

Meeting: Stakeholder Committee Meeting

Meeting Date: 11/06/09 - 1-4 pm

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

Fatal Flaw Analysis: Progress Report

**Maine–N.H. Connections Study
Stakeholder Committee Meeting
November 6, 2009 1-4 pm
Kittery Trading Post**

Attending: Steering Committee

Leigh Levine, New Hampshire Federal Highway Administration
Jamie Sikora, New Hampshire Federal Highway Administration
Bob Landry, New Hampshire Department of Transportation
John Butler, New Hampshire Department of Transportation
Kirk Mohnney, Maine Historic Preservation Office
Peter Michaud, New Hampshire State Historic Preservation Office
Linda Wilson, New Hampshire State Historic Preservation Office
Julia Dawson, Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission
Gerry Audibert, Maine Department of Transportation
Mark Hasselmann, Maine Federal Highway Administration
Russ Charette, Maine Department of Transportation

Attending: Stakeholder Committee

Chris Holt, Portsmouth Pilots
Ben Porter, Save our Bridges
Peter Somssich, Portsmouth Democrats
Richard Candee, Portsmouth Historical Society
Christy Cardoso, Portsmouth Citywide Neighborhood Steering
Committee
Ken Herrick, Albacore Park
Steve Workman, N.H Seacoast Greenway
Rose Eppard, Portsmouth resident
Nancy Carmer, Portsmouth Economic Development Committee
Gail Drobnyk, Badgers Island resident
Kinley Gregg, Town of York
Cathy Goodwin, Greater York Chamber

Josh Pierce, SABR
Doug Bates, Greater Portsmouth Chamber
Milton Hall, Kittery Port Authority

Observing:

Lisa Corcoran, Portsmouth
Silas Proft, Portsmouth

Study Team/Support:

Paul Godfrey, HNTB
Carol Morris, Morris Communications
Kelly Broberg, Morris Communication

The meeting began at 1:10 pm.

Carol Morris: Welcome everyone. Today we'll go over the results of Round 1 of the Fatal Flaw Analysis. We met with the Steering Committee this morning. We'll give you their reactions, talk about the process, what we've done to date, and then spend time evaluating alternatives, which are on the red and green handout.

Here's what we've done so far (refers slide 3):

- Brainstormed alternatives with Steering, Stakeholder and Public
- Developed evaluation matrix based on P&N Statement
- Tested matrix with Stakeholder Committee and at public meeting
- With all possible combinations: 61 different alternatives
- Simplified approach for today – 22 different options
- This approach is used as some evaluation criteria requires bridges to be evaluated individually, while others must be evaluated in combination

Now, when we put all alternatives together there are 61. As we get further along, we'll be looking at things in a package because what you do with one bridge affects the other.

Paul Godfrey: Slide 4 talks about what we've done so far. I have some corrections for you to note on the red and green matrix, corrections identified by the Steering Committee this morning. Under Historical

Resource Impacts, please color the following RED: MB2, MB2A, MB5 and 6, SL2 to SL5, ALT 3. Thanks for making those changes in advance. We started with 61 and to make things easier for today we have created three groupings: Memorial Bridge options, Sarah Long Bridge options, and new alternatives. The scoring criteria you helped us develop are still the same. The Study Team has completed three pieces of analysis and assessment at this point. There are three bridges now. Could this region live with less than three? For all options and alternatives you see here today, we will show footprints: our best estimate of what the option looks like and the resources impacts to homes, properties, businesses. Let's look at the first one.

Paul described the alignment and impacts of each option:

No Build: This is required to be included in every study of this type. Everything gets compared back to this option. Here, the Memorial is closed. We are thinking about a 2035 picture. If we don't do anything to Memorial it gets closed anyway. Sarah Long remains a 2-lane bridge in this model.

Memorial Bridge Options

MB1 Rehab Existing Bridge: From our perspective, this meets Purpose & Need as long as we have a Sarah Long Bridge. There are no impacts. We recommend this option be carried forward.

The Stakeholder Committee agreed.

Chris Holt: Are we just putting a band-aid on what's there by not tearing down or building a new one?

