

Meeting: Steering Committee Meeting

Meeting Date: 05/22/09 - 10 am - noon

**Location: HNTB, 340 County Rd, Westbrook, Maine
(www.hntb.com for directions)**

Meeting Topic: Stakeholder Committee structure, draft Purpose and Need Statement discussion

Meeting Report Maine-NH Connections Study Steering Committee Kick-off Meeting May 22, 2009

Steering Committee Members Attending: Gerry Audibert, Russell Charette, Tom Reinauer, Dave Walker, Jon Carter, Steve Parkinson, Bob Landry, Leigh Levine, Mark Hasselmann, Anna Price, Kirk Mohnney, Nadine Peterson, Linda Wilson. Also attending: Paul Godfrey, Carol Morris, Doug Bates

The meeting began at 9:05 am.

To see Powerpoint Presentation from this meeting, click "Download File" on previous page

Study Progress

Paul Godfrey opened the meeting with an overview of the Study progress and timeline as presented at the public meetings on April 27th. (Timeline can be viewed here.) He stated that work completed to-date is:

- 1st Public Informational Meetings
- Other meetings (PNSY, Host communities, Save our Bridges)
- Traffic data collection (including turning movement counts, ATR's, bike/ped, crash data)
- Origin/Destination Survey of bridge motorists
- Noise Data
- Land Use and Zoning data (maps available in Powerpoint presentation)
- Available Parcels and Aerial Mapping (maps available in Powerpoint presentation)

Paul noted that the Study Team would be meeting with the Coast Guard to get information on bridge lifts, etc.

A committee member asked if the timing of the O&D survey is important. Paul explained that we need the info now to calibrate the Travel Demand Model, but that we would be going back in the summer to conduct additional traffic counts to adjust for seasonal changes.

It was suggested that the maps are of interest to the public and should be on the web site.

Work that will be completed in the near future is:

- Travel Demand Model
- Summary of O&D Survey
- Resource mapping
- Historic and Archeological field work
- Full Study Schedule of all meeting and topics (Public, Steering Committee, Stakeholders, IAC, Section 106, 4(f))
- Navigational
- First Stakeholders Meeting (scheduled for June 25th from 9:30 to noon at the Kittery Trading Post Katahdin Meeting Room)

Committees

Carol Morris provided an overview of the committee structures. The Steering Committee consists of the two ultimate decision-makers, MaineDOT and NH DOT, the Maine and NH State Historical Officers, the Town of Kittery and the City of Portsmouth. Pan Am Railways has been invited. Carol reported that the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard has declined an invitation due to federal regulations that they cannot be involved in community affairs. She emphasized that Shipyard personnel has been very helpful and supportive in terms of providing information, and stated that the Study Team would be in contact with them on an ongoing basis. Other Steering Committee members who are resources on the committee are Maine and NH Federal Highway representatives, the Rockingham County Planning Commission and the Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission.

Paul noted that the Maine Tribes had been on the list but had declined. A committee member from NH SHPO stated that there is a new NH representative of a non-profit Native American Indian organization that has expressed interest, and she will get information to Paul or Carol.

Dave Walker, RCPC, asked what it meant to be a resource as opposed to a member. Carol explained that the DOTs, the communities, the Preservation Officers, the Shipyard and Pan Am are either decisionmakers or are large entities located within the Study Area. The resource members may not be directly affected but will provide a valuable perspective.

Carol then opened a discussion regarding the Stakeholder Committee. She suggested that members be recruited in the following categories: Historic, Business, Conservation/Sustainability, Bicycle, Pedestrian, Ports/Harbors, Community Groups, Municipalities, Emergency Services, Individuals, and Miscellaneous. She then passed out a sheet of suggested names that came from a combination of sources: NH DOT's outreach work on the Memorial Bridge, the two regional planning organizations, Appledore Consulting, and people who had asked to be included. She added that criteria for members is:

- Knowledgeable in their field
- Respected in their field
- Committed/enthusiastic about serving
- Open to listening to data/other opinions

The first point of discussion was whether the Steering Committee should be part of the Stakeholder Committee. The decision by the committee was no, that it was important for at least some of the members to attend the Stakeholder Committee meetings, but that they should not have a seat on the Committee.

