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**Meeting  
Notes**

Attendees: Chris Cross, ATF Chairman  
Marlon Frink, ATF Vice Chairman  
Jack Newick  
Rad Nichols (Alternate)  
Maria Stowell  
Rick Card  
Tom Fargo  
Bruce Woodruff  
John Burke  
Bill O'Donnell, FHWA  
Chris Waszczuk, NHDOT  
Mike Dugas, NHDOT  
Marc Laurin, NHDOT  
Jim Colburn, NHDOT  
Steve Lawe, RSG  
Pete Walker, VHB  
Frank O'Callaghan, VHB  
Members of the Public  
(see attached list)

Date/Time: October 29, 2003

Project No.: 5142500

Place: Newington Town Hall

Re: Newington-Dover EIS  
11238  
ATF Meeting No. 3

Notes taken by: Frank O'Callaghan

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Chris Cross, ATF Chairman, opened the meeting at 6:40 PM.

**COMMITTEE'S ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Chris welcomed the attendees and reviewed the meeting's agenda. He noted that there was no representative of the US Coast Guard (USCG) at this evening's meeting, but expected USCG representation at the next ATF meeting. He stated that ATF members have been conversing with study area business owners and residents soliciting input for the study, and that ATF meetings are an opportunity for the public to ask questions and offer comments. Chris then introduced Chris Waszczuk, NHDOT Project Manager, who in turn, introduced Frank O'Callaghan and Pete Walker from VHB, consultants to the NHDOT, and Mike Dugas, Marc Laurin and Jim Colburn

from the NHDOT. Steve Lawe, RSG, was also introduced as the subconsultant responsible for assisting the regional planning commission's update of the Seacoast regional travel demand model.

Chris Cross reminded attendees of the project's website ([newington-dover.com](http://newington-dover.com)) and noted that meeting minutes and study information were hosted on the website. He then requested comments on the draft meeting minutes of the previous (July 30, 2003) ATF meeting. Chris Waszczuk suggested that the meeting number (i.e. the second meeting of the ATF) be added to the cover/page 1 and that subsequent ATF meeting minutes note the meeting number. Chris' suggestion was adopted and the July 30, 2003 Meeting Minutes, as revised, were unanimously approved. Chris Cross then solicited comments or concerns from ATF members. There were no comments or concerns.

### **PURPOSE AND NEED**

Chris Cross then addressed the project's Purpose and Need (P&N) Statement. He reminded attendees that the P&N Statement is also on the website, and has been reviewed and revised by the ATF and distributed to all federal and state cooperating agencies for review and comment.

Chris Waszczuk updated the attendees on comments received from the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE). The ACOE have crafted their own P&N statement which is not unusual. Chris read the ACOE statement – "the basic purpose of the proposed activity is to allow for the safe and efficient flow of present and future traffic along the Spaulding Turnpike from Pease Gosling Road to the Dover toll facility" which complies with the ACOE's Section 404 guidelines. Chris stated that while the NHDOT would prefer a single P&N statement, however the ACOE customarily crafts their own version to satisfy their regulations which, in the Newington-Dover case, is consistent with the NHDOT/FHWA statement. Bill O'Donnell added that ACOE P&N statements are typically narrow in scope and usually don't consider economic impacts, for example. He stated that in the Newington-Dover case, the ACOE's statement is consistent with the NHDOT/FHWA Purpose and Need Statement and, as such, should not be problematic.

Marlon Frink asked if the ACOE statement would potentially limit the bounds of the study area. Chris responded that the ACOE did not specifically reference the study area map (although the limits are consistent with what is depicted in the study area map). Chris added that the ACOE and others will review and comment on the Scoping Report scheduled to be published for distribution in December 2003.

Chris Waszczuk then distributed a copy of the project Purpose and Need Statement and noted a proposed editorial change under the Need section. He called attention to the first sentence of the third paragraph and stated that while the shoulder width on the Little Bay Bridges is substandard, the existing profile limits driver sight distance, which is not, in and of itself, a geometric deficiency. As such, he proposed changing the first sentence, third paragraph to read as follows:

*"The Turnpike has a number of existing geometric deficiencies including limited sight distance and substandard shoulder width on the Little Bay Bridges and substandard merge, ...."*

A motion was made and unanimously approved to edit the sentence as proposed. [The amended Purpose and Need Statement will be utilized in the study documents and displaced on the project's website.]

