

Meeting: Steering Committee Meeting

Meeting Date: 01/19/10 - 9-11:00 am

Location: Kittery Trading Post, Rte. 1 Kittery, Katahdin Room

**Maine-N. H. Connections Study
Steering Committee Meeting
January 19, 2010
Kittery Trading Post, Kittery**

Presenters:

Paul Godfrey, HNTB
Carol Morris, Morris Communications

Committee members:

Bob Landry, NHDOT
John Butler, NHDOT
Dave Walker, Rockingham Planning Commission
Russ Charette, MaineDOT
Gerry Audibert, MaineDOT
Tom Reinauer, Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission
Jon Carter, Town of Kittery
Leigh Levine, Federal Highway Administration, NH
Anna Price, Federal Highway Administration, ME
Linda Wilson, NH Division of Historic Resources

Also attending:

Peter Michaud, NH Division of Historic Resources
Mary Ann Conroy, Town of Kittery Public Works Director

Absent:

Steve Parkinson, City of Portsmouth
Kirk Mohny, Maine Historic Preservation Commission

*All slides referenced can be found in the PowerPoint for the meeting.
Meeting began at 9:12am*

Carol Morris:

Today we are here to bring you up to speed on the Fatal Flaw analysis. We're further along in the process than we were at the December 16 public meeting. This morning, we'll talk with you, the Steering Committee, and we meet with the Stakeholder Committee this afternoon. We need your final input on what we need to be looking for in terms of closing out the Fatal Flaw Analysis and moving forward.

Process / next steps:

- Steering Committee: Feedback from you today on Study Team recommendations
- Stakeholder Committee review this afternoon
- Finalize Fatal Flaw report/findings by January 31st
- DOT's/FHWA review/approval by mid-February
- Remaining alternatives to have a detailed analysis against all evaluation criteria between Feb-April 2010
- Next Public Meeting – February 10, 2010

The DOTs and Federal Highway have been in on this process all along, so we don't expect any major surprises in terms of their approval. It may be a little later than mid-February but we will be able to move forward with the process while we are making sure we have all of the documentation in order.

We're now getting to the point where things get interesting.

Tiger grant application update:

- TIGER Grant Application for Memorial Bridge submitted in September
- February 17, 2010 decision deadline
- If TIGER Grant Application is successful, all remaining Memorial Bridge options in Study eliminated – focus on Sarah Long Bridge options
- Study schedule remains the same

We thought we would have the Tiger Grant decision in time for a 2/10 public meeting. As of today we don't have the decision, and we don't know for sure when we'll get it - although we will probably have it by the legally required date of February 17. Since this is a real fork in the road, it is important to know the decision on the Tiger Grant for the next public meeting. You'll hear from us by the end of next week if we decide to change the meeting to after the decision date of the 17th. If

so, we would probably schedule the public meeting for February 25. If we get the Tiger Grant, this study shifts to evaluating only the Sarah Long options. Any questions?

Paul Godfrey:

Fatal Flaw Analysis:

- Fatal Flaw Process
- Study Purpose and Need
- 16 Evaluation Criteria
- Generated 63 different alternatives
- An OPTION is one piece of the ALTERNATIVE.
- An ALTERNATIVE is an entire solution.
- Round 1: 34 alternatives eliminated
- Round 2: 14 alternatives eliminated

Last week, we had a Study Team meeting. Federal Highway and the DOTs were there as well, and we talked through where we were in terms of Fatal Flaw Analysis. This is information you can share. A lot of you have seen this information previously but it's appropriate to touch base on where we are.

Fatal Flaw Analysis Round 1, 2, 3 results:

This group endorsed Round 1, as did the Stakeholder Committee. These are the results:

- Steering Committee endorsed Round 1 recommendation
- Stakeholder Committee endorsed Round 1 recommendation, asked for additional alternatives be eliminated
- General Public, Steering and Stakeholder Committee concurrence on Round 1 and 2 findings at Dec. 16th Public Informational Meeting
- Looking for Steering Committee endorsement on Round 3 today

Today we are looking to get endorsement, input, and final feedback on Round 3. We are looking to have the Fatal Flaw Analysis report to the DOTs and Federal Highway by the end of the month for their review.