Paul: We may replace pieces. The replace option means tear down the old bridge and build new one.

Ben Porter: Is this what's included in the TIGER grant application?

Bob Landry: The TIGER grant would be rehab.

Peter Somssich: What is the difference between rehab and rebuild?

Paul: The life of a new bridge is estimated at 75 – 80 years. For rehab, it's 50 – 60 years.

Linda Wilson: Don't new bridges need rehab? Don't you need to add that cost in.

Paul: Yes we will, halfway through the life of the bridge.

MB2 Replace Existing Bridge. This will likely include improved design features such as shoulders and sidewalks. It can be two or four lanes. If it's two, we need to make sure that the Sarah Long is maintained for enough bridge capacity. Very limited impacts. We recommend we move forward with this option.

Jamie Sikora: There are historic impacts.

Paul: Yes, we will be tearing down a historic bridge, so it's coded red. We still recommend moving ahead here.

The Stakeholder Committee agreed.

MB2A: Replace Existing Bridge with a Low Level bridge Upstream. Limits of work are the end of Badger's Island to downtown Portsmouth. This option would likely require the demolition of Memorial Bridge. It would require work in the Memorial historic district, piers, ports, two commercial buildings, condos, parking lots, Memorial Park, local historic district. Also the Warner House.

Chris: Building a bridge further upriver reduces room to come around Badger's Island.

Paul: What I'm hearing you say is that this is a constraint?

Chris: Yes, you're taking (navigational) operating room away from me.

Paul: Based on what we've found to date, we say move ahead on this option. The Steering Committee came close to eliminating this one. Remember, moving it upstream means we can keep Memorial open during construction and pedestrians and bikes can cross for those two years. We need to balance that against resource impacts. This morning, the Steering Committee weighed against keeping it open.

The Stakeholder Committee agreed with keeping it on the table for now.

MB2A/ Replace Existing Bridge with a Low Level Bridge Downstream: The level of impacts is similar to MB2 upstream. The limit of work is

roughly the same. And consistent with the last option, this morning the benefits did not outweigh the cost. So even though the matrix says we are moving ahead, this one will likely come off the table because impacts are less with the rehab options.

The Stakeholder Committee agreed.

MB3 Replacement Bridge - Mid-Level on Alignment: This is a bridge halfway in between what's there today and the I95 bridge - 70 ft clearance off the water, reducing the number of bridge openings by 50%, limits from the northern end of Badger's Island to Chapel Street in Portsmouth. The impact would be demolition of Memorial, piers, Memorial Bark, Warner House, the recreation center, a parking lot, the historic district. It's more impact to Portsmouth. In Kittery, it's parking lots. We recommend not moving forward.

The Stakeholder Committee agreed.

MB3A Replacement with Mid-Level Bridge Upstream: Again, the impacts are roughly the same as MB3. Bottom line, we recommend not going forward because of the impacts.

The Stakeholder Committee agreed.

MB3A Replacement with Mid-Level Bridge Downstream. More impacts on the marina and on properties. Study Team recommends not to move ahead.

The Stakeholder Committee agreed.

MB4: Replacement the with a 150 ft High-Level Bridge. The limits are Government Street in Kittery to Portsmouth downtown. The bridge to Badger would need to remain so we'd have parallel bridges. You can all see the impacts for this bridge. Study Team has recommended we not carry this forward for consideration.

The Stakeholder Committee agreed.

MB5: Close or Demolish Memorial Bridge. This is only viable if the Sarah Long is four lanes wide. That's what the notes on the matrix show. Impact: it is a historically eligible bridge. We suggest to move this forward to the next level. We do have four-lane Sarah Long expansion options still on the table.

The Stakeholder Committee agreed with moving it forward.

MB6 Replacement with Bike/Ped Bridge: The same historic impacts because the existing bridge is removed. The same navigational clearances as the option before. Again, it only works if we have a four-lane Sarah Long.

Richard Candee: Is that a full replacement or rehab?

Paul: This assumes full replacement.

Christy Cardoso: What does close mean – leaving a structure in place?

Paul: Closing means the bridge is removed.

The Stakeholder Committee agreed with moving it forward.