### **PROJECT UPDATE**

Pete Walker initiated the project update by stating that the aerial mapping of the study area was complete and that ground survey checks were in progress and are scheduled to be completed by November 3, 2003. Environmental resource mapping, such as wetlands, wildlife, marine habitat and cultural resources is also complete. He indicated that several of these maps were displayed on the walls. Pete then summarized the issues discussed by the Resource Agencies and public at the recent field meeting in the study area:

- wetland impacts and the need to avoid Pomeroy Cove
- historic structures including the DeRochmont Mansion and the General Sullivan Bridge
- noise impacts with respect to Dover Point residents
- mitigation suggestions including restoration of historic wetland/marine fill and potential water quality improvements to Paul Brook and Pickering Brook that will improve estuarine quality.

Chris Cross asked if the Bloody Point historic district had been acknowledged. Pete replied that the historic district had been noted.

Frank O'Callaghan then briefed the ATF on preliminary bridge investigations by contrasting the Little Bay Bridges with the General Sullivan Bridge. The Little Bay Bridges are characterized by substandard shoulder widths and a 3.5 percent grade which limits driver sight distance to a 60mph design speed (design speed being the maximum safe operating speed governed by the vertical alignment or profile). The 2-lane bridges have minor deterioration along girders and at the expansion joints and the substructure – composed of reinforced concrete – was designed and constructed in 1966 prior to seismic resistance requirements.

Frank then enumerated several factors which would affect the rehabilitation alternatives for the General Sullivan Bridge. The 4 percent grade limits driver sight distance to a 45 mph design speed. The cross-section is limited to 24' of pavement and 2'-11" sidewalks on each side. These geometric characteristics and the continuous truss nature of the structure will preclude the rehabilitation and reuse of the bridge to function as two freeway/turnpike lanes to complement the function and operation of Little Bay Bridges. In addition, the deck, girders and truss members exhibit major deterioration, and there is extensive substructure deterioration. He noted that the piers are composed of unreinforced granite block and mortar, and in conjunction with the low internal redundancy of the truss design and the fatigue associated with the age (1935 construction) of the structure, the General Sullivan Bridge is more vulnerable to a seismic event than the Little Bay Bridges. The General Sullivan Bridge is also historic and subject to lead paint removal and maintenance. Frank noted that the Kimball Chase 1991 inspection and evaluation estimated rehabilitation costs ranging from \$8 to \$16 million depending on the nature and extent of pier reconstruction or replacement. These 1991 cost estimates would be \$12 - \$20 million in 2003 dollars, and may underestimate the cost of painting. For example, the I-95 Piscataqua River Bridge was recently re-painted for approximately \$11.8 million.

Frank's summary precipitated a brief discussion on rehabilitation alternatives and costs for the General Sullivan Bridge to serve either as a local roadway or as an exclusive transit/high occupancy vehicle facility.

Bruce Woodruff stated the need to accurately represent the costs of rehabilitation or demolition since the bridge cannot be allowed to simply sit and deteriorate. Also, it was questioned whether additional in-depth inspections would be undertaken to better estimate the extent of deterioration and nature of rehabilitation. Chris Waszczuk stated that the previous extensive inspections (conducted in the fall of 1990) are sufficient to identify the nature of the rehabilitation effort required and develop reasonable cost estimates. Should a rehabilitation alternative for the General Sullivan Bridge be pursued, then an additional in-depth inspection will be undertaken prior to the development of contract plans. Marlon questioned that it may prove more cost-effective to rehabilitate the bridge than to remove it. Tom Fargo queried as to how one estimates a value on historic significance. Bill O'Donnell noted Section 4(f) requirements and stated that the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) advocates keeping the structure as opposed to the USCG who view the structure as a potential threat to navigation and feel that it should be removed. Chris Waszczuk noted that the structure's design, construction and the crossing location contribute to the bridge being noted by SHPO as historically significant with the second highest historic rating in the state.

