

**Transportation
Land Development
Environmental
Services**



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**Meeting
Notes**

Attendees:

- Chris Cross, ATF, RPC
- Tom Fargo, SRPC
- Steve Parkinson, Portsmouth
- Sandy Hislop, Newington
- Jack Newick, Dover
- Rick Card, Greater Dover Chamber of Commerce
- Peter Wellenberger, NHF&G
- Bill O'Donnell, FHWA
- Maria Stowell, PDA
- Chris Waszczuk, NHDOT
- Frank O'Callaghan, VHB
- Tim Roach, SRPC
- Bob Landman, MPO

Date/Time: May 4, 2005

Project No.: 51425.00

Place: Newington Town Hall

Re: Newington-Dover 11238
ATF Meeting No. 12

Notes taken by: Frank O'Callaghan

Chris Cross, ATF Chairman, called the meeting to order at 6:48 pm. He welcomed all and asked members of the ATF in attendance to introduce themselves. Following the self-introductions, Chris noted that the Newington-Dover project addresses a major transportation need of the Seacoast region, and that public input is welcome. He stated that the current Phase 3 of the project is a process of refining alternatives over the next 6 months to identify a preferred alternative for both the Little Bay Bridges and the study area interchanges. Following the environmental impact statement with the necessary approvals, the preferred alternative would be designed, permitted and constructed. Construction is scheduled to begin in 2010; work will begin sooner if additional funding becomes available. Chris then reviewed the meeting protocol: the project team would present information, to be followed by questions and comments from the ATF, to be followed by questions and comments from the public in attendance.

The draft ATF meeting minutes of March 30, 2005, were then reviewed. There were two (2) minor edits noted by Tom Fargo and Frank O'Callaghan, and the draft minutes, as edited, were approved. Chris Cross requested comments from the ATF. There being none, he turned to Chris Waszczuk. Chris Waszczuk welcomed attendees, noting that the ATF has been meeting lately on a monthly basis, reviewing the traffic data, looking more closely at the resources and constraints in the area, and continuing the refinement and development of the infrastructure improvement alternatives being considered for Newington and Dover. Chris referenced the revised Alternatives for Newington (10A and 12A) and Dover (2 and 3), which were displayed on the walls of the meeting room. He noted that additional engineering studies had revised both the horizontal and vertical alignments of the

Turnpike and resultant slope impacts due to preliminary constructability reviews. He also noted that there were Public Informational Meetings scheduled for May 18th in Dover and May 19th in Newington. Chris then asked Frank O'Callaghan to summarize and review the latest modifications to the Exit 3 (Newington) and Exit 6 (Dover) interchange alternatives.

Frank proceeded to describe the most recent modification to Alternative 10, noting that the mainline of the Turnpike had been shifted approximately 80' to the west in order to simplify the construction of the Woodbury Avenue overpass and improve traffic management during construction; the Exit 3 SB on-ramp had been converted from a diamond-type configuration to a loop ramp in order to maximize traffic weaving distance between the Exit 3 on-ramp and the Exit 1 off-ramp; the elevation of the grade-separated railroad R.O.W. and industrial traffic connector to Exit 3 had been lowered by approximately 8 feet which lowered the mainline profile of the Turnpike; and that the limits of slope impacts had been calculated and depicted on the plan. He referred to these revisions as Alternative 10A. Frank then compared the lowered profile of Alternative 10A to Alternative 10.

Frank then described refinements to Alternative 12 noting similarities to Alternative 10A such as the slight horizontal shift in alignment to the west to improve constructability and traffic management at Exit 3, and the depiction of the limits of slope impacts due to construction. He also noted that the grade-separated railroad R.O.W. and industrial traffic connector to Exit 3 had been shifted approximately 900 feet to the north to improve the constructability of the Exit 3 interchange and to avoid an existing utility corridor, paralleling Patterson Lane, and that the roadway connector to the Tradeport had been realigned to avoid the potential prime wetland area located west of Railway Brook. Frank referred to these modifications as Alternative 12A, and compared the mainline Turnpike profiles of Alternatives 12 and 12A, noting that the elevation of the grade-separated railroad R.O.W. and industrial traffic connector had been lowered in Alternative 12A, in similar fashion to Alternative 10A. He noted that the Turnpike, under Alternative 12A, would be approximately 18'-20' above the elevation of the existing NB barrel of the Turnpike at the point where the railroad R.O.W. and industrial traffic connector passed under the Turnpike.

