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## Meeting Notes

Attendees: ATF Committee:  
Chris Waszczuk, ATF Member  
Chris Cross, ATF Member  
Tom Fargo, ATF Member  
Sandy Hislop, ATF Member  
Jim Campbell, ATF Member  
Marlon Frink, ATF Member  
Bill O'Donnell, ATF Member  
Jack Newick, ATF Member  
Bruce Woodruff, ATF Member  
John Burke, ATF Member  
Maria Stowell, ATF Member  
Steve Wells, ATF Member  
Rick Card, ATF Member  
Cliff Sinnott, Alternate ATF Member

Date/Time: April 30, 2003 6:30 PM

Project No.: 51425.00

Re: Newington-Dover (11238)  
Advisory Task Force  
Meeting No. 1

Others:

Clifford Abbott  
Roy Josselyn  
Caroline Marshall, Portsmouth Chamber of  
Commerce  
David Walker, Rockingham Planning Comm.  
Cynthia Copeland, SRPC  
Michael Goot, Foster's Daily Democrat  
Frank O'Callaghan, VHB  
Bill Oldenberg, NHDOT  
Mike Dugas, NHDOT  
Mark Laurin, NHDOT

Place: Newington Town Hall

Notes taken by: Frank O'Callaghan

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Chris Waszczuk opened the meeting by welcoming the attendees. He thanked the Advisory Task Force (ATF) members for accepting the invitation to participate in the study and asked each ATF member to introduce themselves and to identify their respective special interests in the study and their constituencies. Following the ATF member introductions, Caroline Marshall introduced herself as representing the Portsmouth Chamber of Commerce and sitting in on behalf of ATF member Peter Hamelin who was unavailable for the meeting. Chris Waszczuk distributed a Meeting Agenda, ATF membership list, a composite integrated time line schedule of the ACOE Section 404 permit process with highway projects and NEPA, a project schedule, a draft Project Purpose and Need Statement, a study area map and a Socio-Economic study area map. Utilizing

a power point presentation, Chris reviewed the meeting agenda and discussed the role and responsibilities of the ATF. The ATF will be a forum for providing input to the study team, and will provide a conduit for the distribution of study information to their respective constituents. The ATF is not a decision-making body, but is expected to review and comment on study materials, and forge consensus in advising the study team and in guiding the development of the project. Chris indicated that he expected the ATF to meet at least quarterly over the approximate 3-year study schedule, and that other public workshops and public information meetings would be held over the course of study. Chris also reviewed meeting protocol:

- Meeting would generally run from 6:30 PM to 9:00 PM.
- Format will generally include a Welcome (from Chairperson), statement of the function and purpose of ATF, review and adoption of previous meeting notes, presentations/agenda items, questions and comments from ATF, and questions and comments from the public.
- Agenda items will be established by the Chairperson.
- The public can request an agenda item, through the Chairperson.
- Roberts Rules-of-Order will govern meetings.
- NHDOT/VHB will record meeting notes.

Bill O'Donnell inquired as to the notification of meetings. While not legally required to be publicly posted, Chris Waszczuk stated that a mailing list of interest parties would be developed, in conjunction with the project's web site, public posting at Town Hall and City Hall, and posting in local papers – *Fosters Democrat*, the *Portsmouth Herald*, and the local Hampton papers. Chris Cross suggested posting by the Rockingham and Strafford Regional Planning Commission (web sites and newsletters) would also be appropriate. Marlon suggested that Southern Maine be included. [The Regional Planning Commission in southern Maine could be added to the mailing list for the project.]

Chris Waszczuk initiated the discussion on electing the ATF Chairperson. Both Marlon Frink and Chris Cross expressed interest in the chair; given the regional impact and importance of the project, Chris Cross suggested it was more appropriate for him, as the RPC representative, to chair the task force. Marlon stated that it was most important for the chairperson to be objective and to hold oneself in check. After some discussion, the task force unanimously elected Chris Cross as Chairman, and Marlon Frink as Vice Chairman.

