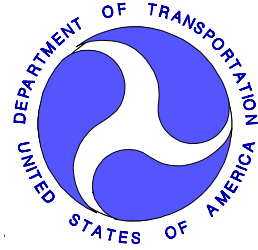




**Maine Department of Transportation
I-395 / Route 9 Transportation Study
January 15, 2003
Public Advisory Committee Meeting**



*Contact Susanna Liller at 1-800-370-2458, extension 112
Meeting Minutes
January 15, 2003, at the Holbrook School
7:00-9:15 pm
PAC Meeting #16*

Public Advisory Committee (PAC):

Rodney Buswell
Alan Bromley
Rick Bronson
Joan Brooks
Ellen Campbell
Manley DeBeck, Jr.
Sandi Duchesne
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
William Plumpton, Gannett Fleming
Jeraldine Chow Herrera, Barton & Gingold
Susanna Liller, Barton & Gingold

Not in attendance:

Keith Guttormsen
Gerry Palmer
Al Skolfield

Susanna Liller welcomed everyone to the 16th PAC meeting. She introduced herself as the facilitator hired by the Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) to lead the Public Advisory Committee (PAC) meetings. Barton & Gingold is also hired by MDOT to take the meeting minutes. Susanna asked the PAC and the public to inform her if there are any mistakes in the minutes.

Susanna explained that PAC meetings are for the people on the Public Advisory Committee but the public is always invited to attend these meetings. The last 15 minutes of each meeting is reserved for questions and comments from the public.

At the last meeting, Rick Bronson from the PAC suggested holding the meeting at an alternate location. Susanna apologized, as she was unable to find meeting facilities in Brewer for this night however the next meeting, which is yet to be announced, will be held in Brewer.

AGENDA 1: OLD BUSINESS

Announcements

The study is in the refinement stage. All alternatives are developed using the same methods and to the same level of detail to allow equal comparison. Bill Plumpton explained the purpose of the study is to find the single alternative that best satisfies the study purpose and needs, with the least impact to the human and natural environment, at an affordable cost. No alternative is preferred by MDOT at this point in the study.

Ray Faucher acknowledged the large turn out and thanked everyone for attending.

Minutes from the last meeting

Susanna asked those who have not been receiving the mailings to let her know. She also asked those who want to be put on the mailing list to see her after the meeting.

AGENDA 2: REVIEW OF RANGE OF REASONABLE ALTERNATIVES

The range of reasonable alternatives includes:

- No-build alternative
- Alternative 2B, 2B-1
- Alternative 2C-1, 2C-2
- Alternative 3A-3EIK-1

Over the course of the study, there have been many suggestions for alternative routes. MDOT has taken most into consideration.

At the last PAC meeting, the Town of Holden asked MDOT to consider the Corporate Boundary Route, which is a corridor spanning the boundaries of Brewer, Holden, and Eddington and resembling Alternative 2C. Alternative 2C was considered and dismissed in the summer of 2001 because it required more area to construct and resulted in greater impacts to floodplains and wetlands than other members of the family of Alternative 2. In response to the town of Holden's request, MDOT considered

several alternatives within the Corporate Boundary Route, and took another look to the north of it and to the south of it.

MDOT developed several alternatives through the Corporate Boundary Route and quantified the impacts from the alignment with the least impacts. The study team examined the number of residential displacements, floodplains, bridges required and length. The alignment within the Corporate Boundary Route with the least overall impact would result in 28 acres of wetlands, compared to 10 acres for Alternative 2C-1 and 2C-2 and 13 acres for Alternative 2B-1, when measured from two common points. The Corporate Boundary Route would result in higher impacts to floodplains and a greater number of residential displacements. Based on this information, an alternative within the Corporate Boundary Route would most likely not be permissible as other alternatives exist with less impact.

From the suggestion from the town of Holden, three modifications of Alternative 2C were developed: Alternative 2C-1, 2C-2, and 2C-2/2B-1. Bill described the locations and features of these modifications.

Sandi Duchesne asked why Alternative 2C was being reconsidered despite the higher environmental impacts. Bill said the alternatives being considered, Alternative 2C-1 and 2C-2, are modifications of Alternative 2C and were studied at the request of the town of Holden to take another look at developing an alternative in the northern part of the town.

