



**Meeting
Notes**

Attendees: Chris Cross, ATF Chairman, RPC
Marlon Frink, Newington
Sandy Hislop, Newington
Rick Card, GDCC
Maria Stowell, PDA
Bruce Woodruff, Dover
Tom Fargo, SRPC
Scott Bogle, RPC
Cliff Sinnott, RPC
Dave Holden, Portsmouth
Bill O'Donnell, FHWA
Ed Woolford, FHWA
Chris Waszczuk, NHDOT
Mike Dugas, NHDOT
Marc Laurin, NHDOT
Tim Roache, SRPC
Frank O'Callaghan, VHB
Members of the Public

Date/Time: 8/25/04

Project No.: 5142500

Place: Newington Town Hall

Re: Newington-Dover #11238
ATF Meeting No. 8

Notes taken by: Frank O'Callaghan

Chris Cross called the meeting to order at 6:35 PM by welcoming all and introducing the members of the Advisory Task Force. He noted that Chris Waszczuk and Frank O'Callaghan would update the ATF on the project status, and that ATF meetings are an excellent opportunity for all in attendance to provide input and feedback to the project team. Chris advised the attendees to feel free to contact NHDOT staff or any member of the ATF to offer comments or to raise a question. He reminded everyone of the project's website – www.newington-dover.com – which hosts a wealth of project related information including conceptual improvement plans, reports, and meeting minutes.

Chris then asked ATF members if there were any comments on the draft meeting minutes of June 23, 2004. There being no comments or revisions, the draft meeting minutes were unanimously approved by the ATF. Chris Cross then reiterated his request of meeting attendees to raise questions or offer suggestions by speaking up at the meeting, contacting the NHDOT or ATF representatives, or by logging onto the project website.

Chris Waszczuk then reviewed the meeting agenda, noting recent feedback from the public information meetings and meetings with the federal and state resource agencies. He stated that preliminary ridership estimates associated with various Transportation Demand Management (TDM) alternatives had been further developed. Chris noted that Frank O'Callaghan would address the

impact of these various TDM alternatives on future travel demand and level-of-service requirements for the Turnpike.

Frank began his presentation by referring to a number of questions and issues that were raised at the public information meetings held in June and July. He noted that, assuming current travel characteristics of Seacoast residents, future 2025 travel demands would require the equivalent of four travel lanes in each direction on the Little Bay Bridges (LBB) and mainline Turnpike. He stated that in addition to a basic 8-lane (four lanes in each direction) mainline alternative, the NHDOT has decided to also carry forward a 6-lane (three lanes in each direction) plus Reversible HOV/Transit center lane mainline alternative. Frank then referred to a number of specific questions and issues, which were raised at the Informational meetings:

- If 8-lanes (4-NB; 4-SB) were provided on the LBB and along the Turnpike, the Turnpike would begin to reach capacity (LOS D/E) in 2032.
- South of Exit 1 (Gosling Road), the 2025 Turnpike level-of-service (LOS) is 'C' in the weekday AM peak hour, and 'D' in the weekday PM peak hour.
- The 2025 LOS at the Woodbury Avenue/Gosling Road intersection will be 'C' under both weekday AM and PM peak hours.
- Conceptual Alternatives 10, 11 and 12 in Newington which entail reconstruction of the Woodbury Avenue (Exit 3) interchange impact the historic Isaac Dow House located on Woodbury Avenue. Frank noted that refinements of the concepts pertaining to the cross-section of Woodbury Avenue suggest that the potential impact on the Isaac Dow House property (and on the Beane Farm on the opposite side of Woodbury Avenue) can be minimized. Plan refinement and reviews is on-going.
- The consultant team has reconsidered the development of a 2-lane loop ramp to service westbound US4 drivers exiting the Turnpike northbound at Exit 6. It has been suggested that Alternatives 2 and 3 in Dover be modified to reflect the 2-lane loop ramp. The consultant team remains unconvinced of the merits of this 2-lane loop ramp.
 - 2-lane loop ramps are uncommon; in light of the relatively high volume of traffic, and high volume of heavy commercial vehicles, operations will not be comfortable for the average driver;
 - The necessary modifications to the existing ramp geometry will, in conjunction with provisions for the new NB on-ramp, result in ROW/property impacts on the Homestead Lane properties;
 - The free-flow of vehicles from the ramp will be impacted by the limited capacity of US4; i.e., traffic flows could be better managed by signalized traffic operations at the ramp terminals;
 - The signalized/diamond interchange alternative provides a good level-of-service (LOS 'C') and better management of traffic flows without impacting the Homestead Lane property owners.

Frank then referred to the cross-section alternatives for the LBB and Turnpike. He noted that the 8-lane typical would be approximately 146' in width and suggested that the center 50' comprised of the median, inside shoulder areas and inside travel lanes could be reconfigured to provide either a center contra-flow reversible HOV/Transit lane, or concurrent HOV/Transit lanes in each direction. These alternatives would range in width from 146' to 154'. He offered these alternatives as demonstration of the potential flexibility of the 8-lane alternative, should reconfiguration in the future be warranted or desired.