Sarah Mildred Long Options

SL1: Rehab on existing alignment and structure. Rail remains and we keep the Sarah Long at two lanes. Note, All Sarah Long options maintain the rail traffic. You will see rail for all.

Chris: Why?

Paul: The Naval Shipyard has told us that moving what they need to move via rail is the only option.

Chris: They can't float it?

Gerry Audibert: They don't have the onload / offload facilities to float it.

Paul: We checked. There are other similar facilities in the country and all three facilities use rail.

Chris: That is a choice. There are other viable ways. I have moved nuclear product on water. It's not that big of a deal to float and is less cost than keeping rail system.

Paul: It's a discussion with the DOD. We are keeping rail. I agree with your point.

Carol: It was our hope we could find another example of this kind of material being moved on the water but we don't have it.

Peter Somssich: It is a greater safety hazard by water than rail. Radioactive materials.

Chris: The nuclear waste is in casks.

Peter Somssich: But what kind of rescue effort is needed? Once it's in the water, the alert is much bigger.

Russ Charette: There is a major timing issue with the shipyard. They have a long process to decide if they could do it or not. That's our basis for moving forward with rail.

Paul: The process to change the current situation, given past discussions with the Shipyard, would be very difficult. We recommend going ahead.

The Stakeholder Committee agreed.

Audience member: You're adding cost if you're adding mobility. You don't want to increase costs because you don't want rail.

SL2: New bridge with New Features. It's either two or four lane. The benefit is an improved navigation channel. The impact is that Sarah Long is a historically eligible bridge. No off-river impacts. We recommend to move ahead on this one.

Ben: Is there a way to consider increasing clearance under the rail line, to bring the rail line higher up?

Paul: Our next few options look at that. Our engineers looked at various bridges. More details will come later.

The Stakeholder Committee agreed to move ahead on this option.

SL2A: New Low Level Bridge Upstream: In this case we have only an upstream option because of the downstream turning basin. Based on discussions with the Coast Guard, we need to stay away from the basin. All off-alignment options for the Sarah Long are upstream. This is a similar height to today's bridge, with increased horizontal navigation clearances, rail under the new bridge. The limits of work are: north of Bridge Street in Kittery to Portsmouth, the other side of

Market Street. The impact is demolition of the Sarah Long, work on US1 Bypass, North Mill Pond, piers. In Portsmouth, we have condos, historic district. In Kittery, three homes, an auto repair business. There are some impacts. However, we recommend moving ahead.

The Stakeholder Committee agreed.

Ken Herrick: Are there impacts to Albacore?

Paul: It all stays outside of Albacore.

John Butler: Will a long lift span improve navigation?

Paul: Yes, we can make it wider to improve vessel flow.

Richard: I think this will impact the Jackson House in Portsmouth.

Paul: No, but we are getting close.

Richard: its better the more upstream you are.

Paul: We aren't talking visual impacts now but will later in the process. This one goes forward.

SL3: 70 feet off water, Mid-Level Bridge with a 2% rail grade. This allows for a reduced number of bridge openings, better navigation clearances, and limits in Kittery the same as the last option. The rail impacts are longer because we are building the bridge up. It's challenging but doable and can be either a two or four lane. Impacts are demolition of the Sarah Long, US Route 1 Bypass, North Mill Pond. In Portsmouth, we have the Eastern Railroad district, the salt storage building, two condos, two homes, the local historic district. In Kittery, commercial property, and Bridge Street must be relocated. Possible acquisition of three to five homes and a nursery.

Chris: Are these lift bridges?

Paul: We are assuming that at this point because it is most economical. They are most appropriate given what we're doing. The recommendation is to carry it forward.

Steve Workman: Just a comment: that's my house on Bridge Street you're talking about.

Paul: We won't lose sight of that if this goes ahead.

The Stakeholder Committee agreed to move ahead with this option.

SL3A – Same Bridge as SL3 but Upstream. We can keep the bridge open during construction but ultimately it will be removed. Same limits and impacts as the previous option. We are still staying out of Albacore Park. There is more impact to the Oakwood Terrace area. These are two or four lane bridges. If we have the Memorial in the mix, a two-lane option is ok. Otherwise, we need four.