Fatal Flaw Analysis Round 3:

- Compared options and alternatives against:
- Impacts at/near Port of New Hampshire

- Order of Magnitude Life Cycle costs
- Mobility of Study Area without Sarah Long bridge during construction
- Result – 15 alternatives reduce to 9*
- * - *includes No-build alternative*

In Round 3, we took a long and focused look at impacts near the Port of NH. Because we continue to identify the Sarah Long as the more critical piece of the equation from a mobility standpoint, we asked could the region survive without the Sarah Long during construction – was that a Fatal Flaw? Let's move into the alternatives *considered but recommended to be eliminated*.

– SL3, replace the Sarah Long with a new midlevel bridge: This is an additional 50 feet off the water. Higher, with elevated rail, a need to relocate Bridge Street, a tie in to Route 1 and the Route 1 Bypass. It can be either 2 or 4 lanes. Impacts the historic area and Port of NH but not Albacore Park, Port of NH. We met with the Port of NH and learned much more about their operations, especially that an elevated rail structure would have many impacts to them. The railyard is used by the port and they want the option open to use it. The big warehouse would need to be either eliminated or moved. Market Street would need to be raised 19 feet. In Kittery, impacts include residences, commercial. Our recommendation is elimination but this needs final blessing from the DOTs and Federal Highway also.

Audience agrees with elimination of this option.

SL3A, midlevel upstream: essentially the same design and the same impacts. Impacts are sizable to the Port of Portsmouth, more residences, Bridge Street, and commercial areas in Kittery. For the same reasons, maybe to a greater degree, the study team recommends elimination of this option.

Audience agrees with elimination of this option.

Bob: In the federal guidelines, is there a set dimension that's considered "upstream"?

Paul: I don't have the exact answer. This shows maybe 80 feet upstream. From a practical standpoint, we need some distance. You could call it "on alignment" if it's not far off, but I wanted to show folks this was the difference – that it was upstream from the old alignment.

Bob: Do we really need an upstream lower level option?

Russ: More than anything, the issue is tying into the existing highway alignment.

Anna: The new alignment impacts more than the distance. Where would it tie in?

Russ: It's the same thing as the Sagadahoc Bridge in Bath. It's not immediately adjacent.

Bob: I am wondering if we could take out the upstream option to knock out more alternatives?

Paul: Great point. To give perspective, the primary reason to consider this option is to keep the Sarah Long open during construction.

Bob: I agree but it can be done on existing alignment, but just slightly off. Now, a 4-lane option - I can't see that on an upstream version.

Carol: We can get to that part of the discussion when we talk about the alternatives still on the table.

Paul: The earlier options and alternatives we eliminated were no brainers. This one was close but we were concerned with the sizable impacts. Especially when we have similar alternatives in play. Any questions on the upstream mid-level option?

Before I move on, we looked at a few other things in Round 3. Would the region be OK if we took out the Sarah Long for a period of time? We did not believe it was a Fatal Flaw. The Sarah Long carries greater traffic in compared to Memorial. More non-discretionary trips...more vital to the region. When the Memorial closed, we expected higher traffic on the other two bridges. But we found a fairly large number of trips on the Memorial are shopping or recreation. Perhaps not all chose to make these trips when the Memorial was closed.

In terms of life cycle costs, there's nothing specific to share today. I will share verbally that we are looking at the \$250 – 400M range for all the remaining options, including capital, operations & maintenance for a 100-year cycle.

Jon: Weren't traffic counts on the Memorial taken when weight restrictions were in effect on the bridge?

Paul: We have data from before and during the most recent restriction.

Jon: But weight restrictions have been on for two years.

