



**Meeting
Notes**

Attendees: Chris Cross, ATF Chair, RPC
Tom Fargo, SRPC
Steve Parkinson, Portsmouth
Jack Newick, Dover
Sandy Hislop, Newington
Bruce Woodruff, Dover
Maria Stowell, PDA
Bill O'Donnell, FHWA
Chris Waszczuk, NHDOT
Marc Laurin, NHDOT
Mike Dugas, NHDOT
Tim Roache, SRPC
Tom Wholley, VHB
Frank O'Callaghan, VHB

Date/Time: July 6, 2005

Draft

Project No.: 51425

Place: Newington Town Hall

Re: Newington-Dover 11238
ATF Meeting No. 13

Notes taken by: Frank O'Callaghan

Cosmos Iocovozzi, Chairman of the Newington Board of Selectmen, called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm. On behalf of the Town of Newington, he thanked the NHDOT for convening the ATF meeting in Newington to hear directly from Newington officials and residents on the development and modifications of Newington project alternatives. He noted that representatives of Newington's Board of Selectmen, Planning Board and Conservation Commission were in attendance in addition to Town residents. He asked for comments or questions from Town officials. Hearing none, he stated that Town officials would likely comment following the project team's presentation. At this point, Chris Cross, ATF Chairman, welcomed all. He noted the importance of the project, and the importance of the input from Newington officials and residents that the project team was seeking. He stated that the Draft EIS was scheduled for completion at the end of 2005.

Chris Cross then referred to the draft ATF meeting minutes of May 4, 2005 and asked if any member of the ATF had questions or comments. There being no questions or comments, the Draft meeting minutes were approved. Following self introductions by the ATF members, Chris requested comments from the ATF. There being none, he turned to Chris Waszczuk. Chris welcomed all and thanked the Newington Selectmen for inviting the project team to present the latest project information and for the opportunity to listen and respond to the concerns, comments and questions of Newington officials and residents. Chris stated that the project is presently in the middle of Phase 3, where the Alternatives are being engineered, refined, and impacts assessed with the intent to identify a preferred alternative prior to the Draft EIS being completed and published. He noted that the project team has attempted to be open to local input, and has modified the Newington alternatives (Alternatives 10A & 12A) based on local input submitted at the May 4, 2005 ATF meeting.

He noted that the project team has reviewed the Town's concept (Alternative 13) and is prepared to discuss merits of the new alternative. He also noted that it is apparent through the course of the Feasibility Study and the earlier phases of the current study (Phases 1 & 2) that some of the original Town priorities have changed. Chris expressed hope that following this evening's meeting, some clear and consistent direction could be provided regarding the Newington Alternatives to allow the project to continue its progression towards the completion of the DEIS and the scheduling of a formal Public Hearing next Spring. He then reviewed the meeting agenda and turned to Frank O'Callaghan to summarize feedback from the Public Informational Meetings of May 18 and 19, 2005.

Frank summarized feedback from the public informational meetings under several broad categories. He noted that Modifications to the Newington Alternatives (Alternatives 10A and 12A) would be discussed in detail later in the presentation, and that such discussion would include review of a Town-generated alternative (Alternative 13). Noise comments pertained to analysis methodologies, assumptions and time periods; abatement criteria; potential mitigation areas; and the design and effectiveness of noise barriers. Several aspects of the General Sullivan Bridge were noted: historical significance, reuse alternatives, cost of rehabilitation, alternative to rehabilitation, and state and federal requirements to assess practical and prudent alternatives to impacting the historical resource. A number of traffic operational questions/issues were noted: Can Exit 4, northbound be eliminated? (No); can Exit 5 be retained? (No); the signalized-diamond interchange advantages over a two-lane loop ramp operation at Exit 6 northbound; the lack of a practical 6-lane alternative, in combination with expanded transit and employer-based TDM, that adequately meets 2025 travel demands; Tradeport and Portsmouth Naval Shipyard traffic impacts on the Turnpike; signal operations at the Spur Road/Boston Harbor Road intersection; incident management improvements under design or implementation; and efforts to minimize potential impacts to the Beane Farm property located on Woodbury Avenue. With respect to the Beane Farm property, Peggy Lamson, Conservation Commission chair and Planning Board member, expressed concern over the potential impact to one or both trees that abut Woodbury Avenue on the Beane Farm property. Frank responded that the proposed cross section on Woodbury Avenue has been reduced to the extent practicable in an effort to minimize impacts to the Beane Farm and the Isaac Dow House. While impacts to both structures have been avoided, one or both trees abutting Woodbury Avenue on the Beane Farm property may be impacted.