Bob Landman noted that he had previously suggested development of a "Zipper" lane to NHDOT officials as a means of providing a center lane contra-flow HOV/Transit lane. The "Zipper" lane concept is a moveable barrier system that allows one to borrow a lane from the off-peak direction and utilize the borrowed lane for HOV's and transit vehicles traveling in the peak direction. In this way, the overall width of the cross-section is minimized. Frank responded that the "Zipper" lane would fall within the contra-flow center lane cross-section that he had previously described. Bruce Woodruff offered that he was concerned with the overall cross-section width, which he feels should be no wider than the eight lane cross-section (146'). He voiced skepticism about the potential utilization of HOV lanes, and suggested that a dedicated transit lane would be more effective. He stressed that Dover Point is a tightly constrained peninsula and the final pavement width should be utilized effectively.

Frank then proceeded to review a summary of ridership projections developed for a number of transit, rail and TDM alternatives. For each alternative, he noted the potential ridership, single occupancy vehicle diversion, and level-of-service assuming a 6-lane plus one HOV/Transit lane cross-section. He noted that the maximum number of HOVs (539) was approximately 250 vehicles less than the generally accepted viability threshold of 800 vehicles per hour for an HOV lane. Individual bus and rail alternatives ranged in diverted SOVs from approximately 30 to 95 vehicles resulting in Turnpike levels-of-service E-F. Employer-based TDM programs could potentially reduce peak hour SOVs by approximately 200 to 360 vehicles depending on the aggressiveness of the programs. Frank also noted that a combination of an aggressive employer-based TDM program with the three bus alternatives and the enhanced Downeaster rail service could potentially provide LOS 'D' in the AM peak hour, but would still fall short of providing LOS 'D' in the PM peak hour. He stated that this level of potential SOV diversion was part of the rationale for NHDOT's decision to carry the 6-lane plus HOV/Transit lane forward for further study.

Bill O'Donnell pointed out a typographical error on the Summary Table of Ridership, Vehicle Diversion and LOS by TDM Alternative. Under Rail Alternative 2B, the remaining PM peak hour NB traffic volume should be 5,977 versus the 5,496 volume shown. The resultant LOS 'F' does not change. Bill also questioned why the HOV Lane Alternative running between the Dover Toll Plaza and Exit 1 diverted a higher volume of SOV's than the HOV Lane Alternative running between the Dover Toll Plaza and I-95. Frank responded that the Exit 1 alternative provided access to the major employers at the Pease Tradeport. Bill Landman noted that enforcement of HOV lane utilization by multiple passenger vehicles could be by photography, and suggested that NHDOT investigate photo enforcement. Chris Waszczuk noted that legislation would be required to permit photo enforcement.

Dave Holden inquired as to the schedule and decision-making in moving forward to recommend a preferred alternative. Frank responded that the next phase of the project (the draft EIS) would begin in six to eight weeks, and take approximately 12 months to complete. This process would entail detailed analysis of the alternatives being carried forward. Chris Waszczuk added that the decision-making process would be a collective process, involving the Department and FHWA with input from the ATF, resource agencies, and general public through additional public information meetings. Dave asked if it would be feasible to design an 8-lane alternative with staged construction; he admitted to be struggling with envisioning an 8-lane alternative. Chris responded that, operationally speaking, two of the eight lanes (one in each direction) would function as auxiliary lanes allowing traffic to access and egress the Turnpike at the major interchanges at Woodbury Avenue (Exit 3) in Newington and US 4 and Dover Point Road (Exit 6) in Dover. Chris added that he envisioned a preferred alternative that would be comprehensive in nature and include TDM alternatives in addition to infrastructure improvements.

Chris Waszczuk then asked attendees if the project team had missed considering any type of viable alternative. Bob Landman suggested that employer cafeterias at the Pease Tradeport would support reducing daily vehicle trips generated by area employees. Maria Stowell responded that there are several employer-related cafeterias currently in use at the Tradeport and opportunity to increase that number as the Tradeport builds out. Tim Roache suggested that the total long-term transportation solution falls beyond NHDOT – it lies with the land use decisions that municipalities such as Newington, Dover, Portsmouth and others will make over time. Bill Burtis commented on the level of congestion during the current weekday commuting periods along the Turnpike, stating that there was a 20 to 30 minute period during the AM peak hour when traffic flow was significantly stalled. Frank O’Callaghan responded that the weekday evening period of congestion was longer than the AM period, given that there was a higher volume of traffic in the PM peak hour. He noted that both weekday AM and PM periods or windows of congestion would increase as future traffic volumes are projected to increase. Bill noted the 1.2 average vehicle occupancy as an assumption in converting rail and transit ridership estimates to estimates of SOV diversions. Frank responded that the travel characteristics of the Seacoast area were identified from the results of the June 2003 Seacoast Area Travel Survey.