Paul: We gathered data during the previous load restriction, where it was dropped to 10 tons. When it was totally closed, we expected the 12,000 vehicles to go elsewhere. We found less than half did. This was an eye opener. More than 50% of Memorial trips are discretionary. If you can't go to the market on the other side of the river, you stay in your hometown.

Carol: We're not able to look at the period when there were no weight restrictions.

Bob: There has always been a weight restriction. Since 2003. The Sarah Long had no weight restrictions until August 2009.

Carol: Do we have any way of knowing if all those heavier vehicles moved to another bridge?

Bob: The volumes of heavy vehicles were so low prior to that that it would not really make a difference.

Paul: We did count but, yes, it was minor.

Bob: Downtown Portsmouth limits those vehicles via the current roadway configuration.

Paul: This is important. If we rebuild Sarah Long on alignment, we minimize the impacts of going upstream but the bridge is out of commission during construction. Understanding how essential the bridge is and what it carries is part of the detailed assessment to come. Let's move to those options that *study team recommends carrying forward*.

No build: Let me clarify. This does have some impact. It means the Memorial will be closed and Sarah Long is open, with the rail. From our perspective, this does not meet Purpose & Need. It is required to be there, though, as a benchmark.

Audience understand that this option must be carried forward,

MB1, rehab: We'll document the costs, both capital and life cycle, and look at the preservation of it as a historic structure. We recommend this go forward.

Audience agrees to carry this option forward for further study.

MB2, replacement on existing alignment: We'll look at capital, operation & maintenance over 100 years, and preservation costs. We recommend this go forward.

Audience agrees to carry this option forward for further study.

MB6, Pedestrian / Bike movable bridge: This will carry only pedestrians and bikes over the old Memorial alignment.

Anna: Does the Kittery approach to Badgers Island remain?

Paul: Yes.

Gerry: For now we would not want to say "movable." Keep it broader.

Paul: We changed it from "lift" to "movable."

Gerry: Keep it as broad as you can – it could be a fixed bridge.

Russ: We don't want to preclude other options.

Carol: So there would have to be elevators that are bike accessible.

Paul: We are open to a fixed bridge with the right clearance.

Jon: I suggest making it a different alternative.

Russ: I don't agree. It's a design detail we can look at later.

Paul: If it was a fixed high level with big elevators, the study team would still need to have the discussion about the details. Where do the elevators go? Where does the roadway network terminate? Parking? Movable vs. fixed?

Russ: It hasn't been fully vetted yet.

Carol: I agree with Jon. If we took this to the public, it is so different that it would have to be discussed as a separate item.

Bob: I think you have the option of different structures on all the options. Let's keep them as they are today...if they move ahead, look at the details.

Paul: Yes.

Gerry: Are we going to call it "movable"?

Paul: I am ok with taking that out.

Bob: Movable or fixed because if you just say bridge, people think it's a lift.

Paul: We'll call it "movable or fixed high level."

Dave: What's the working definition of rehab? Just fixing what's there now? Or making the bike and pedestrian crossing better?

Paul: That is part of the discussion. We need to fine tune it. If we keep the same cross section or broaden it, now we have a different cost level. This is part of the upcoming detailed evaluation.

Bob: It's easier to improve the crossings on a replacement.

Tom: How far do you go to improve access to the Sarah Long if this happens?

Paul: With the bike ped option, we would need to go to a 4-lane Sarah Long. If we eliminate vehicle traffic on the Memorial, how do we mitigate? We must determine the additional level of infrastructure.

Tom: Is this included in the cost estimates?

Gerry: Not at the Fatal Flaw Analysis level.

Paul: It will be once the Fatal Flaw Analysis is done. We are moving into so much more depth and detail. What additional connections do we need to make the study area work? What's the cost? We recommend carrying this option forward.

Audience agrees to carry this option forward for further study.

SL1, rehab on existing: This is a 2-lane with the same openings as we have today. The study team recommends further study.

Audience agrees to carry this option forward for further study.

