



Gretchen Heldmann <gheldmann@gmail.com>

STIP amendment is out for comment, but no notice given to 395/9 group

Rollins, Scott <Scott.Rollins@maine.gov>
To: Gretchen Heldmann <gheldmann@gmail.com>

Wed, Aug 19, 2015 at 4:03 PM

Gretchen,

We will make sure that the STIP amendment process, specifically the public involvement process is improved. We will also extend the comment period on this project and will send an email to the interested parties with the specific additional time we are adding.

From: Gretchen Heldmann [mailto:gheldmann@gmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, August 19, 2015 3:58 PM
To: Charette, Russ
Cc: Howard, Nathan; Rollins, Scott; Mark.Hasseltmann@FHWA.dot.gov; Cassandra Chase (Cassandra.Chase@dot.gov); Ham, Eric; Bostwick, Richard; Rob Kenerson (robk@bactsmmpo.org); Fisher, Nina A; wplumpton@GFNET.com; Brewer City Council; Arthur Verow; Kevin O' Connell; Bev Uhlenhake; Jerry Goss; Steve Bost; Councilor Joseph Ferris; Matt Vachon; Nok Noi Ricker; Eddington; Audibert, Gerry; Lane, Meg E; Mitchell, Kip
Subject: Re: STIP amendment is out for comment, but no notice given to 395/9 group

Hi Russ,

Thank you for the reply. I do understand the membership and management of BACTS. However, your highlighting should have gone on to include "a member of the Maine Department of Transportation" - and I would have hoped that communication between that person and anyone in MDOT who manages projects within the BACTS area, would have been much better than apparently it was...is? Hopefully in the future it is improved.

Managing the STIP may not be your job, but you did know that it had to be updated in order to move along with the 395/9 process. I'm sure you had discussions with whoever does manage the STIP, and I would like to think you would have been informed of what the STIP update process entails so that you'd know as Project Manager how it may affect the 395/9 project process. Unfortunately, that does not seem to have happened. I hope in the future that this communication path is also improved.

Thank you for your time,

~G

Gretchen Heldmann, GISP, LF

On Wed, Aug 19, 2015 at 3:31 PM, Charette, Russ <Russ.Charette@maine.gov> wrote:

The BACTS process is managed by BACTS and not MaineDOT.

From the BACTS website:

Who Runs BACTS?

BACTS is governed by a policy committee and a technical committee. The members of these committees are drawn from municipal officials (both elected and appointed) of the member cities and towns, a member from Maine Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration and Federal Highway Administration. In addition there are non-voting members on the policy committee representing the Bangor Region Chamber of Commerce, and the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Transportation Subcommittee. There is a staff of four; a director, a transportation planner, a technician and an office manager, with offices at 12 Acme Road in Brewer.

Highlight in yellow is mine. I would think that the committee members would have notified interested parties.

The interface with BACTS is managed by someone else in the Department, as such I was not aware of the timing of the BACTS TIP amendment. Once I learned of the BACTS TIP amendment I updated the group. I was unaware of the BACTS TIP amendment requirement until after my April 21st e-mail since managing the STIP isn't my area of responsibility nor expertise.

I am not aware of any other agencies other than FHWA and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service who are working on this other than the NLEB issue.

Russ

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From: Gretchen Heldmann [<mailto:gheldmann@gmail.com>]

Sent: Wednesday, August 19, 2015 1:23 PM

To: Charette, Russ

Cc: Howard, Nathan; Rollins, Scott; Mark.Hasselmann@FHWA.dot.gov; Cassandra Chase (Cassandra.Chase@dot.gov); Ham, Eric; Bostwick, Richard; Rob Kenerson (robk@bactsmipo.org); Fisher, Nina A;

wplumpton@GFNET.com; Brewer City Council; Arthur Verow; Kevin O' Connell; Bev Uhlenhake; Jerry Goss; Steve Bost; Councilor Joseph Ferris; Matt Vachon; Nok Noi Ricker; Eddington; Audibert, Gerry; Lane, Meg E; Mitchell, Kip
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Hi Russ,

Thank you for the update. I find it interesting that the BACTS TIP update was not mentioned in your April 21 email (yet it was sent out for public comment shortly thereafter), and by the June 8 update email, it was already done. Again, no update was sent to the group that the BACTS TIP, which was a related step in the 395/9 process, was even out for public comment. There are a lot of agencies involved in this project but ultimately it is the Maine DOT that is coordinating it, and the one agency that should be at the forefront of making sure the parties involved know what's going on. Doing that would also keep in line with the promise Maine DOT made back in January 2012...