With respect to rail, Frank stated that there was support for expanding the Downeaster service during the peak commuting periods, and that the idea of creating new passenger service between Rochester and Portsmouth, running parallel to the Turnpike, was impractical due to low ridership estimates, high capital cost, and lack of right-of-way. Lastly, Frank took note of a number of miscellaneous items, including the Turnpike profile under various alternatives, the impacts of reconstructed bridge piers on channel currents, maintenance of traffic during construction, base mapping updates and representation of Newington's input to the planning process.

Frank then proceeded to describe the recent modifications to the Newington Alternatives 10A, 12A and 13. He began by noting several issues pertinent to the Newington alternatives which were raised during the recent public informational meetings: desire for a direct southbound off-ramp connection from the Turnpike to Nimble Hill Road, better access to the Exxon-Mobil convenience store, simpler local connections and less length of new local roadway connections. He then described the modifications to Alternatives 10A and 12A which include a direct off-ramp connection from the Turnpike to Nimble Hill Road, and the relocation of the Exit 3 (Woodbury Avenue)/Nimble Hill Road connector from an alignment paralleling the Pease Spur railroad to an alignment paralleling the Turnpike along the to be abandoned existing southbound barrel of the Turnpike. Access to the Exxon-Mobile station would be via the connector road. Frank reviewed site access routing from the Turnpike via Nimble Hill Road and the connector road, and from Newington village via Nimble Hill Road and the connector road. He also reviewed the Turnpike profiles extending from Exit 1 at Gosling Road north to the Little Bay bridges under both modified Alternatives 10A and 12A,

comparing the existing Turnpike elevation above Gosling Road to the proposed Turnpike elevation needed to clear the industrial connector road and the railroad right-of-way.

Frank next described Alternative 13 which was developed and proposed by Town of Newington officials. The concept entails both on and off-ramps to the Turnpike from Nimble Hill Road, a reconfigured Exit 3 interchange that maintains the Tradeport connection, eliminates the local connector between Nimble Hill Road and Exit 3/Woodbury Avenue [This connection would be provided via the Nimble Hill Road – River Road connection, currently under construction, and include connecting to Woodbury Avenue via Shattuck Way and Piscataqua Drive.], and provides for the future railroad R.O.W. connection to the Tradeport by carrying the railroad spur track over the Turnpike. This would allow the profile of the Turnpike to remain at its approximate existing elevation and avoid the need to elevate the Turnpike as in Alternatives 10A and 12A. Access to the Exxon-Mobil facility would be from a cul-de-sac forming the fourth leg of the intersection of Nimble Hill Road, the southbound ramps, and Shattuck Way extension. Frank noted that the original concept developed by the Town included an industrial traffic connector paralleling Patterson Lane, to provide a direct connection between Shattuck Way and Woodbury Avenue. The connector was envisioned to form the fifth leg of the at-grade signalized intersection of Woodbury Avenue and the northbound ramps. However, Frank explained that operation of such an at-grade intersection would require a 7-lane cross section on Woodbury Avenue and adversely impact the Isaac Dow House and Beane Farm. As such, the at-grade industrial connector was deemed infeasible and eliminated from the concept. Frank also noted that the Nimble Hill Road southbound off and on-ramps to the Turnpike were originally located just to the south of the Exxon-Mobil facility. VHB has proposed a modification that would locate these ramps to the north of the Exxon-Mobil facility in close proximity to the existing Nimble Hill Road. Such a modification would retain the same level of access to the Exxon-Mobil facility as originally proposed by the Town's concept, but could have less impact on abutting property, increase the distance between Exits 3 and 4 which would improve traffic operations, and would offer future flexibility to access potential future development of the former drive-in site. He concluded by reviewing the profiles of the Turnpike and the Pease Spur track.