Ed Harrow asked why impacts to wetlands are now the vital factor for determining the proposed route. Bill stated there is a very high standard for impacts to wetlands in the US. The federal and state agencies that have to issue permits to MDOT will not consider an alternative if there is a lot more impact to wetlands than the other feasible alternatives.

Ed pointing out that looking at wetlands and residential displacement, it presumes that taking properties and homes are equivalent. Bill Plumpton said the agencies that issue permits to FHWA and MDOT state the need to minimize impacts to wetlands while maintaining the public's interest. He said that alternatives were designed to avoid houses and minimizes impacts to individual properties to the extent possible.

Scott Leach asked if the agencies consider the impact of the entire project. Bill said the agencies will examine the impact of the entire project and at each point along an alignment to determine for themselves if another alternative exists with less impacts to the natural environment and people.

Alternative 2C-1 was chosen to attach to Alternative 2B-1 due to the impacts to farmland and farming operations from alternative 2B-2.

Alan Bromley mentioned that there is a cemetery at Cleweyville corner. Bill said MDOT would not impact the cemetery. Alternative 2C-1 was designed to avoid and allow for expansion of the cemetery to both the south and east.

Joan Brooks asked if there is a way to add a crossing under the road so that farmland would not be bisected? Bill said a connection could be designed; however, the direct impact to farmland with Alternative 2C-2 would still be greater than the impacts from Alternative 2C-1.

Bill Plumpton said MDOT has indicated that Alternative 2C-2 should be dismissed from further consideration because of its impacts to farmlands and farming operations.

At the last meeting, Rodney Buswell asked how much traffic would be diverted from Route 1A with a new river crossing in Augusta. Bill said MDOT does not know the answer to this question.

In response to Roger Raymond's question about the difference between purpose and need, Bill explained, the needs of the study (system linkage, safety and traffic congestion on Route 9 and Route 1A) are the problems that MDOT is trying to fix. The purpose statement is the overall objective of the study. In addition, Bill mentioned that regardless of the alternative selected, MDOT has committed to improving the intersection of Route 46 and Route 9 and acknowledged that improvements to Route 1A will be needed at some point in the future.

AGENDA 3: SUGGESTION FOR IMPROVING ALTERNATIVE 4B

At the last meeting, MDOT said that it was not interested in studying Alternative 4B further because it is less effective at satisfying the purpose and needs of this study and would result in greater impacts to people and the environment than other alternatives that exist. Although an estimate of construction cost has not been prepared, Alternative 4B would be far more expensive to construct than other alternatives due to a substantially greater amount of earthwork required. At that meeting, Rick Bronson suggested moving the alternative closer to Route 1A, putting it immediately behind existing commercial developments thereby increasing the exposure of businesses to lessen the impact to people and reduce the amount of earthwork required.

The study team designed this suggestion, but the modification does not make this alternative any more attractive to the MDOT and FHWA. The same reasons for the dismissal of Alternative 4B still exist and other problems would be created. Particularly, the impacts to people and businesses along Route 1A would increase, as any future expansion will be constrained. Also, due to bisecting many properties and, in effect landlocking a substantial amount of area, MDOT would have to construct parallel service roads which will further increase impacts and costs. The greatest cost associated with this alternative is earthwork; the amount of earthwork with this modification would increase, not decrease.

Roger Raymond asked the team to consider the trucks traveling to Bucksport from Downeast. If the Route 46 intersection to Route 9 is modified so that the truckers are

forced to go to Bucksport via Route 15, there is concern about the impact to the trucking business. Many truckers will likely continue to use Route 46.

Bill Plumpton said no matter which alternative is selected, MDOT is committed to improving the Route 46 / Route 9 intersection.

Roger expressed concern over maintenance of the roadway. Ray Faucher mentioned that changes in traffic volumes may affect roadway classification that could affect the level of maintenance funding on certain routes.

Ed Harrow commented that the construction of the Veteran's Bridge diverted even more truck traffic onto Route 46.