Frank O'Callaghan then proceeded to describe the study area by referring to a number of aerial photographs and graphics. The study area extends along the approximate 3.5 mile section of the Spaulding Turnpike extending north from the Gosling Road/Pease Boulevard interchange (Exit 1) in Newington, across the Little Bay Bridges, to a point just south of the existing toll booth in Dover. He made reference to a 1996 summary of traffic flow and safety deficiencies that included Exits 3, 4, the Little Bay Bridges, Exit 5 and Exit 6 and which were identified in the recent Spaulding Turnpike Feasibility Study. He also stated that the average annualized daily traffic volumes on the Little Bay Bridges had increased by approximately 20 percent between 1996 and 2001. Frank also reviewed recent traffic accident experience within the study area noting that the total number of accidents (957) during the 1997-2001 period had increased substantially above the total number of accidents (575) for the previous (1992-1996) five-year period. He then described the Exit 4 Interim Safety Plan, a recommendation of the Feasibility Study, which addresses a number of current safety and traffic flow deficiencies associated with entering and exiting the Turnpike at River Road, Nimble Hill Road, the southbound to northbound turnaround (Exit 4N) and the southbound on-ramp from the grade separated turnaround from River Road. This plan is currently under design and scheduled to be constructed in 2005.

Frank then referred to a wall plan depicting issues and opportunities within the study area. In addition to the traffic flow and safety deficiencies which he had previously discussed, he noted the following: the sensitive environmental location including coastal wetlands and the marine ecology, potential historic and prehistoric resources, Hilton Park, the need to minimize impacts to residences and businesses – including noise, the potential for redevelopment, such as the former Drive Inn site, the new Industrial Connector roadway to River Road, and the state bicycle route along US 4 and Boston Harbor Road that traverses the General Sullivan Bridge to the Pease Tradeport via Nimble Hill Road. These are some of the issues and opportunities which will form the context within which the transportation improvement alternatives will be developed. Frank concluded his presentation by referring to a map of the Seacoast MPO communities which identified the 26 municipalities, including Dover and Newington, which would comprise the study area for the socio-economic impact study. This study would focus on the increment of future growth in population and employment that would be expected to occur as a result of the Newington-Dover project. At this point, Frank identified the subconsultant team who would be assisting VHB: RKG Associates would be conducting the socio-economic study; RSG would be responsible for the travel demand modeling; the Jackson Estuarine Laboratory at UNH would be responsible for the analysis of marine resources; the Mechanical Engineering Department at UNH would develop a hydrodynamic model of the current and tides within the general area of the existing bridges; Hardesty & Hanover would assist in the inspection and evaluation of the General Sullivan Bridge; Victoria Bunker and Associates would conduct the prehistoric/archaeological impact analysis; and the Preservation Company would be responsible for cultural and historic impact analysis.

A number of comments and questions followed Frank's presentation. Bruce Woodruff noted that the City of Dover was currently planning a bicycle route that would extend south from Spur Road, run along Boston Harbor Road, loop back under the Turnpike at Hilton Park, and run back north along the existing pedestrian/bicycle path adjacent to Dover Point and then proceed north along Dover Point Road. Bruce also underscored the importance of maintaining/enhancing the grade separated connection between Hilton Park on each side of the Turnpike. With respect to improving the navigability and reducing potential subsurface marine impacts, Tom Fargo suggested reducing the number of bridge piers by considering a new replacement bridge similar to the new Zakim-Bunker Hill Bridge in Boston. Chris Waszczuk responded that affordability would be one criterion that would determine the practicality of all alternatives, including the cable-stayed bridge type that Tom suggested. While these structures are very expensive, nothing at this point in time has been ruled out from consideration.