With respect to Alternatives 2 and 3 in Dover, Frank stated that the only refinements pertain to the identification of the limits of potential slope impacts due to construction, and that the Boston Harbor Road/Spur Road intersection had been relocated approximately 150' to the east to increase vehicle storage lanes (Alternative 2) and transition areas for the lane drop, westbound on US 4, prior to the Scammell Bridge. He also reviewed the Turnpike's profile between the Little Bay Bridges and Exit 6. He noted that the Hilton Park Connector was located approximately 1,200' north of the bridges, where the Turnpike would be approximately 18' above the existing elevation of the Turnpike to provide clearance for the Hilton Park Connector below. An alternative location for the connector had been considered adjacent to the channel, but Frank explained that potential impacts to parkland, flood plain issues, and additional cost (\$5.5 M) deemed this location infeasible in comparison to the northerly alternative.

At this point, Frank paused for comments and questions. Discussion ensued concerning the local connection between Woodbury Avenue and Nimble Hill Road proposed under Alternatives 10A and 12A. Frank noted that the intent of the connector road was to remove local traffic from using the Turnpike as a connection between Exits 3 and 4, and that the reconfiguration of Exit 3 (Woodbury Avenue) would calm traffic exiting the Turnpike in comparison to the existing free-flow condition for southbound traffic entering Woodbury Avenue. Bob Landman suggested that the reconfigured Exit 3 interchange struck him as being too complex. Tom Fargo stated that ["too much pavement"] there was too much emphasis on the local connections which support local development, which in his view, is not necessarily related to the project purpose and need. Cliff Abbott, Newington resident, questioned the objective of the roads in Newington. Chris Cross responded that the Tradeport connection to Exit 3 and improved access for industrial related traffic to Exit 3 were consistent with

the Town of Newington's transportation planning; he also stated that Newington officials are sensitive to the criticism of some concerning the scale of local connections and have developed some preliminary thoughts on how to reduce the scale of these connections. He indicated that he would share these preliminary thoughts with the project team at the conclusion of the meeting. Chris Waszczuk reminded all that there is currently inadequate spacing between the existing interchanges and that the Tradeport connection to Exit 3 (which will divert traffic from Exit 1 and thereby increase the service life of Exit 1), in conjunction with planning for a future rail connection to the Tradeport (which could divert future trucks from the Turnpike and have a positive impact on air quality) and improved access to the Turnpike for heavy commercial traffic will improve traffic operations and safety conditions within the study area, and as such, are in fact related to the project purpose and need.

Tom Fargo suggested that existing pavement which may be abandoned – depending on the alternative – should be better identified on the plans. He added that potential mitigation areas could also be identified. Bob Landman suggested that the local connection between Nimble Hill Road (Exit 4) and Woodbury Avenue (Exit 3) could be accomplished via the “soon to be” 2-way connection between Nimble Hill Road and River Road traversing under the Turnpike, and then proceeding along Shattuck Way to Piscataqua Drive which intersects with Woodbury Avenue, as opposed to the proposed connection paralleling the western side of the Turnpike. Tom Fargo suggested connecting Fox Point Road to Arboretum Drive and its proposed connection to Exit 3 as another alternative for local connections.

In response to a question of whether or not the lack of capacity on the Little Bay Bridges is the principal traffic problem, Chris Waszczuk responded that, in addition to the lack of capacity on the bridges, the bridge approaches are problematic due to the volume of traffic that is entering and exiting the Turnpike, and the proximity of interchanges to one another which compounds the peak hour problem of traffic changing lanes and entering/exiting the Turnpike within the study area. At the request of the owner of the Mobil/Exxon convenience station, Frank explained how drivers would access his facility from the Turnpike under Alternatives 10A and 12A. Without access from the Turnpike, the property owner stated that his business would be adversely impacted.

