

Meeting: Stakeholders Meeting

Meeting Date: 06/25/09 - 9:30 am - noon

Location: Kittery Trading Post Katahdin Room

Purpose and Need Statement Discussion/Review

**Maine-NH Connections Study
Stakeholder Meeting Report
June 25, 2009
9:30 am - noon**

Stakeholder Members Attending: Christy Cardoso, Portsmouth Citywide Neighborhood Committee; Conner Garber, York County Community Action Transportation; Kinley Gregg, Town of York; Ken Herrick, Albacore Park; Gail Drobnyk, Kittery; Beth Wheland, Strawberry Banke; Steve Workman, New Hampshire Seacoast Greenway; David Walker, Rockingham Planning Commission; Josh Pierce, Seacoast Area Bicycle Routes; Jonathan Pfister, Unutil; James Horrigan, Portsmouth Conservation Commission; Deb Richards, Warner House; Phyllis Eldridge, Prescott Park Trustees of Trust Fund; Ed Strong, Kittery Police; Rose Eppard, Kittery; Nancy Carmer, City of Portsmouth Economic Development Committee; Richard Candee, Portsmouth Historical Society; Ken Smith, City of Portsmouth; P. Meyer, N.H. Preservation Alliance; Doug Bates, Greater Portsmouth Chamber; Cathy Goodwin, Greater York Chamber; Chris Holt, Portsmouth Pilots.

Others Attending: Leigh Levine, FHWA-New Hampshire; Mike McDonough, Pan Am Railways; Jon Carter, Town of Kittery; David Balkan, Seacoast Area Bicycle Routes; Julia Dawson, Southern Maine Regional Planning; Peter Bowman, Maine State Senate; Peter Michaud, NH Division of Historical Resources; Linda Wilson, NH Division of Historical Resources; Deborah McDermott, Portsmouth Herald; Mark Hasselmann, Federal Highway-MAINE; Gerry Audibert, MaineDOT; Bob Landry, NHDOT; John Butler, NHDOT; Russ Charette, MaineDOT; Joe Grilli, HNTB; Paul Godfrey, HNTB; Carol Morris, Morris Communications; Georgia Gibbons, Morris Communications.

Paul Godfrey (HNTB) opened the meeting at 9:35.

Welcome

Gerry Audibert (MaineDOT) and Bob Landry (NHDOT) thanked everyone for attending.

Introduction and meeting overview from Paul Godfrey

Study purpose and goals:

- Identify and evaluate long term alternatives for the river crossing.

- Process will be consistent with NEPA, STPA, and National Historic Preservation Act requirements (necessary link between land use and transportation)
- Process is transparent—public gets a chance to review and give feedback on all aspects of study.
- No predetermined outcomes—all options will be considered.

Study areas include:

- Greater outlying area: traffic and travel demand study area.
- Smaller area is evaluation and analysis study area (this is a more focused area)

Schedule:

- May-July. Ongoing data collection and development of draft Purpose and Need (P&N) statement
- August through September. Heavy public involvement period—review and give feedback on initial P&N statement
- Finalize P&N in September and begin fatal flaw analysis of the alternatives developed by the public and the Committees
- September through December, use fatal flaw analysis to define list of feasible alternatives
- At the beginning of 2010 the study team will begin the detailed evaluation of feasible alternatives
- In April-June 2010 the 5th and 6th public meetings will take place, showing results of Alternatives Analysis and presentation of the Initial Preferred Alternative. Evaluate final stage feedback and complete final report of Preferred Alternative.
- Throughout this period there will be a series of interwoven public and stakeholder meetings.

Cameron Wake: Can you describe the fatal flaw analysis?

Paul: This allows us the opportunity to push away alternatives that don't come close to meeting Purpose and Need. It narrows down the options to the ones that it makes sense to investigate more closely.

Committee Overview (Carol Morris)

- Steering Committee is made up of MaineDOT, NHDOT, Maine and NH State Historic Preservation Officers, Town of Kittery, City of Portsmouth, Pan Am Railway. As resources, Maine and NH FHWA, Maine and NH Regional Planning Commissions. Carol said that the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard (PNS) has declined participation given federal regulations on local community involvement.
- The Steering Committee oversees the study team, technical analysis, draws conclusions.