Chris also explained that the preservation effort of the General Sullivan Bridge must be feasible and prudent, which will be answered by the study. The issue of prudence is somewhat subjective – what level of investment is prudent in rehabilitating the bridge? Bill O'Donnell added that a transportation reuse of the structure would help justify the investment.

A resident inquired as to the original design life of the Little Bay Bridges. Chris Waszczuk responded that 50 years was typical for a 1966 design assuming normal maintenance. Current designs are typically for 50-75 years. The Little Bay Bridges are major structures, serving an important function and located in a moderate seismic area. The bridges are inspected every two years which, in conjunction with travel demand, determines the nature, extent and schedule of maintenance. The northbound and southbound bridges are separate structures and will require seismic retrofitting based on future evaluation.

Frank O'Callaghan then introduced Steve Lawe from RSG to summarize the travel survey and traffic model update. Steve began by reviewing the purpose of the stated preference survey: to assist in updating the regional travel demand model, to estimate Seacoast residents' sensitivity to different transportation mode alternatives, and to assist in developing recommendations on how to improve transportation in the seacoast area. He explained that the survey format was a series of computer-based dynamic questions whereby respondents "state" their preferences given a series of options, and that answers to a question are input to the next question. The survey was designed to support the understanding of potential transportation options. The survey was administered in June 2003 and included 1,537 respondents, approximately 50 percent higher than the 1,000 target response. The survey was computer-internet based with flyers containing the internet web address distributed at many public (toll booths, local transportation centers, city/town halls) areas and at local businesses and colleges. Steve summarized some of the survey findings: 74 percent of respondents were full time seacoast area residents; travel to/from work (60 percent) and work-related business (13 percent) were the most prevalent trip purposes; 78 percent of travelers drove alone; 19 percent shared a ride; and of those who choose not to use a car, cost, congestion and preference for transit were cited as reasons for not driving. The Rockingham and Stafford regional planning commissions are currently reviewing a draft summary report.

Frank O'Callaghan added that approximately 42 percent (660) of the respondents offered comments that he summarized as follows: 32 percent (214) supported implementation of E-Z Pass or electronic toll collection; 12 percent (80) identified the Hampton Toll area as a problem which Frank noted was prior to the recent one-way toll experiment; 26 percent (169) cited a need to widen the Little Bay Bridges and 5 percent (31) stated a need to accelerate the schedule; 7 percent (43) indicated that alternatives to driving alone must be competitive with respect to travel time, cost, and frequency and convenience of service; 6 percent (40) suggested train service alternatives; and 3 percent (22) stated the need for more bikeways and shoulder areas for bicyclists and pedestrians.

Steve Lawe then summarized the process to update the seacoast regional traffic model, the purpose of which is to estimate how future traffic patterns are impacted by land use and transportation policy alternatives, and to enhance the overall understanding of the transportation planning process. He identified data requirements such as seasonal and year round housing; auto ownership and household size; employment; roadway network characteristics such as functional classification, number of lanes, capacity, speeds, and intersection controls; transit routing and costs; tolls and auto costs; travel patterns, such as trip generation, length of trips, mode choice, and choice of travel route; traffic counts; transit ridership; the 1992 seacoast household survey; and the aforementioned 2003 stated preference survey. Steve touched on the sensitivity of the model with respect to infrastructure improvements and changes in land use, and noted that increases in capacity may attract new vehicle trips and that increases in vehicle cost may decrease vehicle trips. The results or output of the travel demand model include: roadway volumes and delays, transit ridership, shifts in travel patterns and shifts in land use patterns. Chris Cross asked as to when the future travel forecast would be available? Steve responded that following a coordination meeting scheduled for November 3, he expects the future (2025) base case (existing transportation system) travel forecast to be available before November 15, 2003. Chris asked if there were any questions from the ATF or public; there were none.

