

**Meeting: Public Informational Meeting**

**Meeting Date: 09/24/09 - 6-8 pm**

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

**Maine-NH Connections Study  
Public Informational Meeting  
September 24, 2009  
6-8 pm  
Kittery Trading Post**

**Panel:** Paul Godfrey, HNTB; Gerry Audibert, MaineDOT; Bob Landry, NHDOT, John Butler, NHDOT, Carol Morris, Morris Communications; Russ Charette, MaineDOT

**Welcome/Meeting Overview: Carol Morris, Morris Communications**

- Welcome
- Update on Stimulus Application/BICA – 10 minutes
- Study Schedule Update - 5 minutes
- Traffic Forecasts – 10 Minutes
- Fatal Flaw Analysis: Discussion - 1 hour
- Brainstorm New Alternatives - 20 minutes
- Next Steps - 10 minutes

**Stimulus Application: Bob Landry, NHDOT**

- Out of 20 states accounted for so far, there were \$6 billion worth of applications. *(Subsequent to the meeting, it has been estimated that all applications total approximately \$57 billion, competing for the \$1.5 billion of available funding.)*
- We got our application in on September 15, asking for \$70 million for Memorial Bridge rehabilitation and \$10 million for the State Pier.
- 100 pages of support letters were included, which we really appreciate.
- The full application can be found at [www.mainenhconnections.org/updates](http://www.mainenhconnections.org/updates).
- The I-95 bridge inspection is going on right now—the Memorial Bridge inspection report should be finalized by the end of the month,

which will give us a better sense of the dollar estimates needed to fix the bridge.

- We will need to look at what's different between HNTB's rehabilitation plan from 2003 and what comes out of these new inspections – how would the rehabilitation work need to change.
  
- Q. I'm new to the area, is Memorial Bridge the one that starts on State St.?
- Bob: Yes.
  
- Q. When do you expect to hear about whether we get the grant?
- Bob: They're hoping to make selections by mid-January.
  
- Q. When you're talking about the stimulus, is it Maine and New Hampshire together?
- Bob: Yes, we applied jointly for the Memorial Bridge. And aside from that, NH alone requested funds for the State Pier. We did that in conjunction with this big project because we heard USDOT would look favorably on port projects, and because of the proximity of the pier to the lift bridges
  
- Q. When will reports on the high-level bridge be made available?
- Bob: We don't know that yet.

### **Study Update/Schedule Review: Carol Morris, Morris Communications**

- In October and November the Study Team will be undertaking the ongoing fatal flaw review.
- In December we'll be bringing the results of the analysis back out to the public.
- During the interim period, prior to December, we'll be meeting with the Stakeholder Committee to get their feedback. Once the final decision on which alternatives stay on the list is made in December, we'll begin to analyze the final list of alternatives in greater detail.
- By January/February, should we receive approval for Memorial Bridge TIGER funding, we'll take the analysis of that bridge off the table and continue with the Sarah Long.

### **Future (2035) No-Build Conditions: Paul Godfrey, HNTB**

- As with all transportation studies, we will establish a computer travel demand model for this study. A "No-Build" alternative is necessary so we have a benchmark with which to compare alternatives.

- We assume that future no-build conditions in the year 2035 will include the following:
  - o Memorial Bridge is closed
  - o Sarah Long remains but has reduced weight limits.
  - o The Albacore connector is open to all traffic movements
  - o We see traffic volumes in our study area growing about 24%. That's about average. We've seen over the past decade that traffic grows about 1% a year, so 24% is about right. Aren't the growth assumptions the same regardless of which bridges are open?
  - o Most traffic will shift over to the Sarah Long and it will be at capacity; the rest will go to the I-95 high-level bridge.
  - o A small percentage of displaced traffic would probably choose not to cross the river.

· Carol: Paul, can you explain more about the no-build model and why we do this?