Tom also inquired as to the status of the Interim Safety Plan, stating that construction funding was proposed for 2002 as noted in the Feasibility Study. Chris responded that the funding had been secured, but that design development has taken longer than initially expected. The project is expected to be bid next year (2004) with construction beginning in the spring of 2005. Marlon Frink inquired as to the status of the ITS/Incident Management Plan for the Little Bay Bridges. Chris Waszczuk responded a project to install permanent and variable message boards was recently advertised. The Incident Management Plan should be up and running later this year.

Chris Waszczuk then resumed the presentation by referring to a number of slides that described the phases and schedule of the study. Project development usually proceeds from the planning stage, with input from the RPCs, through the MPO process, to include projects in the State's 10-Year Transportation Improvement Program. Conceptual design and feasibility studies follow to scope out or identify project development issues. Following the scoping stage, projects advance to a preliminary design and environmental evaluation stage– with the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) being the highest or most detailed evaluation. The project then advances to Final Design and right-of-way procurement with construction to follow. A study for the Newington-Dover project area was authorized by the state legislature in 1990 and subsequently halted to

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Project No.: 5142500:

allow the completion of the Pease Surface Transportation Master Plan. Following the Master Plan completion, a feasibility study was initiated in 1997 to identify the traffic and safety deficiencies in the area and develop both interim and long-term conceptual improvement plans for further consideration. The project development is currently in the Preliminary Design and Environment Evaluation stage beginning Phase 1 of the five phases of an Environmental Impact Statement. Those phases are:

- Phase 1 – Project Scoping/Data Collection/Issue Identification
- Phase 2 – Conceptual Alternative Development and Screening
- Phase 3 – Preliminary Design/Impact Assessment/DEIS
- Phase 4 – Public Hearing
- Phase 5 – Final EIS

Marlon Frink inquired as to the future planning horizon year. Chris Waszczuk responded 2025. Chris then described the major elements of each phase of the EIS process. Phase 1 includes the collection of data, base mapping, assessing existing conditions, identifying the affected environment and issues of concern, establishing the Purpose and Need, projecting future travel demands, identifying a range of potential alternatives and developing a scoping report. Phase 2 involves refining and evaluating potential alternatives, screening alternatives and developing a constraints matrix, developing a reasonable range of alternatives and a rationale report. Phase 3 – the Draft EIS – includes further refinement and development of reasonable alternatives, the assessing of impacts, identification of a preferred alternative, the identification of mitigation, and the publishing of the Draft EIS. Phase 4 focuses on the joint public hearing which includes the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and NHDOT. Permit applications will also be submitted and the Commissioner's Report and Special Committee Report (of the Governor's Council) will be prepared subsequent to the hearing. Phase 5 involves the Final EIS which includes confirmation of the least environmentally damaging practicable alternative (LEDPA), approval of the mitigation package, and publishing of the FEIS. FHWA's record of decision (ROD) and the ACOE permit decision follows.

Bill O'Donnell interjected that the mitigation package approved by the ACOE would be permit specific (Wetlands) and that other mitigation (i.e. noise mitigation, etc.) would also likely be included as part of the overall project development.

Chris Waszczuk then reviewed the project schedule:

- Phase 1: February 2003 -- December 2003
- Phase 2: January 2004 -- August 2004
- Phase 3: September 2004 -- November 2005
- Phase 4: February 2006 -- Public Hearing
- Phase 5: March 2006 -- December 2006 (It was noted that the slide contained a typographical error (December 2007))
- FHWA Record of Decision: March 2007
- Final Design: March 2007 to October 2011
- Construction: October 2008 to June 2014

Tom Fargo asked if the 5.5 year construction period reflected fiscal or physical constraints. Chris Waszczuk responded that at this time both were constraints but as the project evolved and details became known, construction phasing could allow some time savings and a more compressed construction schedule. Tom suggested that prefabricated modular construction – such as the Zakim-Bunker Hill Bridge – might reduce the construction schedule.

Chris Waszczuk then reviewed the Phase 1 Milestone Targets:

- Notice-of-Intent (Federal Register) – May 7, 2003 (targeted date)
- Scoping Meeting – June 25, 2003
- ACOE Confirms Project Purpose and Need – September 26, 2003
- Scoping Report – December 18, 2003

Anticipated Meetings include ATF meetings tentatively scheduled for July 30 and October 29, 2003, and a public information meeting in November 2003.