Frank O'Callaghan then continued the presentation by reminding the ATF that the project team was approaching the completion of Phase I of the 5 Phase Study, and that Phase 1, Project Scoping, established the database and identified the issues against which the quantity and quality of impacts associated with potential transportation improvement alternatives could be measured. He summarized a number of transportation inventories. With respect to traffic volumes, he reviewed seasonal variations, vehicle classification and traffic growth along the Turnpike. Average daily traffic on the Little Bay Bridges has grown from 30,000 vehicles in 1980 at an average annual rate of 4% to approximately 70,800 in 2002. Most recently, annual traffic growth has declined to approximately 1.8 percent (2001-2002). The analysis of 2003 peak hour traffic operating conditions revealed capacity constrained conditions in the AM peak hour extending south from the SB Exit 6 on-ramp to the Woodbury Avenue Exit 3 off-ramp; PM peak hour traffic conditions are capacity constrained NB from the Exit 4N turnaround to the Dover Point Road off-ramp at Exit 6, and SB from the SB on-ramp from the River Road turnaround to the Exit 4N turnaround. A number of geometric deficiencies (e.g. substandard turning radii, acceleration and deceleration lanes, and inadequate weaving distances) were also identified at Exit 2, Exit 4, Exit 5 and at Cote Drive. US 4 at the Scammell Bridge is also capacity constrained during both the AM and PM peak hours.

In response to a question from the public regarding the Exxon-Mobil Quick Mart access to the Turnpike at Nimble Hill Road, Chris Waszczuk replied that the interim safety plan for Exit 4, and scheduled for implementation in 2005, will improve safety, access and traffic operations at the service station location and other Exit 4 and 4N locations.

Frank noted that study area accidents (908) during the 1997-2001 5-year period had significantly increased (58 percent) over the number of accidents (575) that occurred during the previous 5-year period (1992-1996). He further noted that while traffic volume increased at 3% per year during the 1997-2002 period, traffic accidents increased by 11% per year, increasing from 144 in 1997 to 220 in 2001. The location of highest accident frequency is the Little Bay Bridges – 97 accidents (11% of total) in 5-year period, with 28 accidents in 2001.

With respect to transit and commuter bus service, Frank indicated that the current levels of service, routing, operations, ridership and planned service improvement data had been compiled for study area providers. The study team had recently met with or contacted representatives of COAST, Wildcat Transit, C&J and Vermont Transit. He noted that COAST was planning implementation of a new downtown Dover loop service in 2004, and express bus service between Rochester and the Portsmouth Transportation Center in 2006. Wildcat has plans to expand service on all its routes. Both C&J and Vermont Transit provide commuter service to Boston – C&J from Dover, Durham (weekends) and Portsmouth; and Vermont Transit from Portland, through Portsmouth to Boston.

Seven (7) rail corridors were also inventoried: Mainline West, running from Plaistow to Rollinsford, which provides freight and passenger service – that being the Downeaster operating between Boston and Portland with stops in Exeter, Durham and Dover; the East Main Line connecting the Portland Yard with Foss Manufacturing in Hampton; the Portsmouth Branch, connecting the Mainline West with the East Mainline; the Newington Branch which extends from the Portsmouth Yard 3.5 miles parallel to the Piscataqua River; the out of service Pease Spur; the abandoned Sawyer-Dover Branch; and the Conway Branch extending from Rollinsford at the Mainline West north through Ossipee to Conway. The East Mainline, Portsmouth Branch, and Newington Branch are active freight lines with track conditions limiting speeds to 5 mph. The Conway Branch is an active freight line (40 mph) between Rollinsford and Ossipee.

Ten (10) park and ride facilities were also inventoried with respect to location, access, parking supply, transit connections, utilization rates and amenities. The City of Dover has suggested the need for a new site in the vicinity of Exit 9 on the Turnpike, and COAST has suggested the need for a site on NH 125 in Rochester.

Frank offered several findings from the review of the socio-economic analysis of baseline conditions including recent 2000 US Census and Journey to Work Data: 76% of all study area workers work within the 30-community, tri-county study area; the number of Strafford County residents working outside Strafford County increased 20% from 1990-2000; as of 2000, 65% of outbound Strafford County commuters commute to Rockingham County. These findings are consistent with commuting travel patterns which are predominantly (70 percent) SB in the AM peak hour on the Turnpike and NB (65 percent) on the Turnpike during the weekday PM peak hour; they also support the fact that there has been more job creation to the south in Rockingham County (e.g. Pease Tradeport) and that the cost of housing is less expensive to the north in Strafford County in comparison to Rockingham County.