· Paul: It's required as part of this study by federal law - NEPA (the National Environmental Policy Act). For all the alternatives that we're going to analyze and share with you folks, the no-build has to be there as a basis for comparison. We can't go in with the assumption we're going to do something. The no-build is a litmus test. It allows the comparisons to be much easier to understand—you need one solid benchmark to know the degree of things getting better/worse.

· Q. You're going to look at the increased traffic on I-95 right?

· Paul: Yes.

· Paul: In the no-build scenario for 2035, the Sarah Long is already at capacity, so traffic would have to go elsewhere. What we're going to be looking at this fall is how these increased volumes will affect the local areas surrounding the bridges (to the north and south).

· Q. When you say no-build option for Memorial, would that mean the bridge would stay open for pedestrians, etc?

· Paul: I really can't answer that question. Everything you just described is possible, but there are questions.

· Bob: I can answer it. It won't be open for pedestrians. By 2035, the lift spans won't be working. On top of that, you're talking a million dollars a year in maintenance and operation costs just to keep it functional for pedestrians.

· Paul: To Bob's point, every alternative has a cost. And no-build has a cost as well, because if a bridge can't function, there will be a cost to remove it.

### **Fatal Flaw Analysis and How it Works: Paul Godfrey, HNTB**

- Used to evaluate and screen the full range of alternatives (solutions) identified
- The remaining feasible alternatives receive a “Higher” more detailed level of analysis
- Fatal flaw screening:
  - o Does the alternative satisfy the Study purpose, need and goals?
  - o Does the alternative have significant impacts?
  - o Is the alternative permissible?
  - o Is the alternative financially/physically feasible?
  - o Is the alternative not clearly inferior to other alternatives?
- If any of the alternatives don’t meet these criteria, we document them and set them aside
- All of the alternatives identified by the steering and stakeholder committees, public and agencies will be considered under the fatal flaw analysis.
- Once we have discarded those alternatives that are clearly not feasible and so do not pass the fatal flaw screening, we will evaluate the rest in greater detail.

### **Fatal Flaw Draft Matrix: Paul Godfrey, HNTB**

- This matrix shows how we conduct the fatal flaw analysis, a “tool” to funnel solutions. (Refer to PowerPoint presentation)
  - The criteria you see along the top of the matrix are based on the Purpose and Need Statement and regulatory requirements.
  - Under Fatal Flaw, we don’t look at everything. Aesthetics, color, how it looks—that’s not critically important right NOW. It will be later on, but it’s not a “showstopper” at this stage.
  - I’d like to walk you through the matrix so you can see how we might evaluate a certain alternative. We have 15 criteria. Things such as lifecycle costs—we want to really understand the comprehensive costs of building, operation and maintenance. We look to extrapolate those costs over 100 years. Other criteria we look at are wetlands and natural resources—is the alternative disrupting or affecting neighborhoods, resources, etc?
  - We’ll also use our travel demand model in conjunction with the matrix—that data can help provide answers to the effects of the different alternatives.
- 
- Q. With the no-build option, where does business employment tax revenue get assessed if suddenly there are people not crossing the bridge to get to the other side?
  - Paul: That type of economic evaluation would come in the January 2010 analysis—part of the more detailed analysis of feasible

alternatives. At this point, those factors are not going to keep or not keep any alternative on the table. It IS important, but it's something that will come into play when we're down to the final few alternatives.

- Carol: Also, it takes a lot of work to gather all that detailed data, some of which we do not have at this point, so the current criteria allow us to move forward with the immediate issues.

- Paul: We don't do this in a vacuum. We bring this back to you, we want your thoughts/feedback/ideas. I guarantee there will be a few alternatives that we'll debate and discuss; other alternatives will probably go away quickly.

### **Hypothetical Fatal Flaw Analysis: Paul Godfrey, HNTB**

- We just want to do a hypothetical today, anyone have something they want to use as our example?

- Bob: Let's do the no-build option.