Denis Hebert, Newington Planning Board, stated that Alternative 13 had several advantages in comparison to the modified Alternatives 10A and 12A – Alternative 13 has less local roadway construction, the elevation of the Turnpike was lower, and it was less costly (by approximately \$2 - \$3M). He inquired as to the ownership of the railroad ROW, and responsibility for future maintenance. Chris Waszczuk responded that the railroad ROW is owned by the PDA, and that the NHDOT is researching access and ROW related issues. Chris added that preserving the future railroad ROW is consistent with the updated Pease Surface Transportation Master Plan and Development Plan, and the NHDOT is open to planning for the future rail connection to the Tradeport either above or below the Turnpike. Denis responded that the cost difference between running the rail ROW over the Turnpike or under the Turnpike is relatively small (\$2 - \$3M) given the total cost of the Newington-Dover project; he stated that the major issue is use – will the rail service ever be reactivated? He questioned the risk of raising the Turnpike [and providing the rail connection under the Turnpike] and fracturing the Town for a railroad connection that may never be used. As such, he stated his preference for keeping the Turnpike at-grade, reducing the cost of the project, and for the State, the PDA and others to provide the rail connection above the Turnpike at a future time.

Jack Pare, 188 Little Bay Road, Newington, noting the planning horizon of 2025 for the project, asked if there was any sense of a rail use need prior to 2025. Maria Stowell, PDA, responded that a recent proposal by an airplane manufacturer would have required rail access. Rail service could be required during the next 10 or 20 years. She added that an active rail connection would remove trucks from the Turnpike and be consistent with the Pease Development Plan which has been approved by the Legislature. Maria noted that the rail corridor should be preserved, that easements have been conveyed to the PDA, and that any proposal to alter those easements, or relinquish the ROW would

rest with the PDA Board of Directors. She also added that since Pease's Development Plan was approved by the Legislature, legislative action may be necessary. Jack Pare then suggested that, the rail ROW connection should be preserved, in his view, by planning for the rail to go over the Turnpike.

A resident asked if the future rail corridor would be built as part of the Newington-Dover project. Chris Waszczuk responded that it would not be constructed as part of the project. He noted that the original concepts (Alternatives 10A and 12A) provided a bridge carrying Turnpike traffic over the railroad ROW, and that the recently developed concept (Alternative 13) eliminates the industrial traffic connector and provides for a future railroad bridge over the Turnpike for a railroad ROW. Rick Stern, 1223 Spaulding Turnpike, Newington, inquired as to the origin and destination of the future rail connection. Maria Stowell responded that the rail connection would run from the Portsmouth Yard, north on the Newington Branch, and then traverse westerly across the Spaulding Turnpike to connect with the Tradeport. Chris Cross added that the Portsmouth Branch Line that runs easterly through Greenland, and traverses NH 33 and connects to the Portsmouth Yard from the south does not have easements in place to access the Tradeport, as compared to the Pease Spur, which has a perpetual easement to cross the Turnpike. Tom Fargo suggested consideration of focusing on accessing the Tradeport from the south (vicinity of NH 33) and acquiring the necessary easements. Chris Waszczuk responded that the PDA could independently pursue rail access from the south along the NH 33 corridor, but the focus of the Newington-Dover project should be on the Spaulding Turnpike within the study area, which entails dealing with the railroad easements across the Turnpike. Gail Pare, 188 Little Bay Road, Newington, expressed support for Alternative 13 and the railroad ROW traversing above the Turnpike. She said that it made more sense to her to keep the Turnpike at-grade and to plan for and deal with the railroad ROW in the future. She asked if the PDA would entertain the concept of connecting the rail ROW above the Turnpike as proposed in Alternative 13. Maria Stowell replied that the PDA Board of Directors would need to respond to that plan (Alternative 13). Tom Fargo concluded comments on the rail ROW related issues by stating that the easements and access issues would likely require additional research and legal interpretation and opinion.