Senator Peter Bowman: You should assume the Shipyard's presence in the process even though they're absent, in other words, don't mess with them.

- Stakeholder Committee is made up of the following categories: historic,

business, environmental, bike/ped, utilities, ports/harbors, municipalities, emergency services, Section 106 Consulting Parties, communities, individuals, miscellaneous.

- This committee interprets data, predicts, evaluates comments, develop next steps. This committee is a focused version of the public and we will ask you to help us interpret and prioritize public comments. This is an iterative, tiered process where we will circulate comments and conclusions throughout the multiple committees and groups.

Cathy Goodwin: Can we get a list of involved parties and contact info?

Carol: Yes, with the first meeting report.

Carol outlined the meeting schedule for the next three months:

- Steering Committee: August 6
- Public Meeting: August 20
- Stakeholder Committee Meeting: September 11
- Steering Committee Meeting: September 17
- Public Meeting: September 24

Question: What's the new due date for stimulus proposals?

Bob Landry: September 15.

Purpose and Need Statement (Paul Godfrey)

- This is a critical element of the study
- It is a starting point for development of alternatives (solutions)
- It clearly addresses transportation and land use issues
- It clearly states the goals and objectives of the study
- Helps guide which alternatives (solutions) will remain on the table

Carol then summarized the previous input from the public meetings and the Steering Committee that led to the first draft P&N Statement.

NEEDS FROM PUBLIC MEETINGS

- Bike/ped non-negotiable
- Bike/ped attracts tourists
- Bike lanes that meet safety requirements
- Bike lanes on all bridges
- Historic nature important—low bridges have historic appeal
- Economic link to downtown Kittery from Portsmouth
- Economic support for businesses on Rte 103

Kinley Gregg: I didn't understand the format of this first draft—they don't match what you have up there and some of these things aren't needs.

Carol: I should clarify. These items we are showing you now are what we HEARD

at meetings, not necessarily “needs” that must be met by study. A better heading would have been, “What we heard at the public meetings.”

NEEDS FROM STEERING COMMITTEE

- Local connection with bridges provides pride of place
- Portsmouth at capacity; businesses spilling into Kittery
- Reduced maintenance costs important to state budgets
- Fewer trucks through downtown is good
- Needs better access to Sarah Long in new locations such as Market Street
- Promoting bike/ped important for residents and tourism
- Access for ALL modes is key
- Zoning shows compatibility
- Good to be able to cross the river casually
- Knitting communities together is good
- It is required to minimize or avoid adverse effects to a historic bridge

Purpose and Need Discussion

- A. Project purpose: This is a more global-type statement—should be broad reaching.
- B. Project needs: What are the problems/issues that should be addressed as a result of the study.
- C. Goals and objectives: These describe important goals, but we may not be able to achieve all.
- D. Background: Provides context for the study

Carol: If there’s something we don’t cover today on these Statements, you can always contact me later. Ongoing feedback is encouraged.

Jim Horrigan: Can you distinguish between needs and goals? Some of the goals look like they should be needs.

Paul: We’re really trying to get to the core of critical things. Carol Morris’ Needs have a higher priority and will be weighted more heavily when we are evaluating alternatives (solutions).

Cathy: Are we constrained by items that must stay in there? i.e. fiscal issues?

Carol: I think the key word is SUSTAINABLE. We must find a solution that is possible for the long term.

Comment from several people: the word “alternative” is problematic. The word should be “solution.”

Paul: Alternative is just the word that is used in these studies to mean “possibility.”

Richard Candee: Seems to me that it should be “alternatives” plural, not just one alternative.

Cameron: Sustainability is the big picture here—a solution can't be financially sustainable and not culturally/environmentally sustainable as well.

Bob: Are we set on this initial draft P&N? No. That's why we're here.

Steve Workman: I'm still confused by the word alternative.

Carol: Substitute the word "solution" for "alternative." We will use solution when we can, but alternative is the word that is typically used.

