

Article on the Study in the Sanford News via Fosters.com

On the road to economic development: Workshop to focus on transportation study's goals

By Shawn Sullivan, Sanford News Editor

SANFORD — What are the transportation barriers between Sanford and its economic development?
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Officials will explore that question during a public workshop in council chambers at the Sanford Town Hall Annex tonight at 6 p.m. The forum is expected to last about two hours.

The workshop, in which officials will seek input from the public, is part of the area's first regionwide transportation study. The Maine Department of Transportation and the Maine Turnpike Authority are funding the Central York County Connections Study, which will include a focus on assessing how changes in transportation could support regional economic growth.

During the workshop, the study process will be outlined and officials will solicit the public's thoughts on transportation, land use and economic development issues and opportunities.

Study Team member Carol Morris, of Morris Communications, said on Tuesday she hopes all participants in the workshop will keep open minds and look at all possibilities without going with just one answer during the study.

Sanford, Alfred, Waterboro, Arundel, Biddeford, Kennebunk, Ogunquit, Lyman, North Berwick and Wells are communities that are participating in the study. Residents of these towns are encouraged to attend tonight's discussion.

Those who are unable to attend can view meeting materials and answer a survey, available now, at www.ConnectingYorkCounty.org. The survey aims to gather feedback on regional travel habits and why people choose to live and work where they do.

According to the aforementioned website, the study is seeking to answer these questions:

q "Can improved access to greater Sanford, as the region's service center, make a meaningful economic difference to the prospects of Sanford and its surrounding communities?"

q "In the long run, are these prospects best served by a northerly (Portland-oriented) or a southerly (New Hampshire/Massachusetts-oriented) connection?"

q "Can upgrades to existing routes serve these purposes or are more radical improvements needed?"

q "How will any proposed improvements affect traffic conditions elsewhere, in particular at existing connections to the Turnpike?"

q "How much will managing land use and access along these roads contribute to achieving these purposes?"

q "Finally, would improving economic development have the added benefit of allowing people to live closer to newly created jobs and services? And would this reduce the amount people travel and thus meaningfully reduce congestion?"

The workshop will start with a presentation and then will open up to the public. The event is expected to be televised, Morris said.

Morris said she hopes people will attend the forum and will let the study team know what is most important to them regarding Sanford's transportation issues.

"The more people we can get to participate, the happier we will be and the better the results for the study," she said.