- *(Group conducts assessment; no-build receives 8 red (negatives), 4 yellow (neutral) and 3 green (positives). Click here for Matrix and more detailed info on criteria.)*

### **Brainstorm Session from Stakeholder Committee—Memorial Bridge Alternatives**

- Ped/Bike/Cars only
- Rehab: "as is" but historic
- Rehab with bike lane
- Replacement with lift bridge – not historic
- Replacement with increased clearance
- Replacement with new alignment
- Replacement with draw bridge
- Replacement with fixed span
- Replacement with mid-level moveable

### **Brainstorm Session from Stakeholder Committee—Sarah Long Bridge Alternatives**

- Rehab: "as is" but historic
- Rehab with bike lane
- Replacement with lift bridge – not historic
- Replacement with increased clearance
- Replacement with new alignment
- Replacement with draw bridge
- Replacement with fixed span
- Replacement with mid-level moveable
- Replacement with vessel improvements

- Replace or rehab with rail only

### **Other Alternatives suggested from Stakeholder Committee**

- Vehicle tunnel
- Rail tunnel
- No bridges at all
- Ferry (s)
- Mono rail
- Single high level bridge
- Add trolley to Memorial Bridge
- Light passenger rail

### **Summary of Stakeholder Input: Paul Godfrey**

#### Memorial Bridge Alternatives

1. Rehab on existing alignment/same clearances
2. Replace on existing alignment/same clearances
3. Replace on existing alignment/mid-level bridge
4. Replace on existing alignment/high-level bridge
5. Close the bridge to all traffic

#### Sarah Long Bridge Alternatives

1. Rehab on existing alignment/same clearances
2. Replace on existing alignment/same clearances
3. Replace on existing alignment/mid-level bridge
4. Replace on existing alignment/high-level bridge
5. Close the bridge to all traffic

To better explain what some of these alternatives are, I'm going to show you a graphic (Refer to PowerPoint Presentation). Anytime we talk about rehabilitation, we assume the alignment stays the same. When we talk about replacement, we can keep it on the same alignment, or we could put it immediately upstream or downstream (change the alignment) When we're talking about replacement, you can have mid-level, or high-level. If you were to replace the Memorial with a mid-level bridge, it would have to be longer or it would be too steep. If you did a high-level bridge (150 feet in the air) the end access points would be way out into Portsmouth or Kittery.

- Q. Is rail viable in a tunnel?
- Paul: Good question - I don't know at this point.

- Q. Did you ever do a study on the people who walk across the bridge?

- Paul: Yes, we did that this summer. It gave us great insight into usage of the bridge.
- Comment: I think more people might bike across the bridge if it were safer.
- Paul: Our travel demand model is pretty robust. We know that certain trips are easier to walk/bike than drive. We'll look closer at that, to see if there are unmet bicycle/pedestrian needs.
- Comment: I think there are unmet needs.
- Carol: For pedestrian too, or just bike?
- Comment: I think probably just bike.
- Paul: Thank you, it's a great comment and we'll work to better understand it.
- Comment: Given the Memorial Bridge, with the exception of New Year's and 4<sup>th</sup> of July, I think we could change the lift span schedule from 10 pm to 6 am - keep it up all night.
- Comment: Do you really want an open lift bridge that's unsupervised?
- Comment: Well, you'd have to have a barrier.
- Bob: Yeah, that'd be a security issue.
- Q. Will the connections study include cost of analysis for rehabilitating two bridges from the TIGER grant?
- Paul: We are doing cost-benefit analysis as part of this study.
- Q. Will there be discussion of potential impacts? Sharp lines on a graph can look so surgical—whereas the true impacts of an offline alternative may be much wider. Will you address the realities?
- Paul: When we are actually looking at alternatives, we will place the lines very carefully to miss whatever we can. That's why we map all the historic, natural and human (homes, businesses) resources.
- Q. And these lines you say do NOT take resources into account at this time?
- Paul: Correct, they're JUST hypotheticals. The hard part of the process is, we're going to come back here with a lot of information. You'll have questions—why did you go this way as opposed to that way, etc, and we'll answer those questions as best we can. We're going to take a lot of time so everyone is comfortable with what is proposed.
- Q. When we start to evaluate results of fatal flaw, if they're significantly different from what we have now, is it possible to do photo simulations?
- Paul: My opinion is we might not need that at the fatal flaw level, but it might reach that phase when we get to the final list of alternatives.



