

Meeting: Steering Committee Meeting

Meeting Date: 08/06/09 - 9 am - 11:30 am

Location: Appledore Engineering, Portsmouth, NH

- Inspection Update
- Stimulus Update
- Purpose and Need Statement – 2nd Draft

- Study Overview

- Public Meeting Overview

**Meeting Report
Maine-NH Connections Study
Steering Committee Meeting
August 6, 2009**

Steering Committee Members Attending: Gerry Audibert, MaineDOT; Russell Charette, MaineDOT; John Butler, NHDOT; Peter Michaud, NHDHR; Tom Reinauer, SMRPC; Julia Dawson, SMRPC; Dave Walker, RCP; Jon Carter, Kittery; Steve Parkinson, Portsmouth; Leigh Levine, NH FHWA; Jamie Sikora, NH FHWA; Anna Price, Maine FHWA; Kirk Mohney (via phone), MHPC), Linda Wilson, NHDHR. Also attending: Paul Godfrey, HNTB; Carol Morris, Morris Communications; Joe Grilli, HNTB

The meeting began at 9:05 am.

Powerpoint presentation (for website)

Stimulus/BICA Update. Gerry noted that MaineDOT and NHDOT continue to work on the Stimulus (TIGER) application. They are talking weekly to finalize the details of the application and pull together necessary information. Regarding the BICA (bridge) inspections, John Butler stated that the inspections of both bridges had been completed and that NHDOT is waiting to receive the final inspections reports from the consultant. They anticipate the reports will be ready to provide to the public by the end of August. Initial findings of the inspection have resulted in posting the Sarah Long bridge at 20 tons and further posting the Memorial at 10 tons.

Russ Charette noted that rail also needed to be addressed as part of the initial findings of the inspection.

Jon Carter asked what the timing of the fixes were going to be for the Memorial Bridge.

John Butler indicated that they were not sure at this time, but would know more following review of the inspection reports.

Jon Carter followed up and asked if the repairs were tied to available funds. If not, what would come first, the repairs or completion of the study?

John Butler responded that if the repairs were modest and could be done by NHDOT maintenance forces, then they would likely be done in the near future. Otherwise, both NHDOT and MaineDOT would need to wait for funding to complete, or potentially wait for the results of the Connections Study to make a decision on how to move ahead.

Gerry and Russ echoed John's statement to say that both MaineDOT and NHDOT would need to wait for the reports to determine next steps.

Steve Parkinson asked if the reports can be made available to Kittery and Portsmouth. John Butler indicated yes.

Gerry indicated that the inspections reports would be reviewed and discussed internally by MaineDOT and NHDOT first, then would be made available to the public.

Carol promised that if more information on either the Stimulus application or BICA inspection were available by the time of the Public Informational Meeting, we would provide it.

Study Update. Paul provided an update on the progress of gathering study data. He reported that technical memos have been completed for the traffic volumes, crash summary, navigational data and the vehicle origin and destination surveys.

For the traffic volumes, they collected counts in April, factored the numbers up to account for increased summer traffic, then conducted additional random counts in July to validate the accuracy of the factoring. Paul reported that in many cases, the factors used were too high, which may reflect reduced volumes this summer due to the poor economy.

The crash survey identifies high crash locations and recommends measures to increase safety.

Study team members met with the state and federal agencies and local pilots to understand what navigational constraints are caused by the existing bridges. They also analyzed a year's worth of data determine how high the bridge needed to be lifted, how often and what kind of ships pass through the channel. Paul noted that in more than half the cases, the bridges had to go only halfway.

Jon Carter asked if the planned dredging of the river, designed to allow a turning basin, would change any of that data by requiring the bridges to be raised higher or more often. Paul said he did not believe so, as the lift situation is currently maximized.

Paul added that a survey has been sent to those who use the river commercially asking for projected rise or falls in usage over the next 20 years.

The vehicle origin and destination survey showed, among other things, that the trip length on the Sarah Long Bridge is typically four times as long as the trip length of vehicles using the Memorial Bridge. Paul said the bike/ped origin and destination survey report is still being prepared; but he noted that there was a surprisingly high percentage of people who bike/walk the Memorial Bridge as a way to regularly travel to work.

Paul stated that all this data will be available at the August 20 Public Informational Meeting.

Paul also noted that still in progress are reports on modal data and facilities, the travel demand model, socio-economic forecasts, the historic overview of the study area, the archeological assessment and other environmental and land use data. He said that they have met with planners from Portsmouth and Kittery to map "activity centers" so that affects of the proposed alternatives can be evaluated in regards to these potential growth areas. He added that Evan Richert will be speaking with local business owners to develop a more fine-grained analysis of existing socio-economic forecasts.

Finally, Paul said that they are undertaking a bridge traffic analysis to determine the maximum capacity of all the bridges.