Chris: Can we make it a four-lane even if the Memorial is open?

Paul: Our traffic look-forward is 25 year and the footprint can accommodate either two or four.

Gail Drobny: You mean two or four lanes for any Sarah Long option?

Paul: Yes. We recommend moving to the next level.

The Stakeholder Committee agreed.

SL4 Replacement with a High-Level Bridge. This is 135 feet high, the same as the I95 bridge.

Gail: Can you maintain the rail on a high level bridge?

Paul: We won't have rail on the new one. We have to keep the existing Sarah Long for rail only. The roadway would go away but the rail stays. The bridge can remain in up mode all the time except for when the rail comes through. These are very long limits of work.

Rose Eppard: This doesn't solve the slingshot problem we have for ships to get through.

Paul: Yes, we still have an angle problem but the bridge is open most of the time. The impact is a portion of the Sarah Long being removed, the historic district, the river, the marine terminal, condos, two homes, maybe the Jackson property. In Kittery, it's three to five Bridge Street homes and the nursery.

Ben: Does that include relocation of Bridge Street even though approach ramps won't ground there anymore?

Paul: This new road needs to go up to make the connection to the current roadway. We are trying to tell you we can't connect to this bridge where it is today. This can be a two- or four-lane. We recommend moving this ahead for consideration.

Nancy Cardoso: When you eliminate a major dock, does that assume mitigation?

Paul: We can still provide access but some new impact is likely. Not sure what degree yet.

Carol: We won't be looking at mitigation until later in the process.

The Stakeholder Committee agreed to move ahead with this option.

SL5: Close the Bridge. Rail remains. We may or may not remove the bridge deck. This cannot support the capacity need and thus is a fatal flaw. We move to eliminate this option.

Chris: Can we eliminate the last one too?

Paul: We're going to have a good discussion on all the options. Let's move to the new alternatives.

The Stakeholder Committee agreed to eliminate the option.

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NEW ALTERNATIVES

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Alternative 1: 150-foot High Vertical Clearance Bridge: This would be placed in the location west of Badger's. It could be in multiple locations but we're here not to debate the location but the impacts. The limits are all the way to Government in Kittery and in Portsmouth, because of bridge height, it ties in at the old library. Trying to serve the downtown area. The impact is a no-go: 10 – 11 homes in Kittery and Portsmouth historic district. We move to eliminate this option.

The Stakeholder Committee agreed.

Alt 1A Low-Level Bridge: This can tie in nicely to the Portsmouth side with some work on Market Street and the limit does stay outside the Hill historic district. However, we have the impact in Kittery, so we recommend against it.

The Stakeholder Committee agreed.

Chris: Also navigation-wise, it's right on a turn. Won't work.

Paul: Turning on a corner requires more room. At least 500 feet.

Alt 1B: Mid-Level Bridge – The same limits in Kittery and in Portsmouth, it ends up at Hanover. It impacts the hill and the district. Again, based on this, no go.

The Stakeholder Committee agreed.

Alt 2 – Tunnel. 7,000 feet of tunnel, 50 feet under the bedrock. A long way down Route 1 and into Portsmouth. It runs from Government in Kittery all the way through Portsmouth. The cost of this is at least 200 million dollars in construction alone. Here, we recommend not carrying it forward.

The Stakeholder Committee agreed.

Ben: Is there no impact on Badger's Island?

Paul: No, we are below bedrock there.

Alt 3: Ferry(s): We can't move enough vehicles with ferries – it's a fatal flaw because it won't meet capacity needs. We recommend not moving it forward.

The Stakeholder Committee agreed.

Paul: So of the 22 options on the matrix, we are recommending 10 be eliminated. Based on this morning's discussion, that number will go up. We want your recommendations.

Ben: Could you go back over the ones that are still in?

Paul: MB1 rehab, MB2 replace, MB2A but this low level upstream and downstream option goes away with more documentation, MB2B, MB5 and 6, SL1, 2, and 2A, SL3 and 3A. SL4 also.

The Stakeholder Committee agreed with the current options still being considered.