Carol then asked the group to break out into two groups to make it easier to hear from everyone, asking people to comment on, "what do you like about these statements, what don't you like, what is missing."

GROUP BREAKOUT/P&N REVISIONS?

Group 1—Led by Paul Godfrey

Paul stated that he would keep notes on an "Idea forest." He doesn't want to lose any thought or idea, good or bad.

PURPOSE—this is what we need to accomplish by this effort.
(Paul reads through first set of bullets on statement.)

Doug Bates: Make alternative plural; put asterisk next to sustainable to make sure it covers all aspects of the word.

Cameron: The sentence should read, "Identify sustainable alternatives." If we're thinking about sustainability in the big picture the word should be more up front. It encompasses all the principles.

Gail Drobnyk: Is the purpose to identify alternatives or a solution.

A: Paul: The solution will end up being one of the alternatives.

Christy Cardoso: I agree we need to define sustainable. It is also important for alternatives to be plural, because the singular word makes it sound like you're going to take something away.

Ken Smith: Maybe we should take sustainable out, since it has a singularly "green" connotation these days. Instead of trying to define this one word, we should just incorporate the definition into the language.

Cameron: The word should remain because it's the big concept.

Paul: any objection to "prudent," "cost-effective" or "fiscally responsible?"

Cameron: Cost-effective and fiscally responsible are probably the same.

Paul: Which word is more applicable?

Christy: Fiscally responsible.

Paul: Why?

Christy: It has longer-term connotations. Also, we should include socially responsible.

Kinley: We could incorporate the word "stewardship" as a restatement of socially responsible.

Cameron: How about something like "preserve and enhance our cultural and natural resources."
(General agreement.)

Christy: Economic responsibility is an important factor.

Deb Richards: Lifestyle and quality of life aspects very important.

Ed Strong: We're talking about a rusty old bridge here.

Cameron: Comment on last statement. The shipyard has national security connotations so I think the statement should say "communities and the nation." "Using all modes" would be a good addition to second bullet; and "across and along" helps to expand the usage of the river.

Dave Walker: To Cameron's point, "safe and secure" transportation is a phrase we use sometimes to address issues of national security. Might be better language.

(There was discussion of whether the nuclear shipyard fits into the definition of sustainability we're trying to emphasize.)

Linda Wilson: The shipyard is the shipyard not the nuke-yard. It's critical to the area.

Ed: They don't build boats there; they just repair and maintain them.

Connie: "Region" should be added into last bullet because this affects more than just the two communities.

Kinley: Should we define what deficiencies are?

Paul: How about "functional and structural" deficiencies?

Christy: Keeping it undefined allows room for more deficiencies—so that things we may not see now can still be addressed later.

Ed: Lift bridges themselves are dysfunctional.

Connie: Maybe it's important to spend some time identifying the deficiencies.

Gerry Audibert: We do have the opportunity to go back to the P&N statement as the study goes on, so if something comes up later it will not be left out.

NEEDS. (Paul reads bullets)

Deb Richards: Isn't Memorial bridge be a safety concern, if it gets stuck? We shouldn't focus on just the Sarah Long.

Mike McDonough: We have a lot of bullets; it might be worthwhile to combine and simplify.

Paul: We'll certainly do that as we go on; I like to start with a longer list just to make sure nothing is excluded.

Doug: "Day" should be "year" in 4th bullet. And the cost estimate should say per bridge/per year.

Gail: What's the breakdown between operational and maintenance costs?

Gerry: We're looking at it right now.

Paul: that's exactly the kind of information we'll be looking at closely when identifying alternatives.

Gerry: We're looking at 100-year life cycle costs for the bridges.

Paul: If things like "maintain and improve" aren't what you want to accomplish, now's the time to bring it up.

Cameron: I suggest losing the word "maintain."

Gail: I agree.

Doug: I think we should leave both open.

Cameron: It's unacceptable to maintain bike access—it must be IMPROVED.

Christy: "Maintain" has a second meaning of keeping bike access on the bridge, which we need.

Julia Dawson: Change the order of words to say, "improve and maintain" to put emphasis on improvement. (Group agrees.)