Frank concluded his presentation by enumerating the environmental inventories, such as wetlands, vegetation, hazardous materials and cultural resources which have been completed. He noted that a noise model had been calibrated to assess the potential future impacts of transportation improvement alternatives on study area businesses and residents.

Before proceeding to Miscellaneous Items, Chris Cross inquired as to the Agenda for the Public Information Meeting (PIM) scheduled for Wednesday, November 12, 2003 at 6:30 PM at Dover City Hall. Chris Waszczuk responded that the agenda would be similar to this evening's agenda that summarizes the Scoping Phase findings of the study to date and seeks additional public input. He noted that invitations to the PIM have been sent to all the abutting property owners in the project area and to the NHDOT's mailing list. Chris further noted that the draft Scoping Report is being internally reviewed and is expected to be made available to the public in December. It will also be posted on the project website.

### **MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS**

Chris Waszczuk introduced Jim Colburn from the NHDOT to update the ATF on the Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) plan for the study corridor and surrounding region. Jim distributed a summary sheet which identified the incident management initiatives for both the Little Bay Bridges and the I-95 corridor. With respect to the Little Bay Bridges, the NHDOT is deploying 5 permanent and 5 portable remotely activated dynamic message signs (DMS) to advise motorists of incidents that occur on the bridges and allow motorists escape routes prior to becoming trapped or grid-locked on the Turnpike. Permanent sign locations include: SB Turnpike at the Sixth Street Bridge; SB Turnpike at Gerrish Road; EB US 4, prior to NH 108 interchange; NB Turnpike opposite Portsmouth Ford; and NB Woodbury Avenue at the Fox Run Mall. Operational protocols have been established among the NHDOT, DOS and local responders, and will be initiated by the State Police. The plan is scheduled for May 2004 implementation. Jim also mentioned that NHDOT, MDOT and State Police from both states have been meeting to develop a coordinated response to incidents that occur along the I-95 and Spaulding Turnpike corridors. This planning will resolve communication and operational issues and result in a future traffic management plan that also involves local agencies in responding to traffic incidents and regional security issues.

A brief Question and Answer session followed Jim's summary. Rad Nichols commended the plan and suggested the addition of a sign location on I-95 northbound south of Exit 3. Jim responded that the Department's consultant will be conducting additional studies and will review the Exit 3 location. Jack Newick inquired as to the use of radio for highway advisories, similar to Maine. Jim stated that the NHDOT is evaluating such a system. He also noted that NH is participating with ME and VT in developing a standard – one call system – to alert drivers of conditions throughout the region. Both Rad and Tom Fargo suggested the need for SB driver advisory/information prior to Exit 7 (NH 108 interchange) on the Turnpike, and possibly on the EB ramp at the interchange. Jim stated that a portable sign could be used at the EB ramp, if necessary, and stated that the technology will allow evaluation and testing of the incident management plan as well as the public's reaction to the messages. The duration of incidents will influence operations and response plans which may include temporarily shutting down interchange ramps and shifting traffic flows between NB and SB barrels of the Turnpike. Responders to incidents also need to be educated to work as teams to improve efficiency and reduce delays. Bill O'Donnell mentioned that video monitoring might also play a role in reducing response times. Jim noted that the NHDOT is evaluating video monitoring as part of its collaborative effort with the Department of Safety and Public Health as they plan and develop a centralized traffic management center. The discussion ended with Jack Newick stating that the NHDOT had improved their maintenance schedule along the Turnpike by avoiding holiday and other peak travel times.