Marlon Frink inquired as to the location for the Scoping Meeting and if there was a scoping report available to review. Chris Waszczuk responded that the meeting would be at Newington Town Hall and that there is no report available – the scoping report would follow the meeting and is scheduled to be published in December 2003.

Chris Waszczuk then touched on the public participation process. In addition to the schedule of ATF meetings throughout the course of the study, other outreach efforts would include public information meetings, resource agency meetings, periodic newsletters, and a project web site – [www.newington-dover.com](http://www.newington-dover.com). The web site is active and will contain meeting minutes, plans, documents and other relevant project information as the study advances. A contact list will be developed from individuals who subscribe to the site's mailing list and wish to be informed of upcoming information. The site also offers the opportunity for public comment from which a commonly asked questions section will be developed.

At this point in the meeting, Chris Waszczuk solicited comments and questions from the ATF members. Bill O'Donnell confirmed the date, time and location of the Scoping Meeting – 4:00 PM, June 25, 2003 at Newington Town Hall. Marlon Frink requested that appropriate plans be posted at least one week in advance of the meeting at the Town Hall. Chris Waszczuk concurred. Marlon initiated discussion about the study area stopping short of including the Dover tollbooth, and questioned the soundness of not including toll related issues. Chris responded that the toll issues were not part of the study; the Department had conducted a statewide toll study. He emphasized that toll-related issues are very sensitive legislative level issues. The State's revenue loss due to toll elimination suggest an increase of state gasoline taxes to make up for the shortfall, a proposal that the state legislature has been reluctant to pursue. Tying the Newington-Dover project to the toll issues could indefinitely delay or derail the project. Bruce Woodruff stated that implementation of electronic toll collection scheduled for 2004 would help reduce the congestion at the tollbooth. Chris Waszczuk reiterated that we would work through the congestion problem, but would not be conducting another toll study. Bruce Woodruff suggested that Mike O'Malley of the Turnpike Bureau appear at the next ATF meeting to discuss the Turnpike Toll Study and toll related issues. [Agenda Item]

Tom Fargo noted the system constraint of US 4 being two lanes. Jack Newick stated that the cross-section of US 4 and the Scammell Bridge was contentious for the Town of Durham and others and reflected the concerns of many. Chris Cross suggested that the NHDOT discuss area system constraints at the next ATF meeting [Agenda Item]. John Burke asked if the travel demand model would reflect system constraints including Woodbury Avenue. Frank O'Callaghan replied that it would.

Chris Waszczuk then reviewed the project's purpose—to increase transportation efficiency and to reduce safety problems – and the project's need – current capacity constraints, substandard roadway geometry, a 20-year future traffic volume projection of approximately 100,000 vehicles

per day and a substantial number of study area traffic accidents. Jack Newick offered that the need for additional lanes on the bridge is apparent.

Bruce Woodruff emphasized that, based on his Exit 10 experience, the Purpose and Need Statement needs to be simple and strong. It is critical to the project's development. He also noted the following items should be included in the project need: Hilton Park is a destination, which is pedestrian oriented and needs to be connected to the bicycle system; the Turnpike and bridges are just as critical to the movement of freight and commerce as they are to commuter traffic; there is no other viable route; non-motorized traffic – pedestrian and bicyclist accommodations across the Bay and beneath the Turnpike – are also important.

Chris Waszczuk concurred with Bruce with respect to the importance of the Purpose and Need Statement. A well-defined justified purpose and need statement drives the process for alternative consideration, in-depth analysis, and ultimate selection. Chris suggested that members of the ATF review the draft statement, discuss it among themselves via e-mail if desired, and submit comments to him at their earliest convenience. The ATF will discuss the revised draft Purpose and Need Statement at their next meeting with the intent of adopting a final version.