At this point Frank turned to Tom Wholley, an acoustical engineer at VHB, to discuss the preliminary noise analysis. Tom explained that the noise analysis was a work in progress and that preliminary analyses of both existing and future conditions have been conducted adhering to NHDOT procedures which are consistent with FHWA procedures. Existing conditions were modeled and calibrated by utilizing an FHWA model that reflects local topographic, traffic and roadway features and conditions. The hour with the highest level of noise was analyzed, and future conditions reflected the peak hour 2025 traffic volume estimates. Tom made note of two (2) criteria for identifying noise abatement requirements – a significant increase in noise, defined as 15 dBA or greater, or a 67 dBA level of noise for residential areas. Tom referred to several graphics which depicted noise impact areas within the study area. He identified three (3) areas in Newington and five (5) areas in Dover where existing sound levels equal or exceed the 67 dBA noise criteria threshold. Construction of the Turnpike improvements – assuming 8-lanes under Alternatives 10A (Newington) and 3 (Dover) – result in noise levels in the aforementioned areas that would increase, at projected 2025 traffic volume levels, in the range of 1 to 4 dBA, depending on location. Tom explained that the project related impacts are considerably less than the NHDOT 15dBA threshold for identifying a substantial noise increase, and that no new areas are created where sound levels exceed the noise abatement criteria. He then referred to graphics which depicted 60dBA and 66dBA noise contours within the study area, and noted locations where potential noise abatement may be considered. These locations are existing areas that exceed 66dBA noise levels, and where existing noise levels would increase by approximately 1 to 4 dBA under future conditions. He noted that design of potential noise abatement in these areas would be assessed and would consider such factors as location, land use, and cost.

Gordon Smith, 14 Boston Harbor Road, Dover stated that the acceleration of trucks from a stop at the Boston Harbor Road/US 4 signalized intersection was very noisy and annoying. He mentioned that he had previously complained to NHDOT about noise following the completion of the Scammell Bridge reconstruction project. Chris Waszczuk offered to conduct a noise measurement at his residence to verify calibration of the noise model and accuracy of noise levels. Tom Wholley added that the model can be adjusted to reflect the affects of gear shifting due to the starting and stopping of trucks. In response to a question from a resident, Tom stated that the NHDOT noise abatement guidance allows a degree of discretion with respect to methods of noise abatement. Denis Hebert asked if a decrease in noise of 10dBA actually constituted a 50 percent reduction in noise level. Tom confirmed that it did, noting the logarithmic function of noise measurements. Denis also asked for confirmation that the future condition analysis assumed an elevated profile of the Turnpike. Tom confirmed that an elevated profile was assumed. Tom Fargo inquired about the noise reduction effects of "quiet pavement". Tom Wholley responded that the FHWA model allows a "quiet pavement" assessment, but noted that over time, the pavement wears and the noise level would increase. Pavement reconstruction with "quiet" materials could help abate noise in the short term. Tom Fargo noted that the Massachusetts Highway Department was currently utilizing "quiet pavement" on the reconstruction of I-95 from the NH state line south. Tom Wholley noted that the current preliminary analysis of future conditions does not reflect the benefit of "quiet pavement", thus is a conservative assessment.

Gail Pare questioned whether or not the village center area of Newington should be held to a higher noise standard than residential. Tom responded that in such a case, the 15dBA increase in noise level would be the appropriate criteria, and that noise increases are expected to be in the 1 to 4 dBA range. Barbara McDonald, 415 Newington Road, Newington inquired as to the specific noise abatement mitigation that was being proposed. Chris Waszczuk responded that a preferred alternative needs to be selected prior to the design and location of specific noise abatement measures, and that selection of a preferred alternative was approximately 3-6 months away. Barbara expressed frustration, stating that it appeared to her that there was nothing new in information that was being presented during this evening's meeting. To the contrary, Chris replied that Alternatives 10A and 12A had been modified based on recent feedback from the ATF and public, and that Alternative 13 was a totally new concept originating from Newington Town officials and being presented for the first time at tonight's ATF meeting.

At this point, Frank O'Callaghan directed attention to a plan of Alternative 13 posted on a wall, and discussed the travel patterns and traffic operational characteristics of this concept, including access and egress from the Exxon-Mobil facility. Discussion ensued on the access to the Exxon-Mobil facility. Frank pointed out that site access, as proposed, attempts to strike a balance between traffic operational and safety concerns, and convenience to facility patrons. He noted that NHDOT and FHWA would not support perpetuating direct access to the site from the Nimble Hill Road on and off-ramps due to safety concerns.