SL2, replace on existing: This can be a 2 or 4 lane. We have some detail to look at. Lane numbers depend on whether the Memorial is open to traffic and how much. This option gives us the opportunity to improve vessel clearance.

Bob: Did we do the 2035 numbers for traffic yet?

Paul: No. If the Memorial has traffic, will 2 lanes on Sarah Long be enough? We will look at the scenarios and see if they can meet capacity in 2035. Prudence tells us if we are close to capacity, we want to contemplate 4 lanes or the ability to construct 4 lanes readily in the future. Even though we go into details next round...if we find something that says this alternative doesn't make sense...we stop. For now, we want to move forward with it.

Audience agrees to carry this option forward for further study.

SL2A, low level upstream: It's similar to what we have today – will talk to the Coast Guard about where they would like to see it located. Impacts include properties on Kittery side. It's still at grade through the Port of NH yard, though. We don't want to impact operations there. We want to recommend carrying this ahead.

Audience agrees to carry this option forward for further study.

Jon: I'm getting word they plan to dredge the turning basin. Are they enlarging it?

Paul: They are looking at dredging in the area outside the yard. East of the bridge.

Bob: What's the benefit of this one vs. the existing location?

Paul: The ability to keep the bridge open during construction. If we replace the bridge on alignment, it is out of commission.

Bob: I think you can do it on existing, too.

John: I think we're kind of talking semantics. The distinction is an alternative that's on alignment and one that's off alignment just enough to maintain traffic. Is it 20 feet or 80 feet away? SL2A is 80 feet off...

Paul: Does that take away impacts in Kittery? Sure. But we need to make sure we can tie in.

Bob: If you think from a navigational perspective, the piers cannot be slanted for a lift structure. With that said, the farther apart you are, the longer span you need. It's a big deal how far upstream it is if we're not removing the existing bridge.

Gerry: Why wider upstream?

Bob: If you leave the existing structure where it is, you take the lift columns and leave all the rest.

Gerry: That's not known yet. It does not make sense.

Russ: Do you take the two piers that control the lift?

Bob: You take one. Remove one pier and open it up. The closer you can get the new lanes, the better. The ship guys say all they need is 50 feet. We can ask Chris Holt, or the Harbormasters from Portsmouth and Kittery.

Paul: Yes. We need to get an official determination from the US Coast Guard, given the existing constraints.

Bob: They have done that in the Sarah Long records – laid out the constraints.

Paul: This is good discussion. You describe a different approach than immediately upstream. What's the right approach?

Russ: That is a design detail.

Paul: That design detail has a cost differential. The decision has to be based on right amount of information.

Bob: Especially deciding about the substructure in such deep water.

Carol: Are you talking about leaving the elements below the water line because it would cost less?

Bob: I'm talking about using it.

Paul: We are talking about using the substructure even on replacement. Bob is talking about a hybrid – keeping the substructure but moving the bridge.

Bob: We should not replace the bridge unless we can take care of the vessel clearance issues. How much substructure you can save is another discussion.

Paul: The US Coast Guard wants the amount of work we do in the river minimized.

Bob: Increasing sidewalks on the Memorial Bridge was nixed by the US Coast Guard because it required a new permit. Would it help for the next meeting to have a drawing of how we are thinking of moving the column back?

Paul: Yes. We need more engineering on the design.

Bob: No, I mean for this afternoon's meeting. Drawing it out on that whiteboard.

Gerry: I am concerned we're getting into too much engineering detail here.

Paul: Bob, everything you've said is absolutely on the table for discussion.

Russ: We are getting into too many details for right now.

Carol: Although it's not the worst idea for the community to hear the kinds of things we are thinking about.

Paul: Hypothetically, we take it off alignment to keep the bridge open if the two options are very close cost-wise. That is logical. It's a design detail. What's the best and most cost effective way to get where we want to go?

Gerry: We don't even know about the soils and so on at this point.

Bob: I understand the difficulty of construction. If you build a 2 lane just upstream, that would let you do the construction, and give you the navigation benefits.