Tom Fargo made reference to the Feasibility Study and stated that the average annual traffic growth rate assumption of 1.8 percent had been exceeded based on the increase of traffic between 1996-2001 (20 percent) that Frank had mentioned earlier. While underscoring the need for the project, he raised the question of model accuracy. Frank responded that the modeling conducted in 1997 was based on the best available information and was an average annual rate projected for 25 years. For example, traffic volume growth between 2000 and 2001 was 0.0%. As part of the current EIS study, the regional travel demand model is being updated based on 2003 traffic volume data and a current survey of seacoast residents on their travel characteristics. Cliff Sinnott added that recent 2000 census and journey-to-work data would also be used in the model's update and calibration to current conditions.

Marlon Frink asked if the ATF could meet more frequently than quarterly. Chris Waszczuk responded that a quarterly schedule was a guideline and that the ATF could meet more frequently on an as needed basis. Chris Cross suggested that, in addition to meeting, the use of e-mail be utilized to assist in sharing information among the ATF members and the Department. The schedule for the next two ATF meetings was confirmed – Wednesday, July 30, 2003, at 6:30 PM in Dover, and Wednesday, October 29, 2003, at 6:30 PM in Newington (in a larger room). Agenda will be mailed two weeks in advance of meeting. ATF meeting notes will be available, and posted on the web site, within 2-3 weeks following a meeting. Contact information on ATF members will be finalized and posted on the web site. E-mail addresses of the committee members will not be included on the project's website. In response to a question from Jim Campbell, it was agreed that ATF members would send comments on the Purpose and Need to Chris Waszczuk. John Burke asked if the Newington-Dover traffic projects would be coordinated with the US 1 project. Chris responded that the same traffic model will be utilized for both projects.

At this point, questions and comments from the public were solicited. Cynthia Copeland requested that the socio-economic study area be expanded to include the municipalities of Wakefield, Brookfield, Middleton and New Durham. While the population in these communities is relatively low, they are the fastest growing towns in the region and town officials are interested in the study. Chris responded that the socio-economic database for these communities is not readily available, as in the other communities. Further discussion with the modeling sub-consultant will be necessary to discuss this dilemma. Cynthia also inquired as to whether there would be an air quality and noise assessment as part of the study. Frank O'Callaghan stated that both air and noise analyses will be conducted.

It was noted that Fred Pearson and Cliff Sinnott were alternate ATF members representing, respectively, the SRPC and the RPC. Chris Waszczuk stated that alternates would fill in/vote in the absence of the designated ATF member. Alternates' attendance is welcomed, as is the public's. Alternates will be listed on the list of ATF members. Bill O'Donnell noted that ex-officio members, such as himself and Chris Waszczuk would not vote. Chris Waszczuk reminded the members that the ATF is an advisory group, not a decision-making body. He also clarified that reaching consensus on various issues is more desirable than voting.

Cliff Sinnott added some historical perspective to the previous discussion on toll issues. To the best of his recollection, the original 1989 legislation that authorized the feasibility study included a study area north from the Portsmouth Traffic Circle to a point beyond the Dover tolls. Subsequent legislation in 1990 reduced the study area from a point, south of the tollbooth to Exit 1 at Pease Boulevard/Gosling Road.

An attendee inquired as to the feasibility of rail alternatives. It was mentioned that potential rail alternatives will be assessed as part of the EIS process; for example, the rail connection to the Pease Tradeport will be considered, as well as passenger service alternatives, if any.

An attendee inquired as to the public availability of e-mails or other correspondence between ATF members. Chris Waszczuk explained that individual e-mails will not be posted on the website; however, a summary of ATF member discussion will be presented at future ATF meetings and noted in the ATF meeting minutes, which will be posted on the website.

Chris Cross concluded the meeting by stating that the communities have provided a group of talented, experienced, interested and committed individuals to the ATF who represent the values of their communities; the ATF will function as a viaduct for input and feedback to their respective constituencies.