Michael Martoni, Coleman Drive, stated that he was concerned about potential noise impacts, and that while acknowledging that access from Nimble Hill Road was treacherous under existing AM peak hour conditions, he saw no need for a west side local connector, as proposed, assuming implementation of the interim safety improvements. Chris Waszczuk noted that noise impacts would be addressed as part of the project.

An attendee suggested that additional access to the Tradeport may be planned to the south of Exit 1 (Pease Boulevard/Gosling Road) which would make the proposed connection to the Tradeport from Exit 3 unnecessary. Frank O'Callaghan responded that he was very familiar with the transportation master plan of the Tradeport, and stated that no such Turnpike access located to the south of Exit 1 is planned. Transportation planning for the Tradeport has always envisioned a potential connection to the north of Exit 1. Steve Parkinson concurred, noting that access via the closed driveway located south of Exit 1 is too close to the I-95 off-ramps and the Portsmouth traffic circle and would be problematic from a traffic operations and safety perspective.

With respect to the proposed location of the Hilton Park connector, Tom Fargo concurred that the floodplain, parkland and cost-related issues make the northerly location preferable to the channel location, as previously described. Responding to a question, Frank noted that the Turnpike at this location would be approximately 18' above the existing elevation of the Turnpike.

Jack Newick stated that wind direction would be critical to the noise analysis, noting sounds carry across the channel depending on the velocity and direction of the wind.

There being no further comment or questions, Frank summarized the advantages of the diamond-type interchange on the northbound barrel of the Turnpike at Exit 6, in comparison to the 2-lane loop ramp suggested by others for consideration. The signalized diamond interchange operates at a satisfactory level of service, will introduce gaps in the overpass traffic stream that will make it easier to exit Dover Pont Road and Spur Road, will save approximately \$2M in bridge costs and will provide a potentially safer traffic operation than the free-flowing 2-lane loop ramp alternative.

Cliff Abbott questioned why a signalized diamond type of interchange was proposed instead of perpetuating the free-flowing loop type of configuration that exists today. Chris Waszczuk noted that a traffic simulation depicting both conditions was presented at the previous Advisory Task Force meeting, which showed the signalized diamond interchange operating at a high level of service in the design year (2025). He noted that the simulation would be presented again at the upcoming Informational meetings.

Frank then reviewed the status of 8-lane and 6-lane options. He noted that only two (2) 8-lane options remain, both of which entail rehabilitation and widening of the Little Bay Bridges (LBB) combined with transit and employer-based TDM actions. The only difference between alternatives is whether or not the General Sullivan Bridge (GSB) is rehabilitated (Option 3) or removed (Option 2) and replaced by a multi-use path attached to the LBB. The 6-lane options remaining include the 6-lane typical (Option 6) which entails the rehabilitation/widening of the LBB, rehabilitation of the GSB, transit and employer-based TDM actions. Unfortunately, this 6-lane option does not meet the 2025 travel demand, with system breakdown projected to occur around 2017. In an effort to increase capacity and minimize impacts, the borrow lane or zipper lane (Option 9) and peak hour shoulder use (Option 10) concepts were developed. Similar to Option 6, both the LBB and GSB are rehabilitated and combined with transit and TDM actions. In contrast to Option 6, both provide four (4) travel lanes in the peak direction during the peak hour of traffic. The peak shoulder use has the advantage over the borrow lane concept of having lower operating and maintenance costs. Frank noted, however, that FHWA has reservations about both concepts, and is reluctant to endorse either Option 9 or 10 as a long-term solution. At this point, Frank deferred to Bill O'Donnell. Bill noted that FHWA has just recently drafted comments for submittal to NHDOT, and that in summary, FHWA could not support either the peak hour shoulder use or borrow lane concept. In cases where FHWA has endorsed such concepts, they have been in highly congested corridors, and have been implemented as interim measures to provide time necessary to design, permit, fund and construct long term solutions that meet long-term needs. Bill noted that FHWA has concerns of safety and driver confusion for those not familiar with study area traffic and roadway conditions. He cited traffic accident research studies that noted increases in accidents where shoulders have been employed during peak hours in transitions from 4 to 5 lanes, and lack of research data regarding the transition from 3 to 4 lanes as the study area case would be. He further noted that while 6-lanes (Option 6) fails from a 2025 traffic operations performance perspective, and that 8-lanes (Options 2 and 3) provide a satisfactory level of 2025 traffic service, there is not much difference in roadway and bridge footprints (from an impacts perspective) between the 6- and 8-lane options. As such, FHWA will not support either Option 9 or Option 10.

