

2B or not 2B

By Larry Adams, Special to the BDN - May 15, 2012 6:23 pm

The I-395/Route 9 Study Group is disregarding the original criteria and intent of the project: Alternative 2B was removed from further consideration not once, but twice before the end of 2002. The reasons were clear: "This alternative would not be practicable because it would fail to meet the system linkage need, and would fail to adequately address the traffic congestion needs in the study area. Traffic congestion and conflicting vehicle movements on this section of Route 9 would substantially increase the potential for new safety concerns and hazards."

In the same document, the original system linkage need was further defined: "To meet the need of improved regional system linkage while minimizing impacts to people, it was determined that an alternative must provide a limited-access connection between I-395 and Route 9 east of Route 46."

That paragraph continued to give a glimpse of what may be expected if an alternative does not meet the original system linkage need parameter: "Alternatives that do not provide a limited access connection to Route 9 east of Route 46 would not be practicable because that would not provide a substantial improvement in regional mobility and connectivity and would negatively affect people living along Route 9 in the study area. Alternatives that would connect to Route 9 west of Route 46 would severely impact local communities along Route 9 between proposed alternative connection points and Route 46." This information can be found at <http://www.i395-rt9-study.com/Pubs/Alts%20Tech%20Memo.pdf>, page ii and Summary page 5.

MDOT's Purpose and Needs Matrix, http://www.i395-rt9-study.com/Pubs/PAC041509_handouts.pdf, dated April 15, 2009, contained no engineering data that could be manipulated or misunderstood by anyone — just simple yes and no answers. Did 2B-2 meet the following criteria: Study purpose? No; ACOE purpose? No; System linkage need? No; Traffic congestion need? No; Safety concerns? Yes. Alternative 2B-2 only met 20 purpose of the purposes and needs of the study three years ago and now it is the "preferred alternative" for a \$90 million dollar project.

Alternatives 2B and 2B-2 use the same "4.2 mi. of Route 9 without additional improvement" per the DEIS. They are almost exactly the same route with the same I-395 starting point and the same connection point on Route 9. 2B-2 is 2B.

One of the most interesting statements in the 300-plus pages of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement is found on page s19: "However, future development along Route 9 in the study area can impact future traffic flow and the overall benefits of the project." Go to <http://www.i395-rt9-study.com/DEIS/00Sum.pdf> for the DEIS Summary.

How can the overall benefits depend on Eddington's development or lack of development? How long before future development becomes a safety issue? What is the cost of safety?

What you won't find in the 300-plus-page DEIS document is any real concern for the human element. Humans can be relocated, but you certainly can't disturb a couple of frogs and salamanders in a vernal pool that may only exist for a few months and not return again for a year or so if ever. Many of us are well within 100 feet or less of the 200-foot right-of-way, many people have their properties cut in half and at least eight families will watch as the bulldozers raze their homes. How can an agency look an 82-year-old man in the face knowing that he will lose his home and the property that he has worked all his life and say this is the right proposal for this connector? Where's a balance between environment and man?

The east-west private highway feasibility report will be completed by Jan. 15, 2013. "Such a route would remove nearly all of the existing traffic off of Route 9, as well as cut projected future traffic on Route 1 by roughly 2,300 vehicles per day below current levels," according to the MDOT 1999 Executive Summary, <http://www.maine.gov/mdot/1999eastwesthwystudy/reportlinks.htm>.

Where's the traffic issue on Route 9 if nearly all the existing traffic is removed by an east-west highway?

The study group, under the management of the MaineDOT/FHWA, has managed to spend in excess of \$1.7 million dollars to reach a conclusion that an alternative thrown out two times 10 years ago by the same study group now "best satisfies the study purpose and needs" for this connector. Really?

Larry Adams is a resident from Brewer.

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