Purpose and Need Statement. Carol provided an overview of the most current version of the Purpose and Need statement. Prior to the meeting, FHWA from both Maine and New Hampshire had provided comments on the format and suggested some format changes, which were incorporated. Carol noted that we intend to present the most current version of the P&N statement at the Public Informational meeting. She then reviewed the Needs handout, which summarized the needs that had been originally generated by the public and Steering Committee.

Using the projector, she then presented a color-coded version of the Purpose and Need statement. Yellow, green and blue sections of the P&N had been highlighted to show what had been provided by the Public and Steering Committee, the Stakeholder Committee and the agencies, respectively.

Gerry noted that FHWA will need to be comfortable with the definitions that are provided in the P&N statement. Carol agreed to add the DOT and FHWA definition of need to the P&N statement.

Jamie suggested slightly modifying the definition of sustainability. Changing “preserve and enhancing” to “and support”.

Everyone agreed that we needed a follow up call with FHWA and the SHPOs to review the revised language. This would include Mark Hasselman who had provided comments previously but was not in attendance today. Anna promised to coordinate with Mark, and Carol will set up a conference call to discuss this suggestion for the week of August 10th.

Jon Carter noted that he thought that Richard Candee would want the word preserve to remain in the P&N statement. Linda and Peter were also supportive of keeping preserve. Additional comments on this topic were noted by Joe, Gerry, and Linda.

Gerry noted that words mean different things to different people. Peter acknowledged this, noted that we need to work under one definition. Joe provided some background that Section 106 and 4(f) have specific definitions for certain terms.

Russ asked if the original Memorial Bridge rehabilitation project was a preservation project? Peter indicated it was based on the definition of preservation as defined by federal law stated under Section 106 and 4(f). . Paul noted that it was important to get the P&N right from both the public and

agency perspectives. Tom questioned key words in the P&N and wanted to know if we were going to be able to quantify the needs and goals identified. Linda stated that definitions need to be right, but that they must honor statutory, regulatory and public language.

All agreed that adding a glossary of terms to the P&N would be appropriate to make sure everyone is clear on what certain terms mean, specifically sustainability, preserve, and quality of life. Carol will take the lead on pulling this together. It was also agreed for now to add "For the purposes of this study," to the beginning of the definition.

Discussion then moved toward the specific needs - were they complete, or were others required. Carol asked if the preferred alternative will need to meet *all* the needs. Gerry noted that meeting a degree of each of them was the likely approach. Anna agreed with this statement and said it is rare that it is possible to fully meet all needs.

Joe and Gerry asked the group if removing "using all modes" from the purpose statement was appropriate, since current transportation thinking automatically includes all modes in planning. Carol asked that we keep this since it was specifically requested by the public and was not in conflict, but simply clarifies, the purpose statement. This was agreed, but it was suggested and agreed upon that adding "multi-modal" as a modifier to "movement" would serve the same purpose and also not imply that all crossings would be required to include every existing mode of transportation.

Jamie then discussed the potential to change Need d) from connectivity to opportunity. Many others provided comment on this need statement and it was agreed to make the change Jamie suggested.

Paul asked if we needed an additional need statement that incorporated other transportation deficiencies that may arise that are not on the bridge, i.e., transportation deficiencies in downtown Kittery or Portsmouth. Gerry indicated that by adding, "maintain or improve mobility for all modes throughout the region" to Need statement a) would address this.

Leigh suggested that we change a) to "Structural deficiencies exist that threaten accessibility and mobility to the region that require...". All concurred.

David suggested adding accessibility and mobility to the definition list. All agreed.

Leigh and Gerry then suggested adding the concept of reducing costs to Need statement b). After discussion, it was decided that since the word “sustainable” is part of the Purpose Statement and is defined to include the term “fiscally responsible,” it was not necessary to make this addition.

Linda suggested that goals be re-ordered so that costs were not the perceived priority. The group noted that the goals are not in any order of priority, but agreed that the perception could be that they are. Anna suggested we use bullets vs. numbers or letters. Linda suggested the CSS bullet could go first. Much discussion followed, including putting CSS first, moving the CSS definition to the glossary and also adding reference to the CSS approach in the Purpose statement.

Carol then went through and identified some of the previous purpose and need statement information that had been removed. All agreed that while some of the wording was not exactly the same, the intent was covered in this revised version. The exception was concern about evacuation, and Joe suggested we add back the evacuation route statement to Need statement b). (NOTE: This was subsequently deleted as it does not really fit in b. and the mobility addition in a. covers it.)

Carol agreed to incorporate changes to P&N statement based on meeting discussion and provide to all next week.

August 20 Public Meeting: Carol went over the planned agenda for the upcoming Public Meeting. The meeting will take place at the Portsmouth Public Library, with an open house from 4-6 pm and a meeting from 6-8 pm. The open house will feature stations where the public can get an up-close look at the date results to date, and ask questions of a study team expert. Written comments will also be captured during this time period. Following that, the meeting will cover the following agenda items: Stimulus Update, BICA Inspection Update, Study Update, Background Conditions and Analysis Overview, Purpose and Need: Review of Next Draft, General Questions/Discussion.

The meeting ended at 11:15 pm.