Michael Marconi, 19 Coleman Drive, Newington, voiced support for Alternative 13. Peggy Lamson identified roadway drainage as an important design issue. Chris Waszczuk concurred and noted that water quality is a major study area concern. Gordon Smith noted a drainage concern located at the Boston Harbor Road/US 4 intersection. Chris Waszczuk responded that Best Management Practices for drainage would be reflected in final design of the preferred alternative.

At this point, Chris Cross solicited input from Newington town officials and residents in the formulation of a Newington position on project alternatives and issues. Gail Pare noted she assumed NHDOT would be responsible for maintenance (e.g. snow plowing) of the Nimble Hill Road ramps running between the Turnpike and the proposed 4-way intersection of the ramps/Shattuck Way extension/Nimble Hill Road/proposed cul-de-sac (Alternative 13); and that once a preferred

alternative is selected, the edges of the widened Turnpike should be landscaped with mature trees as opposed to seedlings. John Grohl, 272 Nimble Hill Road, Newington, reflected on the discussion of traffic operations and safety concerns relative to Nimble Hill Road under Alternative 13 and concurred with the project team that direct access from Nimble Hill Road to the Exxon-Mobil facility could be problematic in the future. Chris Waszczuk noted the need to begin finalizing the concepts based on the traffic projections and analysis conducted. Lorraine Cole, Coleman Drive, Newington, expressed concern for the potential economic impact to the owner of the Exxon-Mobil facility under the site access proposed as part of Alternative 13. Chris Waszczuk responded that site access, as proposed, is both visible and convenient to both Turnpike traffic and Newington residents, noting the change in access relates to safety concerns for both Newington residents and travelers on the Turnpike. Denis Hebert stated that safety is the priority vis-à-vis impacts on Nimble Hill Road, and that Alternative 13 is the best plan possible. Ann Stewart, Newington Selectman, concurred with Denis Hebert, noting that Alternative 13 best addresses the Town's concerns of safety, noise and access to the Turnpike from Nimble Hill Road. Sandy Hislop, Newington Planning Board, also expressed support for Alternative 13, noting that the lack of a direct industrial traffic connector to Exit 3 would be compensated by the Town's project to extend Shattuck Way to Gosling Road. Michael Marconi stated that Alternative 13 was a big improvement in comparison to other alternatives.

Assuming Alternative 13, Denis Hebert suggested a re-examination of the Turnpike profile in hopes of lowering it in the vicinity of Exit 3. Jack Pare concurred and suggested lowering the Turnpike profile to the extent possible to reduce the extent of the future rail elevation. Michael Marconi inquired if lowering the Turnpike profile would benefit noise abatement. Tom Wholley responded in the affirmative. Denis Hebert suggested that blinders attached to the bridge rails of the Little Bay Bridges would minimize driver distraction and increase traffic flow efficiency and safety.

At this point Chris Cross thanked all for attending and for their input, and thanked NHDOT and the project team for listening. Chris Waszczuk suggested that Town officials should submit a letter to the NHDOT affirming the Town's support for Alternative 13 which was expressed at tonight's meeting. He added that Alternatives 10A, 12A and 13 would be advanced through the Phase 3 DEIS process. Jack Pare asked if Alternatives 10A and 12A would be modified to reflect the railroad ROW traversing over the Turnpike. Chris responded that Alternatives 10A and 12A would remain as is, i.e. with the Railroad ROW traversing under the Turnpike. Denis Hebert offered that the noise mitigation resulting from the lowering of the Turnpike's profile under Alternative 13 was a reasonable trade off for the lack of a direct industrial traffic connector to Exit 3. Chris Cross noted that the development and refinement of alternatives has been an incremental process with both the Town and NHDOT willing to compromise where possible. Gail Pare expressed her appreciation for the ATF and NHDOT's willingness to listen and work with the community.

Chris Waszczuk noted that the City of Dover has requested rescheduling of the next ATF meeting from August 31st to August 24th, at Dover City Hall. Chris Cross closed the meeting by stating that Newington officials would submit a letter of consensus, support and rationale for a preferred Newington alternative within the next two weeks.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 PM.

cc: J. Brillhart, H. Goodwin, M. Richardson, W. Hauser, W. Oldenburg
F. O'Callaghan (VHB), ATF Committee, Newington Selectboard