"The Maine Department of Transportation ... regrets the insufficient outreach by MaineDOT to leaders of the affected communities along the proposed I-395 US Route 9 connector," the statement read. "Town officials and the residents of Brewer, Holden, Eddington and Clifton deserve to be fully informed of all decisions and progress. We recognize that it is our obligation to do so, and we will rectify this situation in the future."

...as well as a statement from November 2012 to provide bi-weekly status update emails (which has not been kept up).

The idea that since no one commented on the BACTS TIP means there's no public opposition is completely absurd and false. What it means is that no one knew it was a part of this process so therefore no one watched the BACTS website, no one was notified via the email list Maine DOT is supposed to be keeping up to date, and we missed the little blip in the paper. I know it's well past the comment period, but I'm attaching pieces I've drafted over the years that are in opposition to this connector, so that those on this list have them for their records. Please also check this website for many pieces drafted by many people over the years: <http://i395rt9hardlook.com/>

Here we are in August 2015 and we are still having to ask for updates, and try to figure out where to go to find notices of related agency postings, etc.

Regarding the NLEB, I would hope that since FHWA is copied on this email thread, they would be able to respond or direct me on who to ask, regarding an update on this topic, please.

Are there any other agencies or entities working on anything right now, related to this project?

Thank you,

~G

Gretchen Heldmann, GISP, LF

On Wed, Aug 19, 2015 at 9:30 AM, Charette, Russ <Russ.Charette@maine.gov> wrote:

Good Morning Gretchen,

Since Nate is out for most of the day today I'll respond to your e-mail. Please direct any further correspondence to Nate as I indicated in my last update to the group.

I'm not sure why an update wasn't sent out. We will work to ensure that the group is kept up to date. As I indicated in my two e-mails of April 21, 2015 and June 8, 2015 regarding the STIP process, a STIP Amendment is required for the next phase before FHWA can issue their Record of Decision.

MaineDOT's STIP amendment should have followed along closely after BACTS published their State Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) amendment. The BACTS TIP Notice of Availability was published in late April. I've attached the BACTS Notice and their letter to MaineDOT indicating that they did not receive any comments on their Notice of Availability. Their comment period was for 30 days.

I'll copy the individuals who manage the MaineDOT website with your recommendations for improvements on posting STIP Amendments. The MaineDOT website has gone through revisions in an attempt to make it more user friendly for mobile users such as people using I-phones.

A link to the STIP page.

<http://maine.gov/mdot/stip/>

In response to your request regarding an extension to the deadline for comments I'll defer that question to Nate when he returns to the office.

In response to your question about the Northern Long Eared Bat I'd recommend that you check with FHWA on this issue since they are in discussions about the bat with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Thank you.

Russ

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From: Gretchen Heldmann [mailto:gheldmann@gmail.com]

Sent: Tuesday, August 18, 2015 3:41 PM

To: Charette, Russ; Howard, Nathan; Rollins, Scott; Mark.Hasselmann@FHWA.dot.gov; Cassandra Chase (Cassandra.Chase@dot.gov); Ham, Eric; Bostwick, Richard; Rob Kenerson (robk@bactsmmpo.org); Fisher, Nina A; wplumpton@GFNET.com

Cc: Brewer City Council; Arthur Verow; Kevin O' Connell; Bev Uhlenhake; Jerry Goss; Steve Bost; Councilor Joseph Ferris; Matt Vachon; Nok Noi Ricker; Eddington

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Hi Russ,

I was just wondering why a project update email was not sent out, or an update to the 395/9 study website was not posted, given that apparently the suggested revised STIP was posted August 12th? This is after all, one of the key pieces we have all been waiting for, since the ROD cannot be issued without this amendment. I just stumbled across the STIP revision notice today, as it's pretty buried on the MDOT website - I would think it would be linked on the Public Comment page, but no, that's just a generic fill-in form with no indication of what is currently available for public comment. I also could not find a notice in the paper that this document was available.

Given the above, I would like to know if the deadline for comments can be extended, please. As it currently is, from the 12th to the 25th is not even two weeks.

According to your email of June 8th:

"Once additional information becomes available related to the project we will provide an update."

No update has been provided since, other than your notice of retirement at the end of the month.

In the June 8th email, you also mentioned Northern Long Eared Bat and the BACTS TIP. Please let us know if there has been further work done on those, and please share any documents you may have related to those topics.

Thank you,

~G

Gretchen Heldmann, GISP, LF