Cliff Sinnott, acknowledging that enhancing or expanding the existing Downeaster rail service offered the advantage of building on an existing service, suggested that potential ridership might be increased if peak hour service could be increased from 1 run to 2. Frank responded that the project team would investigate the operational impacts and cost of an additional peak hour run. Jennifer Schroeder raised the issue of whether infrastructure improvements would in and of themselves generate additional travel demand. Chris Waszczuk responded that the potential for secondary growth and resultant traffic due to increasing the capacity of the Turnpike within the study area would be analyzed during the next phase of study. The project team will utilize a regional econometric model to assess such growth potential.

At this point in the meeting, Frank concluded his presentation by reviewing the summary tables comparing the resource impacts and estimated construction costs of the various interchange and bridge alternatives. One table summarized these impacts and costs assuming eight lanes on the bridge and mainline Turnpike. A second table compared these impacts and construction costs to an alternative that assumed six lanes on the LBB and Turnpike. As Frank reviewed this table, it was apparent that the differences in resource impacts and construction costs were relatively minor. Frank noted that, if one assumed a center, reversible HOV lane in addition to the six lanes, the cross-section width would be similar to the eight-lane alternative, and the corresponding differences in resource impacts and construction costs would be negligible.

Rick Fernald, representing the Newington Exxon Station and the owner of the convenience store located at the intersection of Nimble Hill Road and the Turnpike, asked if the Newington Alternatives (10, 11 and 12) could be modified to include an off-ramp from the Turnpike to Nimble Hill Road. Chris Waszczuk responded that such a modification is possible, and is indicated on the conceptual plans by dashed lines.

Cliff Sinnott asked if an 8-lane infrastructure alternative without TDM alternatives is realistic. Chris Waszczuk responded that a combination of infrastructure improvements with TDM is probably more realistic. Chris then stated that the Seacoast MPO had recently stated their concern of maximizing potential transit ridership through consideration of the dedication of an exclusive transit lane, and that the NHDOT had addressed that issue by carrying forward the 6 plus 1 alternative. He noted that the resource agencies had expressed similar comments vis-à-vis their support for consideration of the 6 plus 1 plus TDM alternative. Chris added that FAA representatives attended the August 5, 2004 resource agency meeting and have been invited to be a cooperating agency. With respect to the recent Seacoast MPO/TAC meeting, Tim Roache stated that the MPO has not reached a decision on

whether to conduct an additional traffic study to assess 2035 study area traffic conditions. Tim then confirmed with Frank O'Callaghan that an 8-lane alternative would not begin to reach capacity (LOS D/E) until 2032. Bill Burtis, noting that LOS 'D' would extend to 2032 and that construction could extend from 2008-2013, suggested that traffic conditions during construction would be an excellent opportunity to begin efforts to change attitudes and increase interest in transit.

Dave Holden complimented the NHDOT in the approach of casting a wide net on identifying and evaluating alternatives to meet the project's purpose and need.

As the meeting approached adjournment, Chris Cross reminded all that Phase 2 of the 5-phase study was concluding, and the time was at hand to speak up and raise any issue or question if one felt that any of the Alternatives being recommended for further study seemed infeasible, or if there are other alternatives or ideas that should be pursued. He stated that the project team is a year away from recommending a preferred alternative based on criteria discussed earlier under the summary table of resource impacts and construction costs associated with infrastructure alternatives. He noted that alternatives for the bridges, interchanges and various TDM actions have been recommended for further study, and he acknowledged that there are other alternatives that fall outside of this project that may contribute to improving regional mobility. The opportunity is at hand to state one's priorities. Bob Landman stated his preference for development of a "Zipper" lane. Chris Cross responded that the "Zipper" lane could be considered within the 3/1/3 alternative. Chris went on to add that toll-related issues are not part of this project; anyone wishing to pursue such statewide issues should take them up with the state legislature in Concord.

Bill Burtis stated that he wanted as few lanes on the bridge and Turnpike as possible. He felt construction of eight lanes for the bridge and highway was unimaginable. He added that the study process would be a catalyst for wider discussion, including regional issues. Chris Waszczuk acknowledged that the Newington-Dover project has initiated discussion of MPO issues beyond the scope and limits of the project.

Bill Landman acknowledged the historic nature of the General Sullivan Bridge (GSB) and stated, in his opinion, public sentiment is evenly split on whether to preserve or remove the bridge. Chris Waszczuk responded that there has been much discussion on the GSB, that the GSB is the second highest rated historic bridge in the state, and that the federal 4(f) process requires the project team to demonstrate that there is no feasible and prudent alternative to removing the bridge, if the recommended preferred alternative includes removal of the GSB.

Tom Fargo asked if the estimated 2032, LOS 'D/E' for an assumed 8-lane bridge alternative reflected the regional travel demand model. Frank responded that the 2025 PM peak hour regional travel demand model projection of traffic volume on the bridge had been increased by an average annual traffic growth rate of approximately 1.8%, the same annual average growth rate determined by the model in projecting 2003 volumes to 2025 volumes. However, a regional travel demand model for 2032 conditions does not exist.

There being no further questions or comments, Chris Cross adjourned the meeting at 8:35 PM, noting that the next meeting of the ATF has been tentatively scheduled for 6:30 PM, November 17, 2004 at Dover City Hall. *[Note: This ATF meeting was rescheduled for January 12, 2005]*