Paul: To me that's the whole point. There IS a cost savings to the replacement on the existing alignment. There are hardly any impacts. We're going to explore that.

Bob: Maybe you build it in two phases...we would need to consider difficulty of closing the rail line for any period of time.

Carol: Can the shipyard make other arrangements for their usual one-two shipments per year? I asked them that question early on. They need more specific information in order to respond.

Bob: If you want to correct the marine situation, you need to close for two years. With a 4-lane option, you can build the two lanes upstream first and the other two later.

Gerry: We are caught up in the details again.

Russ: Let's move on now.

Paul: OK. But don't lose these thoughts for later.

Recap Fatal Flaw Analysis:

- Study Team Recommendation:
 - 63 alternatives reduced to 8 alternatives plus No-Build
 - 3 Memorial Bridge options
- Rehab (2-lane)
- Low level replacement on existing alignment (2-lane)
- Bike/Ped Moveable Bridge or Fixed High Level Bridge
- 3 Sarah Long Bridge Options
 - Rehab (2-lane)
 - Low level replacement on existing alignment (2 and 4 lane)
 - Low level replacement on upstream alignment (2 and 4 lane)

Alternatives matrix: *Refers to chart on Slide 23.*

Paul: Thoughts and comments? It's taken awhile but the process requires us to provide a good level of assessment. We are already neck deep into the details! Assuming Federal Highway and the DOTs concur, we start the next phase. This will be a more detailed evaluation where we will get into the weeds to better understand

costs, resource impacts, and mobility. I will keep bringing it back to Purpose & Need. We'll also look at criteria not previously assessed and how to weight and score criteria - how we wade through the subjective process.

Refers to Slide 26. Here are the next few steps in the schedule:

- Engineering
- Travel demand modeling
- Traffic analysis
- Life cycle costs
- Resource impacts
- Permitting feasibility
- Section 4f and 106
- Draft and final report

Jon: Will the final report have a projected construction start or time scenarios?

Paul: Yes. Anticipated level of permitting time, process time, design time, resource programming, all will be included.

Jon: Would you have recommendations about what happens if Memorial is not selected for a TIGER grant? There will be an overlap.

Gerry: We can't build both bridges at once.

Paul: We recognize that. The critical time component. We want to provide as much info as possible. The public will ask what happens next.

Russ: And also we take into account how much money are we looking at. All of those issues are on the table. Maine recognizes the needs.

Tom: So if there's no funding in February...the timeframe means the Memorial will be closed if nothing is done. Sometime in spring, there needs to be info about shutting it down.

Russ: That's not true. You have other decisions you can make like additional maintenance or changing it to a bike and pedestrian bridge only.

Carol: It's not a black and white situation.

Jon: We'd better have that concept in hand.

Gerry: By the end of April, we should have a good idea of the recommended solution. The DOTs are talking. I think that gives us time to work with the communities on action plans. We'll know what the next steps will be. Funding is the big issue.

Russ: The benefits of this study – we know now that the Sarah Long Bridge is in trouble. We know moving forward we will have to address these needs. There is a huge demand for bikes and pedestrian crossing on Memorial. There have been real benefits of the study. It's been painful but the region will greatly benefit.

Tom: We've portrayed to the public that if nothing happens, we shut down the Memorial Bridge. We need communication about what both states will do in the interim between the end of February and bridge closing. We don't want to hurt the credibility of the study.

Bob: They've raised this point at the DOTs. The commissioners are aware. We need to be patient.

Carol: If the Memorial Bridge is rehabbed or replaced that is a two-year shutdown. We have mentioned that at the public meetings.

Gerry: We can't underplay it. NEPA requires us not to assume. We can't tell the public anything specific until we have the study recommendations.

Carol: We can say we are looking at the *what ifs* – and that there is awareness at upper levels about the needs.

Tom: We need to have something ready at the public meeting to say here's how we move ahead if we don't get the TIGER grant.

Carol: Yes, that's why we want to have the next public meeting after we know yes or no on the grant.