Gail: There are navigation problems with an upstream option at Memorial. Based on Chris' comments, we need to eliminate it.

Chris: How far downstream would the new bridge be from the existing bridge?

Bob: About 60 feet downstream.

Chris: It's moving about 70 feet downriver from the start of the Memorial Bridge.

Christy: SL4 doesn't fix the navigational issues because you're keeping the old bridge for rail. SL4 is the worst option.

Ben: A fixed bridge reduces cost.

Richard: There's lots of room for decay with the lift bridge.

Paul: We're going to document everything. For now, SL4 is a keeper.

Rose: How does keeping an extra bridge, even if it's just rail, solve anything?

Paul: An option is a four-lane high-level Sarah Long and getting rid of the Memorial Bridge.

Rose: It is also a bike and pedestrian issue.

Christy: This does not meet study parameters.

Ben: What we're telling you is we don't want to see SL4. Take it off the table.

Paul: Okay. We hear you, but I need further documentation to do that. Your comments are part of that. We're being very careful in this process.

Ben: We're not hearing openness from you.

Paul: I'm not there yet. I don't have enough information.

Richard: I can guarantee I won't vote for that option.

Carol: I'd like to remind you all that this is not a voting process.

Rose: Only the people from the morning meeting get to vote, right?

Carol: No. No one votes. The two DOTs make the final decision. The public's opinion is one component we need to make sure we come up with the best solution and also to meet NEPA guidelines. We are confident this will not make the grade, but as Paul says, we need to gather more information.

Gerry: This is just the beginning, a very rough cut. We need to satisfy federal highway requirements by documenting all suggestions.

Peter Michaud: My understanding is that community support is vital. No one supports SL4.

Rose: The Sarah Long options, do they include changing the orientation for boats?

Paul: We will look to increase the horizontal clearance rather than change the angle of the bridge.

Rose: You mean move the towers?

Paul: Yes, reducing skew. We assume the opening is wider. All Sarah Long Bridge options assume this except for the rehab option.

Chris: I'm confused about SL4.

Paul: There is not enough documentation to take it off yet. We are hearing you loud and clear, though.

Audience member: Where would SL4 start?

Paul: South of 236 tying in almost to Maplewood. The US Route 1 Bypass has right of way. The road below would go away.

Ken: You talk about why we shouldn't do things. What are the advantages?

Paul: The pluses and minuses come in the next round.

Peter Michaud: SL4 does not mention the need for bike and ped access. That needs to be noted.

Carol: I have that noted.

Linda: To reinforce Peter's point, if Memorial goes away, we have to give bike access somehow. If we lose the connection between downtown Portsmouth and downtown Kittery, both communities wither on the vine.

Christy: Part of where our mistrust is that you said some of the Memorial options were just holding on by a thread and yet they are fatally flawed. How close is SL4?

Bob: One of the benefits of a high level bridge like this is reducing lifecycle costs. A high level bridge has zero operating costs in the future. Maintenance on the I-95 bridge is \$77,000 a year. For the Sarah Long, it's \$700,000. That's what you get by keeping it in the mix. Memorial is a million dollars a year in operating cost. And this is just a top-level look. Over a hundred years, this pays for more bridge.

Chris: Does the rail system and Navy pay you anything for the rail line?

Bob: That's a very interesting discussion. Rail is owned by Pan Am Railway. We are charging the Naval Yard fees and they say we should be charging Pan Am. But the Navy pays Pan Am. That's a different discussion.

Paul: It's in there – SL4 - because we haven't put the last nail in the box. We can't miss anything.

Christy: It's hard as a citizen and user to see some dismissed and see some undesirables push forward because of lifespan costs. Living quality – where does it rank?

Paul: We haven't discussed living yet. That will be soon.

Carol: We are getting there.

Kinley Gregg: I don't understand the premise of SL4. The Sarah Long Bridge is not safe to drive on but it's safe enough to transport nuclear waste?

Bob: The trusses that support the train do not have issues. These are the trusses that support the roadway. This is a deck issue.

Linda: If there is no lower level crossing from downtown Portsmouth to Kittery and two high bridges, even with a Sarah Long rehab, what does that accomplish economically? We have to look at both economies and communities.