### **DRAFT 10-YEAR TRANSPORTATION PLAN UPDATE**

Chris Waszczuk distributed the May 17, 2002, Ten Year Transportation Improvement Program, 2003-2012, summary sheet for the Newington-Dover project and the September 5, 2003, Draft Ten Year Transportation Improvement Program, 2005-2014 (which will be finalized in May 2004), summary sheet for the Newington-Dover project for comparison purposes and to identify funding implication changes due to the current draft program. As currently proposed, the draft Ten-Year Plan projects construction funding to be available during the 2010-2012 period, as opposed to the previous plan that projected construction funding during the 2008-2011 period. In addition, the total project cost has been increased from \$108 million to \$116.6 million, reflecting additional engineering and right-of-way cost estimates. Chris noted that a number of seacoast residents spoke at the recent Governor's Advisory Council on Intermodal Transportation (GACIT) public hearing hosted in Portsmouth to review transportation issues and needs and identified the Newington-Dover project as a high priority for the seacoast. Tom Fargo, as a representative of the Strafford Regional Planning Commission, stated for the record that the Newington-Dover project is the Seacoast MPO's number one priority, and that the Department needs to maintain the original schedule. Chris Waszczuk responded that the project team is reviewing the study schedule to identify elements which could be expedited and a public hearing targeted sooner. If funding is available sooner than expected, the Department desires to be ready to expedite construction. Jack Newick offered the Manchester Airport Access Road project as an example of how projects can be unexpectedly delayed. Tom Fargo stated that the Portsmouth Chamber of Commerce is lobbying NH's congressional delegation for additional funding.

### **NEAR TERM OPTIONS**

Chris Cross initiated discussion on the possibility of funding for near term, interim improvements which would improve safety or increase traffic operational efficiency. Chris Waszczuk mentioned that the Exit 9 park and ride site, which the City of Dover has proposed, could qualify for CMAQ funding which is programmed for \$6.5 million in FY-2007. Small (e.g. \$100k to \$200k) TSM type actions could be funded from betterment funds; the funding for the Interim Safety Improvements at Exit 4 - 4N in Newington is still programmed for FY-2005

In light of the 2006 CMAQ funding for the COAST express bus service, Rad Nichols questioned whether project construction funds could be utilized sooner to fund the express bus service. John Burke suggested that people at PEASE and in Portsmouth are asking that the express service be implemented now to aid commuting. He also inquired as to the availability of transit funding to relieve construction impacts. Chris Waszczuk responded that spin-off projects such as bus service are a possibility, but he will have to check on funding realities. This precipitated a discussion on transit usage of the General Sullivan Bridge in conjunction with HOV use and the related issues of access management of the bridge, local access connections, schedule of rehabilitation, neighborhood impacts from local connectors, and market demand for transit service. Bruce Woodruff and Chris Waszczuk summarized the transits options for the General Sullivan Bridge as: transit/HOV use only; local traffic including transit; and transit/recreation use. Chris stated that the Phase 2 Rationale Report would sort these issues out. Rick Card raised the issue of potential traffic diversion to alternate routes, such as ME 236, assuming that reconstruction of the Little Bay Bridges reduced the capacity of the bridges during construction. A resident also commented that the GSB, if rehabilitated early enough in the schedule could serve as part of the traffic management plan when the Little Bay Bridges are reconstructed. Chris responded that with respect to reconstruction of the Little Bay Bridges, two lanes of traffic in each direction (as in current conditions) would be maintained at all times to limit aggravating congestion, which would minimize the potential for added traffic diversion.

### **LONG TERM VISION**



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Chris Cross posed the question, "How much are Newington and Dover willing to 'give up' to accommodate transportation improvements?" Tom Fargo referred to the 2000 Feasibility Study and suggested the need to advance to a conceptual design level to assess impacts and begin to answer Chris' question. Given the hour of the evening (9:30 PM), discussion of a long-term vision was continued to a future ATF meeting. Chris also stated that there would be more information to come on Future Topics, such as channel navigation issues and interim traffic management ideas.

The meeting adjourned with the scheduling of the next two ATF meetings:

- Wednesday, January 28, 2004, 6:30 PM at Dover City Hall
- Wednesday, April 28, 2004, 6:30 PM at Newington Town Hall

In response to Tom Fargo's inquiry, Chris Waszczuk stated that the Scoping Report will be available for distribution in December/January; the draft report is for NHDOT/FHWA review.