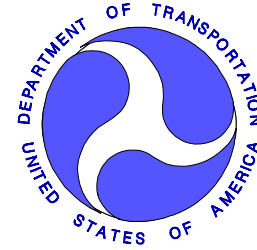




**Maine Department of  
Transportation  
I-395 / Route 9 Transportation  
Study**

September 19, 2001  
Public Informational Meeting



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

***Meeting Minutes***

*September 19, 2001*

*7:00-10:00 pm*

*Public Informational Meeting*

The purpose of this public meeting was to update the public on the work that had been done by the study team and members of the PAC since the public scoping and informational meeting in April. PAC members were not required to attend this meeting but many were present. The members of the study team present at this meeting include:

Ray Faucher – MDOT

Fred Michaud – MDOT

William Plumpton – Gannett Fleming, Inc.

Jeraldine Chow – Barton & Gingold

Bill Plumpton gave a 45-minute slide presentation where he reviewed the

1. The study process
2. Purpose of the study
3. Needs of the study
4. Evolution of the build alternatives
5. Future activities

**Some of the key points include:**

1. Study Process
  - Study is being performed in accordance with the framework that has been developed for complying with the State's Sensible Transportation Policy Act and the National Environmental Policy Act.
  - The results of this study will be the identification of the single alternative that satisfies the purpose and needs of the study, results in the least impact to the environment (both the natural environment and the man-made environment, considered equally), and at an affordable cost.
  - The preferred alternative identified as a result of this study, would then be advanced to final design, assuming that funding exists.

## 2. Purpose

- Improve a section of Maine's National Highway System from I-395 in Brewer to Route 9, consistent with current American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials policy on design
- Improve regional system linkage
- Improve safety on Route 9, 46, and 1A
- Improve the current and future flow of traffic and shipment of goods to the interstate system

## 3. Needs

- Improve System linkage
- Improve Safety
- Improve Traffic congestion

## 4. Evolution of the Build Alternatives

- The impacts to the man-made and natural features in the area are considered equally in the evaluation of all alternatives. The preferred alternative should result in the least impact to people and natural resources.
- Man-made features include land use, future land use and zoning, neighborhoods and community cohesion, community facilities and services, uncontrolled petroleum and hazardous wastes, cultural resources including historic and archaeological resources, public parks and recreation lands, noise, air quality, and economic and demographic information
- Natural features include physical geography, soil and geology, aquatic resources including surface waters and groundwater, floodplains, and wetlands, vegetation, wildlife, fisheries, endangered/threatened and other protected species and air quality
- 45 possible alternatives were developed at the May PAC meeting. At the June PAC meeting, following the initial evaluation of the corridors by the study team, the number of original alternatives was reduced to 8, then, following suggestions from the PAC, was increased to 12. Following further evaluation by the study team of the 4 new alternatives, the study team recommended that two of the new alternatives should no longer be considered for further evaluation, leaving the 10 alternatives presently being considered.
- Of the 45 different alternatives that were developed at the May PAC meeting, the range of alternatives considered included the following:
  - Family of 2s: primarily north south from the end of I-395 to Route 9
  - Family of 3s: primarily east/west
  - Family of 4s: parallel to Route 1A and Route 46
- The objective of the study team was to identify at least one alternative in the various alignment families that could be retained for further analysis in the subsequent screening phases.

- The satellite image, bought by the DOT, was taken a few weeks before Thanksgiving last year. It allows for a detailed level of accuracy for evaluating potential impacts from the proposed alternatives to the natural and man made resources within the study area.
- The project website, [www.i395-rt9-study.com](http://www.i395-rt9-study.com) contains a lot of useful information including an updated satellite image. Everyone is encouraged to explore the site.

#### 5. Future Activities

- Ultimately reduce the number of alternatives from current 10 to 1
- DOT to complete traffic forecasting analysis so as to make sound projections for the year 2030
- Complete detailed historic resources analysis
- Undertake noise measurements
- Refine alternatives including further avoidance and minimization of impacts to people and natural resources
- Continued public involvement and agency coordination

#### **Questions and Comments:**

*Note: Due to limitations, comments recorded in the minutes are not verbatim. We also apologize in advance for inadvertently misspelling, misreporting and/or omitting your name. However, please let us know if we made an error and we will correct it.*

Tom ColeMeyer asked what the plans are for easing the congestion in Holden and Bangor. Ray Faucher acknowledged the problems of congestion along Route 1A in Holden and along existing I-95 through Bangor and added that this study is a result of a deficiency that was identified in a recently completed regional study that evaluated a variety of alternatives to improve east/west travel from the Canadian border to the east to the New Hampshire and Canadian borders to the west.

