

PURPOSE AND NEED STATEMENT

REVISION DATE: MARCH 31, 2011

BACKGROUND

Central York County is located in one of Maine's fastest growing regions. Between 2000 and 2009, York County's population grew from 186,740 to an estimated 201,877 persons, an increase of 8.1 percent. Job growth also occurred over the same period, but at a slightly slower rate. Almost half of the County's working residents commute to jobs outside the County. Conversely, relatively little in-commuting occurs - about 70% of York County's jobs are filled by County residents. While these commuting patterns are not as extreme as those typical of "bedroom communities," they are indicative of a local housing/jobs imbalance.

Within York County, Sanford serves as the service center for those municipalities north and west of the Maine Turnpike. Two major travel corridors connect Sanford to the Turnpike; The Rte. 111 corridor (which follows US 202/Rte 4A between Sanford and Alfred) extends east and connects at Biddeford, while Rte. 109 extends southeast and connects at Wells. The Rte 111 corridor in particular carries commuting traffic to the Biddeford/Saco area and beyond to Portland and Cumberland County. Some areas of South Sanford are more directly connected to Biddeford and points east by Rte 99, accessing the Turnpike at Exit 25 in Kennebunk. Two additional corridors – US 202/Rte. 11 and US 4 – connect Sanford and central York County with communities to the west and the Spaulding Turnpike in New Hampshire. These corridors accommodate commuting and other travel to the Kittery, Maine, Portsmouth, NH, Dover, NH and Rochester, NH areas. All routes are also used by truck traffic destined for central York County.

Outside of the built up areas of Sanford and Biddeford, the major routes generally consist of two-lane principal arterial highways with speed limits ranging from 40 mph to 55 mph. Roadway geometric conditions (lane widths, alignment, and provision of shoulders) vary from route to route, with Rte 111 generally constructed to a higher standard than the other corridors. Within the study area, twelve intersections and four segments meet the criteria for MaineDOT designation as high crash locations. While congestion today is largely confined to a few specific, busy areas – and in some locations varies considerably by season due to tourist activities – continuing growth and development is expected to lead to more widespread and longer lasting congestion in the future.

Local bus services operate year-round in the Sanford and Biddeford areas, and trolley service is provided in the coastal communities during the summer months. Scheduled transit service also operates daily between Sanford and Wells, and a reservation-based service links Sanford with both Wells and Biddeford. Demand responsive service is provided to most communities in York County at least one day

per week, providing transportation to medical appointments and shopping. Connections to major job centers outside of the county are provided by scheduled bus services operating between Biddeford and the greater Portland area, and Amtrak Downeaster rail service from Saco and Wells north to Portland and South to New Hampshire and Boston.

The prospects for continuing growth in the area, current issues related to highway conditions and safety, lack of transportation choices, and concerns about ready access to larger markets and to the Maine Turnpike resulted in the Maine Legislature directing this study¹ in order to “evaluate existing infrastructure and future capacity needs west of Rte. 1 in order to decrease congestion and improve access.” Evaluation of transit and other alternative modes of transportation as well as land use impacts and controls are also mandated as part of the study.

RATIONALE

Several of the study area corridors have been evaluated during the past decade. MaineDOT’s 2003 report on the Rte. 111 corridor and 2005 report on the Rte. 236 corridor were comprehensive studies of conditions that resulted in corridor-specific recommendations. The Rte. 111/202 report identified several issues of concern, including a high rate of severe collisions, congestion currently in Biddeford, and increased congestion corridor-wide in the future resulting from ongoing development. The Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission completed a similar effort in 2004, issuing an interim report on the Rte. 109 corridor. The Rte. 109 study identified access management, coordinated land use planning, and highway alignment and geometric conditions as key recommendations. Additionally, MaineDOT has awarded a contract for reconstruction and safety improvements to two and a half miles of Rte 109 in Wells between the Maine Turnpike and Meeting House Road.

A key early task in this project is assessing past work on these efforts and identifying and understanding how conditions have changed since their completion. Ultimately, the Central York County Connections Study will evaluate transportation needs for key travel modes (passenger vehicles, trucks, rail, air, bicycle and pedestrian), consider relationships between transportation and land use actions, and recommend coordinated actions to address mobility and access system-wide, rather than on a corridor-specific basis.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Central York County Connections Study is to identify and evaluate feasible transportation and related land use strategies that will enhance regional economic growth, increase regional transportation interconnectivity, improve traffic safety, direct expected travel demand through a strong mix of multimodal strategies and preserve and improve existing infrastructure while maintaining the visual, cultural and historic character of village centers and rural areas.

¹ Resolve, Chapter 95 LD 1720, Item 1, 123rd Maine State Legislature

NEED

- Greater economic opportunities may result from improved travel routes between central York County and the Turnpike.
- An imbalance between jobs and housing results in long commutes and heavily directional use of area highways.
- Highway segments with narrow lanes, lack of shoulders, poor alignment and lack of access management are not well-suited for use by bicycles, pedestrian and truck traffic.
- Lack of transportation choice within the study region results in over-dependence on automobiles and limits mobility (especially for non-drivers).
- Sixteen locations within the study area are identified as high-crash locations. Rte 111, Rte 109 and US 202 all experience higher overall crash rates than the average rate for comparable corridors in Maine.
- As the region continues to grow, congestion will become more widespread and travel delays will increase.

GOALS

- Promote economic development.
- Promote tourism development.
- Improve regional connectivity.
- Improve modal interconnectivity (ability to easily transfer between different travel modes such as motor vehicle, bus, rail, air, bicycle, or pedestrian).
- Improve accessibility between central York County and the Interstate Highway system.
- Promote consistency between study goals and municipal comprehensive plans.
- Address traffic safety issues (including those involving pedestrians and bicyclists).
- Maintain and enhance the visual, cultural, historical and environmental character of the region.
- Improve travel choices, including public transportation (bus, rail), biking and walking as well as Travel Demand Management opportunities (van pool, car pool, park and ride, telecommute).
- Improve access management along major corridors.
- Prioritize transportation improvements that serve and support existing and planned investments (public and private) in the community.
- Encourage cooperation and coordination among municipalities and agencies in developing, operating and maintaining transportation infrastructure and services.
- Coordinate study concepts and recommendations with other planning efforts in the study area.