Manley DeBeck talked about the increase in the number of accidents between I-395 and Route 1A at the Holden-Brewer line. He asked how long it would take the state to recognize the problem on Route 1A. Ray Faucher said this study would reduce the traffic volumes and improve safety on Route 1A. Ray said MDOT is aware that this study will not completely fix the problems on Route 1A and that improvements will be required, regardless of the alternative that is ultimately selected. He mentioned when he talks about change on Route 1A, he is referring to when the road becomes a candidate for widening from two lanes to four lanes. He said there would be continued maintenance on this route. He added, should there be problems on any route, it would be evaluated along with other state projects and would have to compete with those projects when the DOT develops its funding program every two years.

Sandy Duchesne stated her discomfort in not further studying Alternative 4B. Bill said this alternative was dismissed at the last meeting because, when compared to other alternatives that exist, this alternative is less effective at satisfying the purpose and needs of the study, results in greater impacts to people and the environment, and higher cost. . Approximately \$80 million dollars would have to be spent on earthwork alone. In terms of reducing VMT and VHT, Alternative 4B is less affected than some of the other alternatives. Ray said under this alternative, the problem of Route 1A would be postponed, not solved.

Rick Bronson asked why cost is a driving factor in this study, but it was not a driving factor for the Calais-St. Stephen transportation project. In response, Bill said the alternative that had been selected by MDOT and FHWA for the Calais / St. Stephen study results in less impact and is cheaper to construct than the other alternative that was retained for detailed studies.

Rick asked the study team to consider Sandy Duchesne's suggestion for Alternative 4B. He asked if it would be possible for the route to be within view of businesses on Route 1A in Holden, serving the Acadia traffic, and then turn north to Route 9 to the west of Davis Pond and Holbrook Pond. Rick offered to draw out a map of the suggested modification. He also asked if this project would become a political process the way Calais did.

Jim Ring said that we have already studied similar alternatives.

Bill apologized for misunderstanding Sandy's suggestion. He said if Sandy's suggestion were different enough from alternatives that were previously studied, MDOT would study the impacts of this modification. He reminded Rick of the earthwork needed for a section of Alternative 4B parallel to Route 1A.

AGENDA 4: RESULTS OF LOCAL MEETINGS TO DISCUSS ALTERNATIVES

Town of Holden (Meetings on December 16 and January 8)

Steve Condon Presented a review of these two meetings:

At the December 16 meeting, Holden Town officials provided information to the public on the alternatives that the MDOT Study Team had developed in the vicinity of the Corporate Boundary Route. The 2C-1 and 2C-2 alternative that goes through Holden in the vicinity of Levenseller Road was not well received by the citizens or the Town at this meeting. Following this meeting, Larry Varisco, Mike Waugh, of Surry Engineers and myself met with MDOT on January 8 to review the proposals that had been developed and relay the concerns of the December 16 meeting to MDOT officials. Holden reiterated its support for locating a route within the proposed Corporate Boundary Route.

Town of Eddington (Meeting on December 8)

Joan Brooks presented

The general consensus is the town does not like any of the Alternative 2s. Also, there needs to be a light on corner of Route 178 and Route 9.

Charles Plummer added that the citizens of Eddington are completely against any spur off of Route 178.

The town will be coming out with a resolution in a week.

AGENDA 5: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DISMISSAL OF ALTERNATIVES FROM FURTHER CONSIDERATION

Alternative 2B extending from I-395 to Route 9 (not shown on the map distributed prior to this meeting):

Bill Plumpton explained that this alternative is the shortest one developed. Given that construction is about \$1m per lane mile, this alternative is less expensive than the others. A total of 3 houses will be displaced with the lowest impacts to wetlands, approximately 28 acres. However, in terms of satisfying the system linkage part of the purpose and needs, it does not do as well as the other alternatives.

At the last PAC meeting, MDOT heard for the first time that the Town of Eddington does not like this alternative. MDOT evaluated the ability of this alternative to satisfy the system linkage part of the purpose and needs, and when you consider the future traffic volumes, vehicle speeds, vehicle mix, the impacts to people, and the ability to manage access along Route 9 now and in the future, MDOT is dismissing this alternative from further consideration because it is less effective than other alternatives, with greater impacts.