Dave: The Jobs for America program is a second stimulus. There could be some money for the Memorial there. We are getting something ready to go for this Jobs for America.

Russ: Those issues are being discussed.

Gerry: And we are expecting a call on the TIGER Grant decision soon.

Paul: Questions / details for early input:

- Detail of replacement Memorial Bridge?
- If ped/bike Memorial Bridge how will it connect to the communities?
- What additional roadway connections might we need to consider to the 4-lane Sarah Long with the removal of the Memorial Bridge to vehicle traffic?
- What additional roadway connections might improve a rehab or replacement 2-lane Sarah Long Bridge?

Your thoughts and ideas are welcome – such as the discussion we had today on design assumptions for the Memorial. I want to identify and look at things with real impact. How do designs change our costs from the \$250 – 400M range? This is part of the stuff we're getting into. We want your thoughts.

Tom: Well, the "spaghetti interchange" is bizarre. It affects how people choose to travel. How can we help this situation? It does affect how we choose to get around.

Jon: It goes to traffic numbers. When the Memorial was closed, they weren't coming over the river.

Paul: To what degree can we improve that? People accepted that short-term. Are there other things that need to come into play?

Russ: As we get down to a small number of alternatives, we can look at those details. Nine is too many alternatives to go through.

Gerry: If we find out an alternative creates problems, we take it off the table. Our desire is to do as much as we need but not more.

Paul: Our recommendations appear solid. Is there anything we have missed or are our recommendations reasonable?

All agree to move ahead with the recommendations as presented.

Carol: The next public meeting is either February 10th or 25th, as discussed. There will be additional meetings in the interim, but in May,

we'll have Steering and Stakeholder meetings with draft recommendations. We'll want a public meeting in June as early as possible.

Bob: Do we have anything that says we can rebuild the Sarah Long, maintain traffic, and close the Memorial?

Russ: We need the Memorial as a reliever for construction.

Paul: We have done a constructability assessment.

Gerry: We need more insight into level of impacts.

Paul: Your point is on target. With no vehicles on Memorial, how big a deal is it? Short term, may be acceptable.

Bob: That changes if it's longer-term.

Gerry: There are a few discretionary trips. For the short term, they shop in their community. Long term those patterns readjust.

Paul: So how can we accommodate?

Gerry: We know where the traffic generators are.

Paul: There are so many unique and different things in this area – it changes every 30 minutes traffic-wise.

Peter: Welcome to the Piscataqua region.

Linda: It's a complex system, not just one part to isolate.

Tom: I think that the bike and pedestrian traffic on Memorial is work-related.

Paul: Yes, during the week it is. That's why we have a Bike / Pedestrian alternative on the table.

Tom: If for some reason the Memorial is closed, will it be closed to all traffic?

Bob: Yes.

Paul: No emergency access either.

Jon: I didn't sit in the whole meeting on the economic analysis. What was agreed?

Carol: We are on hold. We are waiting to hear on the TIGER grant, because if we get it there will not be an issue. In the meantime, we are developing a proposal.

Jon: We don't want to build expectations contrary to what we are doing.

Carol: Yes. We have to address this before the public meeting.

Jon: I don't want it to blow up again.

Carol: A related item is that another thing that could take the Bike / Pedestrian alternative off the table – making the economic analysis moot - is the advisability of building a 4-lane Sarah Long.

Paul: Other thoughts? We will make a formal recommendation to Federal Highway and the DOTs on the 21st.

Gerry: Will the public get the draft Fatal Flaw recommendations?

Paul: We will present the draft recommendations to the public. We need a comment period.

Brief discussion around the timing of the public comment period to allow as much time as possible for the project schedule. Concurrence that we are already working on the detailed analysis even if the Fatal Flaw analysis needs more documentation.

Paul: I'd like to introduce a new member, Mary Ann Conroy, the traffic commissioner in Kittery. *Group welcomes Mary Ann.*

The meeting adjourned at 11am.