasons:

- a. MDOT's budget is currently insufficient to meet the repair and maintenance needs of Maine's transportation infrastructure. These needs are critical for safety and Maine's economy and all limited funds should receive higher priority than this project.
- b. Federal regulations currently limit truck gross vehicle weight on the northern part of our interstate system to 80,000 lbs, including I395. State regulations allow 100,000 lbs on state highways, including State Route 9 in Clifton and Eddington. The goal of improved traffic flow and shipment of goods between I395 and State Route 9 cannot be accomplished until this weight inequity is resolved. Until the conflicting weight limits on State Route 9 and I395 are addressed through federal policy changes, the proposed connector makes absolutely no sense. Upgrade of existing roads or the no-build option should be the priority.
- c. Since 2006, private investors have advocated an East-West Highway alternative to the proposed MDOT connector from State Route 9 to I395, whereby a private toll highway would be constructed, and paid for by private investors. The proposed route does not involve use of Route 9 or I395. This privately funded option continues to gain momentum, and would prevent MDOT from spending limited public funds unnecessarily. The feasibility of this project should be fully explored before further resources are spent on the connector project.

MDOT should not spend any additional resources on this planning process unless MDOT addresses the critical issues stated above. The Holden Town Council supports a no-build option and construction of the proposed privately funded East-West Highway.

If the funding and weight restriction issues are resolved and the need for a connector can still be justified, Holden's position is as follows:

The Holden Town Council supports option 2B-2 as the preferred alternative in order to accomplish the connector study goals and ensure maximum regional benefits. Holden's support of option 2B-2 is based on three key advantages; 1) 2B-2 could incorporate Route 178 traffic flow to I395 without use of North Brewer's residential roads (maximum regional benefit), 2) option 2B-2 is the shortest length of new construction (minimal cost), and 3) option 2B-2 utilizes existing State Route 9 to the highest degree (avoids new road construction).

Therefore, the Holden Town Council supports option 2B-2 as the preferred alternative if (and only if) the I395 weight restriction changes to the state road limit of 100,000 lbs. If the 80,000 lbs weight restriction on I395 continues, the Holden Town Council supports a no-build option and private funding for the proposed East-West Highway.



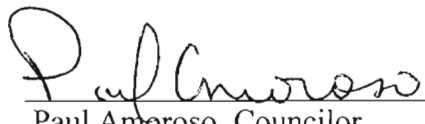
John Bryant, Chairperson



Robert Harvey, Vice Chairperson



Joel Swanton, Councilor



Paul Amoroso, Councilor



Ralph McLeod, Councilor

Date Approved: October 16, 2008

TOWN OF HOLDEN, MAINE

**A RESOLUTION EXPRESSING OPPOSITION TO THE
I-395 TO ROUTE 9 ROAD CONNECTION**

WHEREAS, representatives from the Holden Town Council and other surrounding communities have been working with officials of the Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) to identify potential feasible routes to connecting Interstate 395 and Route 9 with a limited access highway in order to address transportation needs in this region; and

WHEREAS, the Holden Town Council opposes MDOT's continuation of this planning process and further waste of state and local personal and financial resources; and

WHEREAS, current MDOT funding is insufficient to meet the repair and maintenance needs of Maine's existing transportation system; and

WHEREAS, current federal regulations limit truck gross weight to 80,000 lbs on the northern part of our interstate system including I-395 and state regulations allow 100,000 lbs on state highways an impasse exists that must be resolved prior to connecting the two routes; and

WHEREAS, a private toll East-West Highway has been proposed that would not involve I-395 or Route 9; and

WHEREAS, the proposed East-West Highway would solve many of the states current transportation needs; and

WHEREAS, such a highway would be constructed from private investments preventing the MDOT from expending limited public funds; and

WHEREAS, if the funding and weight restrictions can be resolved the Holden Town Council may reconsider this issue if option 2B-2 is considered as the alternative route.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Holden Town Council expresses its opposition to continuation of this project until such time as the above mentioned issues can be resolved and desires MDOT and the Public Advisory Committee (PAC) to join with them in support of this resolution.

October 16, 2008
Date Adopted

HOLDEN TOWN COUNCIL

John Bryant
John Bryant, Chairman

Joel Swanton
Joel Swanton

Robert Harvey
Robert Harvey, Vice-Chairman

Paul Amoroso
Paul Amoroso

Ralph McLeod
Ralph McLeod