- Gerry: With the fatal flaw, we may see things that don't PRECLUDE options, that is, we would not take them off the table yet, but that might raise flags that we'll take into consideration
- Q. You ran through the no-build scenario, and have probably a dozen more scenarios. Who makes those decisions?
- Paul: We take the first stab, based on all our data, resources, etc. We want the outcome to be as quantitative as possible. We use hard information to say, should this box be green? Should it be red?
- Q. When you say WE, do you mean consultants AND transportation agencies?
- Carol: By WE, first it would be the Steering Committee, and then we take it to the Stakeholder Committee. Then we bring it to you.
- Q. To what extent will the decision already be made before it comes to the public?
- Paul: No decisions will be made until its fully vetted by the public.
- Carol: When we get to evaluating the FEASIBLE alternatives, that's when it might get tough. But we'll take it through all three levels, from the Steering Committee to Stakeholder Committee to the general public.
- Q. Is there a run out time on Memorial Bridge? Every time I go over it I say a prayer.
- Bob: Last year, we were estimating 2-5 years. We'll know more when final inspection reports become available.
- Q. It's my impression that the decision makers at the end of this process are the two state departments of transportation working together? Is that correct?
- Paul: Yes.
- Q. You talked before about doing pedestrian/cyclist surveys. You didn't mention numbers—if the bridge is not fixed, will those people then use cars? And is that factored in to your travel demand model?
- Paul: Yes. For example, pedestrian trips would drop significantly. We took all those walkers/bikers and added them to automobile figures.
- Q. When the surveys were being done, we drove across, and we weren't stopped. Was there some kind of criteria to determine who you stop?
- Paul: In order for a survey to be valid, it all has to be completely random. We also don't need to stop all cars to get a statistically valid accurate sample.
- Gerry: Also, if they noticed traffic starting to build up, they'd wave people through.
- Q. If they did away with the Memorial Bridge, would you add exits and entrances to Sarah Long?



- Paul: The logical answer is yes. We'd say, are there connections that can be readily made that would improve the flow of traffic?
- Q. I'm assuming you didn't ask the people driving if they would bicycle if the bridge was different?
- Paul: Correct, we just asked factual information, nothing subjective.
- Q. What happens if we don't get stimulus? Is there a budget we're working with?
- Paul: I won't answer for the DOTs, but I will say they're both committed to the outcome of the study
- Q. In the alternatives, do you have a sense of cost benefits of different types of bridges (i.e. high span, lift bridge, swing bridge.)?
- Paul: There are certainly differences, some are more expensive to build, others are more expensive to operate and maintain. That will be something that might come into play in the more detailed assessment, but not in fatal flaw.

### **Upcoming Meetings: Carol Morris, Morris Communications**

- October/November: Steering/Stakeholder Committee Meeting(s) to check in on Fatal Flaw Analysis
- December: Public Informational Meeting(s) on Fatal Flaw Analysis results
- Q. If stimulus proposal is accepted, what happens?
- Paul: We would modify the study, because stimulus only accounts for the Memorial Bridge. We would then shift focus to the Sarah Long.
- Q. So rehab would start immediately on the Memorial?
- Bob: Yes, that was a criterion for the application. We'd be shovel-ready to bid the project in February.
- Q. So when would it be worked on?
- Bob: They'd be on the ground in May 2010, and the bridge would be back open by October 2012.
- Q. You couldn't do one lane at a time?
- Bob: No. We found out during the last bid process that that adds to the cost of the rehab significantly.
- Paul: As always, we appreciate your time and effort. Stay connected to the website for updates. Thank you.

*The meeting ended at 7:40 pm.*