Bob Landman commented that West Coast facilities don't provide shoulders in some cases, and in others, provide very narrow shoulders. Bill replied that those are examples of interim retrofits of existing facilities, not the design and construction of a new facility with built-in deficiencies or design exceptions. Bob noted the sensitive environmental condition of the study area suggesting special consideration may be warranted. Bill responded that we should not be satisfied with built-in deficiencies. Bob inquired as to the possibility of utilizing a moveable center median, in a

borrow / zipper lane fashion. Chris Waszczuk replied that the Exit 3 and Exit 6 bridges that traverse the Turnpike require center piers for support which preclude the possibility of moving a single center median from one side of the Turnpike to the other.

Tom Fargo noted that 8-lanes will be adequate for the future given the regional demographics and the origins and destinations of travel. Gail Pare asked if 8-lanes would be required throughout the study area. Frank O'Callaghan responded that 8-lanes would be required between Exits 3 and 6, and that the 4th lane in each direction was an auxiliary or traffic management lane connecting the on and off-ramp lanes at each interchange. Gail suggested that an aerial photograph or plan view of 6- and 8-lane bridge alternatives would help her and probably others visualize the difference in scale between 6- and 8-lanes. Chris Waszczuk replied that a rendering would be developed as concepts are further developed. Bob Landman stated that he was comfortable with 6-lanes, but not yet supportive of 8-lanes. Gail Pare raised the issue of HOT lanes. Chris Waszczuk responded that such a concept would be inefficient in our compact study area, and would require a radical change in travel behavior. Chris Cross noted that 8 lanes is not excessive in his view, particularly in light of the continued attractiveness and growth of the Seacoast area.

Tom Fargo observed that current traffic patterns reflect regional employment and housing patterns, to wit, that lack of housing opportunities south of the LBB result in many residents residing north of the LBB and commuting south of the bridge to work. Such commuting patterns limit the flexibility for TDM actions such as ridesharing and variable work hours due to family commitments such as day care and school drop-offs. Bob Landman opined that we should learn from metropolitan areas, such as Denver, Colorado, where transit has been integrated into the mainstream of daily activities; as such, NH should invest more in transit. Bill O'Donnell replied that the FHWA supports buses and transit as part of comprehensive transportation solutions, such as the improvements recommended for the I-93 corridor. Bob responded that such investments should not benefit private enterprise, such as allowing free overnight parking at the Portsmouth Transportation Center (PTC) which, in his view, amounts to a subsidization of C&J service to Boston and Logan International Airport.

At this point, Chris Cross asked for any final comments from the ATF. Sandy Hislop stated that Newington residents prefer provision of an off-ramp to Nimble Hill Road, and that 8-lanes is preferable to 6-lanes given the future travel demand. Rick Card concurred with respect to the 8-lane options, noting that there are few alternate travel routes to the Turnpike, which explains the heavy travel demand; he also noted that tourist traffic is largely unfamiliar with the area.

Chris Cross thanked all for their interest and comments, which the project team will consider. He noted that Public Information Meetings are scheduled for May 18, 2005, in Dover and May 19, 2005, in Newington. At these meetings, a project overview, and summary of project status will be presented, and additional input solicited. He reminded all that the objective of the study is to reach consensus on a smart and comprehensive transportation solution for the study area. Chris Waszczuk noted that the latest refinements to Alternatives – 10A, 12A, 2 and 3 – would be posted on the project website as soon as possible, and that the traffic model simulations and level of service videos would be available at the Public Information Meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 9:12 PM.