Paul Growdy, Brewer, thanked MDOT for doing a wonderful job with developing a very informative website. He commented uncontrolled growth is unhealthy for the community and asked the study team what tools are being developed to control growth at the ends of highway. He also asked about a truck toll route. Ray mentioned that the DOT is in the final phases of developing an access management tool to help communities with their growth management plans. As for a toll road, it would require legislative permission and DOT does not have the authority to consider that option. Bill added that roads which are constructed and paid for by Maine taxpayers couldn't restrict usage. The DOT will consider the toll concept as an innovative financing issue if they need one.

John Kelly, Holden, expressed concern over the backup of trucks on I-395, traveling onto eastbound Route 1A. Ray said the study team would use the traffic analysis to make future projections to the year 2030 so as to determine what improvements need to be made. Despite the fact that traffic on Route 1A is growing, Ray added that the current flow of daily traffic on a year round basis warrants only a 2-lane highway. However, as traffic grows, Route 1A may need to be expanded to a 4-lane facility if a new roadway connecting I-395 to Route 9 is not constructed.

Adding to John Kelly's point, Susan Schelak from Holden mentioned Wal-Mart plans to build a new store along I-395, possibly creating a lot of traffic on Route 9 and Route 1A. Ray emphasized the need to obtain all available information before making projections on proposed traffic flows.

Tori Wickman from Eddington asked what the proposed date is for construction to begin. Ray told her at present, MDOT only has funding to complete the study. If there were money remaining, they would use it for right of way acquisition and construction. Typically, a 6-mile alignment with bridges takes three construction seasons to complete.

A member of the public asked if Route 1A would continue to be an unlimited access highway. Ray suggested the MDOT had plans to upgrade the road. They plan to work with the community to reduce the number of access points so as to decrease the rate of accidents.

Jeff Stanford from Eaton Ridge in Holden read a petition that was sent to Ray.

If I-395 is primarily being used by truckers Terry from Holden objects to supporting others' business. He asks the study team to consider the no build alternative.

Armand S. Andrie from Eddington sent the attached letter to PAC members urging for them to vote for the no-build alternative. He advocates for goods to be transported via rail. This would help in reducing pollution and improve transportation. Ray stated MDOT is making efforts to enhance other modes of transportation and would also like to see the use of trains increase. However, it is very expensive to subsidize rail activity.

George Butler asked why the state would purchase rail right-of-way if they did not intend to develop the land. According to Ray, the state purchases rail right-of-way when there is a possibility of that rail line being redeveloped and reactivated.

Tracy, Brewer, asked which alternative would lead to the least people displaced. Bill said, at this time and level of detail, Alternative 3EI would result in one residential displacement.

Tracy asked if Alternative 3EI is the most cost effective alternative and if it would be affected by the cost of acquiring land. To answer her first question, Ray said that to get cost effectiveness, they would have to conduct a cost-benefit analysis, using traffic forecasts. He reminded the public that there is still work to be done to complete this study. Regarding right of way acquisition, Bill agreed the cost of acquiring land would impact the total cost and cost-effectiveness of the alternatives.

Randy Peters from Holden asked Bill what percentage of the accidents included large trucks? He added that taking a satellite picture in spring when the ground is very wet could bias the data for wetlands. Bill said the accidents on Route 46 involved all types of vehicles during all four seasons and road conditions. As for wetlands, the satellite picture was combined with information on wetlands obtained from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Wetland Inventory, a database of wetlands, and the U.S. Natural Resource Conservation Service's database of hydric soils or soils indicative of wetlands. This information was supplemented with field observations. Taking an additional satellite picture would not guarantee additional information.

A resident of Holden mentioned that Alternative 2C runs right through many people's backyard. He asked how the study team determined only 3 households would be affected. Bill stated that the study team tried to minimize the impact to people's property with the highway alignment and a property was only considered a displacement if the house was physically in the path of (not adjacent to) the highway. As the study progresses through the planning stage, they would look at individual properties more closely and attempt to minimize impact and avoid as many properties as possible. Ray added that the MDOT has rules and regulations for acquiring property.

Larry from Holden told the study team that Alternative 3EI goes through his backyard. If this is the selected alternative, he asks if it could be moved north. Bill acknowledged that all alternatives have their advantages and disadvantages but assured him the study team would look into it as the alternatives progress through the detailed screening analysis.

In response to a question about the definition of a site prone to accidents, Bill said that the DOT recognizes a site as a high crash location when more than 8 crashes occur in a 3 year period at a fixed location. A section of Route 46 is classified as a high crash location. There have been 52 different accidents in a 3-year period on Route 46.