The second point of discussion was how to handle the Section 106 Consulting Parties. Carol said that in many studies, these groups meet separately from a Stakeholder group as there are too many of them to be included. Carol's concern was that the number of members in this category (primarily historical) would be disproportionately large and have more than their share of members compared to other equally important categories. The Steering Committee was disinclined to have the Section 106 groups meet separately because it would increase the number of meetings and increase the chance of groups getting different information and coming to different conclusions. As a result, the decision was to include all Section 106 Consulting Parties in the Stakeholder Committee for the time being, and if it becomes problematical, work with Federal Highway, the Section 106 groups and the Stakeholder Committee to find an equitable solution.

It was suggested that an additional category of regional transit operators should be considered for the stakeholders group. The Steering Committee also added some additional names to the list of potential invitees, and approved a final list of those to be invited. Letters will begin to go out via email the week of May 25th. (Subsequent to the meeting, a date for the first Stakeholder Meeting was confirmed for June 25, from 9:30 to noon at the Kittery Trading Post.)

Purpose and Need Statement

Paul then moved the discussion to an overview of the Purpose and Need Statement. It is:

- a critical element of Study
- a starting point for development of alternatives
- must clearly address the transportation and land use issues
- must clearly state the Study's goals and objectives
- a document that will help guide which alternatives remain.

At the two public meetings, Carol had asked the public to comment on needs as they pertain to the river crossings. Responses at both meetings were similar, and Carol summarized them as:

- Bike/Ped access should be non-negotiable
- Bike/Ped access attracts tourists
- Bike lanes must meet safety requirements
- Bike lanes on all bridges

- Low bridges = historic appeal
- Historic nature important to region
- Economic link to downtown Kittery from NH
- Economic support for businesses on Rte. 103
- Must support Portsmouth Naval Shipyard needs
- Must accommodate tourism needs
- East Coast Greenway a key link
- Must meet evacuation needs
- Need less maintenance in future
- Support rail transportation for future
- Should not solve summer traffic on I-95

Paul then asked the Steering Committee what they wanted to add to this list. The Study Team will then use the combined list to generate a draft Purpose and Need statement that will be evaluated, commented on and amended by the Stakeholder Committee (at the June meeting), and at the August and September public meetings. Carol and Paul emphasized that this is a key document and it would take a series of iterations from multiple committees and meetings to come to a statement that was balanced, inclusive and usable to help find the best alternative.

Additional comments on Needs from the Steering Committee included:

- Reduced maintenance cost are very important due to state budgets
- The perception is that local traffic uses the Memorial Bridge, trucks and rail use the Sarah Long, and through-traffic uses the bypass.
- Since the weight limit was put on the Memorial, fewer trucks go through the downtowns and that is a good thing.
- We need better access to the Rte. 1 Bypass (Sarah Long) in new locations such as Market Street.
- There is a local connection with the bridges that is important, providing a pride of place
- Portsmouth is at capacity and businesses are going across the river to Kittery – this is part of the connective tissue of the region
- Promoting ped/bike is very important for residents and tourism
- Access to downtown Portsmouth is key to communities in both directions
- Access for ALL modes is key
- Look at the zoning maps – they are compatible between the two communities – this shows how the communities have developed as a duo
- Stopping and waiting is part of the local experience
- Each bridge has a specific purpose
- Sarah Long was the first bypass to get truck traffic around the downtown – this ties things together - it is good to be able to cross the river casually
- Knitting the communities together is good
- It is required to minimize or avoid adverse affects to a historic bridge.

Paul and Carol thanked the group for their input. Paul stated that the next meeting would be late July or early August and that a full calendar of meetings would be developed within the next few weeks.

The meeting ended at 11:50 am.