Alternative 2C-2

MDOT will not study this alternative further, pending concurrence from the federal and state agencies, because of its greater impacts to farmlands and farming operations than Alternative 2C-1.

Alternative 3A-3EIK-1

Bill pointed out that 50 acres of wetlands are impacted by this alternative. Since this is 30% more than the other alternatives, it would be difficult to obtain a permit for this alternative. Little support exists for this alternative. This alternative would also impact approximately 11 acres more floodplain than other alternatives being considered. This alternative also would impact approximately 12 acres more important wildlife habitat than other alternatives being considered.

Charles Plummer asked if the EPA regulated hydric soils. Bill said no, that hydric soils are not strictly regulated. MDOT has assumed wetlands are the limits of both the National Wetland Inventory Wetlands and hydric soils.

Charles asked if Alternative 3A-3EIK-1 could be modified to minimize the impact to wetlands. Bill said this was considered and this alternative could not be further modified to substantially reduce that amount of wetlands and floodplain impacts to the point that they would be similar to the other alternatives being considered.

MDOT is dismissing this alternative from further consideration.

MDOT's next step would be to confirm the dismissal of these alternatives with the federal and state regulatory and resource agencies and then begin to assess the impacts of the remaining alternatives in greater detail.

Alternatives Continued for Further Study

The alternatives remaining include: No-Build alternative, Alternative 2B-1, Alternative 2C-1/2B-1, 2C-1, and the modification suggested at this meeting by Rick Bronson, if different from previous alternatives.

AGENDA 6: NEXT STEPS

Noise Analysis
3-Dimensional Visualization of Alternatives Retained for Detailed Analysis
Cost Estimating
Agency Coordination
Preparation of the EA for public review and comment

AGENDA 7: QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

Nancy, Levensellar Road in Holden: What kind of impact would this have in terms of accidents on Levensellar Road? Would MDOT be responsible for the additional accident related financial expenses?

Bill Plumpton said this route would bridge over the top of Levensellar Road so there would not be a direct impact to Levensellar Road. There are no other points of access along Route 9. All the alternatives being considered have one bridge over Levensellar Road.

Sandra Burns, Levensellar Road in Holden: Before we moved here in April, we contacted MDOT and asked if the house we were interested in would be impacted. No one said anything. Now that we have put all our life savings into this, I find out about Alternative 2C-1 and I can't even sell the house due to the big drop in the market value. I have a special needs daughter who would not be able to take the noise associated with this alternative.

Ray Faucher said that the towns have asked MDOT to look at several different alternatives in this area. All are examined equally and MDOT is looking to the towns and citizens for input. Alternatives will continue to be studied and refined to reduce impacts. There could be some tweaking once an alternative is selected. As discussed in the last PAC meeting, MDOT has a compensation program for properties directly impacted by MDOT projects. Ray noted this study is still evolving and MDOT has not yet selected an alternative.

Sandra Burns: But why were we never told? The person with whom I spoke at MDOT didn't tell me about this alternative.

Ray said this variation shown on the January 2003 map was developed recently. MDOT is not out there to target anyone.

Judy Sullivan: I don't see much difference between what's on the table now and Alternative 2B-3EK. Also what happened to the bridge?

Bill said he would have to go back to look at the alternatives. To answer her second question, Bill mention MDOT is refining the design of alternatives to reduce impacts and to ensure that alternatives are studied equally and to the same level of detail.

Ed Barrow, attorney representing Mr. Nelligan: The trailer park is home to 80 families. Although you suggested being able to tweak Alternative 3A-3EIK-1, the alternative you suggested is within 500 feet of these homes. The uncertainty is eating at the Nelligans'.

Mr. Barrow asked the people from the mobile home community to stand. Many people in the audience stood up to identify themselves.

Bill Plumpton said noise is on everyone's short list of concerns. Noise analysis will be performed for the alternatives retained for detailed study.

Ann, Holden: How seriously are you considering the No-Build option?

Bill Plumpton said that the study is based on impact to people and natural resources in the year 2030. The No-Build would be selected if the impacts outweigh the benefits.

A date for the next PAC meeting has not yet been selected. We will notify you by mail as soon as we are able to provide more information.