Carol: We will look at the economics with the final choices in hand.

Linda: It's fine to say that. Don't they have to be plugged into thought process now? It may be a disaster. We have to take into account economic impact vs. maintenance cost.

Russ: You said early on that some of these options are part of larger alternatives packages. Maybe the packages will solve the problem.

Paul: Maintaining both bridges maintains economic status quo. Let's get to the next step so we can look at economics.

Carol: And what's on the table now addresses some of your concerns.

The Stakeholder Committee agreed to move SL4 on to the next round, although it was not a favored option.

Paul: Let's go back to the Round 2 criteria slide:

- Steering Team Recommendation is that Round 2 of fatal flaw analysis will include:
 - Evaluation of similar bridge options
 - Pedestrian/Bicycle assessment for bridge options
 - Order of Magnitude Life Cycle cost estimation

Order of magnitude means we will do ballpark estimates, taking available data and putting it together quickly. This will allow us to see outliers and they can go away in the next few weeks. There could be a Round 3 to look at the economic factors.

Ben: Can we also include the impact of auto traffic? If you have the elimination of a bridge, you need to draw conclusions about traffic impact.

Paul: We want to do that, based on the discussion this morning. Let's get to a smaller number to analyze.

Rose: Can a subset of us be deputized to get data from businesses while the Memorial Bridge is closed? We hear businesses are hurting. We need to capture the data.

Peter Michaud: The Union Leader gave us some percentage points. Can we use the bridge closure to gauge the impact on a thriving downtown?

Rose: It isn't like you're picking a time when things were great, so year-over-year is valid.

Peter Michaud: The Memorial closure is a great experiment on this situation.

Carol: If we can figure out a way to do it systematically. Business people are never happy with their level of business and it's hard to accept anecdotal information.

Rose: Ask for year-over-year.

Paul: One of the parts of this process is gathering real data. We want to understand what happens when a bridge goes away.

Carol: Where is that business going? It may be going somewhere else.

Peter Somssich: We can help you get a survey out there.

Rose: We can send letters to businesses.

Ben: I can do an online survey in nothing flat.

Paul: We should discuss this. We want usable data.

Doug Bates: You're going to get lots of anecdotal data - they may not share their real stuff.

Gerry: This is a known situation. We are not sure the impacts now are the same as if it were permanently closed. Businesses are not going to give hard data. We are gathering traffic data now.

Cathy Goodwin: Our businesses don't know if this closure is short or long. Visitors don't know. These are common sense problems. How do you assess the one-time visitor? We tried to do it last time with the Sarah Long closure. Businesses only answer general questions.

Rose: Like a census. Blind.

Paul: We can get there through other means. If I am going from Portsmouth to Kittery, I will see a reduction in traffic.

Steve: How and where are you collecting Bridge Street data?

Paul: We are collecting traffic data at a number of points during the current bridge closure.

Steve: I'm not seeing counter strips.

Paul: They were in there for a week.

Chris: If you eliminate one bridge, what about wear and tear on the other bridge and shorter lifespan?

Paul: We will factor that in. In the next few weeks we want to tell you the next steps. By end of November, we'd like to have this next round done. After Round 2, as mentioned, we want to go back to the public. We know the last round will mean lots of debate.

Peter Somssich: Where does economic analysis come in?

Paul: We'll have a detailed analysis in the small group that comes out of the Fatal Flaw Analysis. Let's shoot for a public meeting in December.

Christy: I have a concern. If by Round 3, if our options don't include our existing bridges, where do we stand?

Paul: The options with existing bridges won't go anywhere.

Bob: How many solutions go through the final step?

Paul: Maybe up to six. Six is nice but I don't know.

Gerry: Contractually we said four to six. That was our initial thought.

Josh Pierce: Are the mid-level bridges movable?

Paul: Yes, we have to maintain the existing navigation for the channel. The benefit is they will be open only half the time they are now.

Audience member: Will they all be lift bridges?

Paul: Yes. We did look at swing bridges but think lift is best for this river from a cost and approach perspective. We'll assess the type of bridge in more detail at the next level.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:50 pm.