Armand Ardrle asked if there could be interim improvements made to enforce a no passing regulation on Route 46 from Route 1A to Route 9. Bill said MDOT would consider Mr. Ardrle's suggestion.

Grant Byers, Holden, suggested to PAC members if cost is the issue, the study team should consider ending the road that runs parallel to Route 46 at Route 1A. It affects a lot of forestland. Bill reminded the public that the role of the PAC is to advise the study team and help provide insight to local issues and concerns. However, it is the DOT and the federal agencies that make the final decision.

A member of the public made a comment on the lack of PAC member presence at the meeting. She feels that their job is to represent the community and should be at the public meeting to hear their concerns.

Another resident asked if the DOT would implement an interim solution at the intersection of Route 9 and Route 46 to reduce the crash rate. Ray said the DOT would have to look at the problem in comparison to other transportation issues in other parts of the state. In the big picture, it may not be of priority. Safety is only one of the issues to consider in this study process.

Al Michell from Holden asked if the state would buy his house if an alternative passed through his property. Bill responded, should the selected alternative impact someone's land, the state would consider the purchase of the entire parcel of land.

Anthony Pallegree, Holden asked if the 2030 traffic projection distinguishes between 80,000 and 100,000 pound trucks. Ray stated that 100,000-pound trucks are allowed on all highways except for the Interstate that has an 80,000-pound limit. One hundred thousand pound trucks are also allowed to use the Turnpike system, but must exit the Interstate at the first available exit after leaving the Turnpike system. Statistical data can be obtained but he added that the fraction of 100,000-pound trucks would be very small percentage of the total traffic volume.

Dianne Smith, Holden, asked how much truth there is in the theory that suggests new roads result in an increase in traffic. She urges the use of rail for the transportation of goods. In response to the suggested theory, Ray stated that new roads induce more people to make trips they would not otherwise make, as new roads make the journey easier. Traffic is expected to increase substantially by the year 2030. As for rail, Ray mentioned that the Offices of Passenger and Freight Transportation are targeting areas where rail service may be improved and/or established. However, he restated the fact that rail service is very costly.

Debbie Kelly from Holden asks if the study website could include links to other studies so that the public and the PAC are able to educate themselves to make a more informed decision. Ray mentioned a link would be added for the East-West transportation study but not the study pertaining to Route 1A as the latter study is not underway at this time.

Debbie Kelly asked the study team if they had actually traveled on the roads to assess the transportation problems. Bill said the entire study team has spent time in the area and traveled the roads to observe the transportation problems first hand. He also said it is one of the reasons for including PAC members in the study. They travel on the roads and know exactly what the problems are. PAC members help the study team in raising awareness to issues, which otherwise may be overlooked.

Ken Hughes asked Bill to address the impact on deer. He lives on a section of Alternative 2C and sees many deer in his backyard in the winter. Ken also asked if the MDOT would be willing to meet with smaller groups of people that have specific focused concerns and issues. Bill said that the data on the locations for deer wintering areas came from the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife and the Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Holden. Bill added that MDOT does not have plans for smaller focused group meetings for discussions outside of the larger public meetings and PAC meetings open to the public, but suggested that MDOT would may consider them if there was a need on a specific issue or concern.

Dave Carriden asked if there will be economic advantages accrued to the community as a result of this transportation project. Since this study is not driven by an economic need, but rather a transportation need, Ray stated that an economic analysis is not being considered at this time.

Armand Andrie said it is important to look at the effect to the economy. A new alignment would improve certain businesses at the expense of others. Property values along with tax revenue would decrease. The impact to Holden is critical.

Mr. Andrie asked how Alternative 2C got moved 1¼ miles east and if it is the preferred alternative of the engineers. Bill stated that a portion of Alternative 2C was shifted to the east of Eastern Avenue in an effort to minimize impacts to people and natural resources. Bill pointed out that DOT is studying all alternatives equally and to the same level of detail to identify an alternative which best satisfies the purpose and needs of the study with the overall least impact to people and natural resources.

A member of the public asked if MDOT had plans to deal with the accident-prone areas of the lower end of Route 46. Fred Michaud indicated that this portion of Route 46 has been identified for improvements in the Department's Six Year Plan and those funds would be anticipated and provided for over the next six years.

Steve Barkin, Holden, asked the study team to consider the no-build option. He reasoned that too many lives would be impacted under the proposed alternatives.

Bill ensured the public that the no-build alternative remains a viable alternative and it would be fully developed and compared against the other proposed alternatives.

Ray adjourned the meeting and encouraged everyone to take a look at the project website at <[www.i395-rt9-study.com](http://www.i395-rt9-study.com)>.