Paul: Evaluation criteria will be developed for these words too, so we make sure we're meeting the definitions.

Linda: Change order of "minimize or avoid" to "avoid or minimize" in 8th bullet.

Christy: I want to make sure we're cognizant of impacts to neighborhoods as much as we are to historic factors. Cutting a street in half has a huge impact.

Connie: "Residential neighborhoods" is probably a good phrase.

Ken: Should we be adding a line in here about disaster/evacuation—I know it's in the goals section but it should probably be in the Need category too.

Gail: Definitely. And not just evacuation—but multiple ways to cross the river is integral even just for traffic or accidents or any sort of shutdown.

Ed: it's unbelievable how many plans we have—and both bridges are part of those plans.

Ken: And for that safety implication it should be in the NEED category.

Connie: I think we're all saying the same thing—that safe and secure mobility is crucial. Shouldn't just be a focus on "evacuation," but an overall enhancement of movement and flow.

Ken: Add in "public safety" to make sure the Chief's needs and plans are maintained.

Connie: What's the definition of the word "system" in the second to last bullet?

Gerry: Transportation system.

Cameron: Given that we're looking at a 100-year lifecycle, greenhouse gas emissions needs to be a factor—the reduction of these gasses is important. No idling! This should be a bullet in the needs statement.

Ed: Who's going to enforce that? Are we going to have idling police now?

Gerry: Maine does have greenhouse gas emissions goals, so it's an excellent comment.

Christy: I agree. But I do think it belongs in the goals more than the needs. As Gerry said, it does exist as a general transportation guideline—I don't want to put bigger goals into the mix than just the issue of these three bridges.

Mark Hasselmann: We do have in our long-range planning to address air quality.

Paul: I'm sensing that most people are seeing this as a Need, not a goal, so I'll leave it here for now.

GOALS (Paul reads bullets.)

Doug: There's redundancy here.

Connie: I'd say historical integrity is stronger than historic significance.

Linda: It should say significance AND integrity, since those are two guidelines for acceptance onto the national register.

Paul: So we'll eliminate this bullet from goals and keep it in needs.

Doug: Maybe some sort of phrase explaining context-sensitive solutions.

Gerry: CSS basically acknowledges the need for people interaction, and how the transportation system fits with the people scale.

Paul: Yes—CSS means making sure the system fits with the area.

Connie: A clear definition of that would be helpful, for those of us who aren't experts and aren't familiar with the term.

Julia: I'm surprised there aren't more comments about interstate commerce, trade between the two states and beyond.

Deb Richards: This all implies commerce to me.

Christy: I agree, I think it's assumed.

Gail: Wouldn't hurt to include something about local businesses.

Ken: Let's put it in the idea forest and figure out a way to address it.

Paul: OK—we'll mention commerce and access to commerce.

(General comments: change "highway" to "roadway." Incorporate "trails." Stipulate "waterway" next to "navigational.")

Doug: Question about process: So we're taking room one and room two, combine all the info—what's then the next step?

Paul: Carol and I will give you a brief synopsis today, then we'll be giving you two P&N statements, one that shows the suggested changes to each and one that is a revised version.

Kinley: A comment on study background. Seems to me a little bit of a whitewash given that NH wants to move forward and Maine doesn't—I'd like to see something in here about Maine foot-dragging.

Ken: We should add an economic acknowledgement to study background.

Mike: And make sure whatever alternatives we look at incorporate land use factors.

Group 2 - Led by Carol Morris

This group had a general discussion regarding their concerns with the term "alternative," and Carol agreed to use the word "solution" in its place for the time being.

There was general discussion regarding the Purpose Statement. Jim Horrigan wondered if the second bullet should include the watershed that encompasses Kittery and Portsmouth. After discussion, it was decided that that was too broad.

It was agreed that the "Seacoast Region" is the best descriptor of the area.

Peter Bowman suggested an entirely new rewrite of the Purpose Statement. Carol read it to the group and they liked it with a few adjustments. They agreed to add short term and long term as a modifier for the word "strategies." There was also discussion that the paragraph did not allow for navigation, and the suggestion was made and agreed to that as well as "across" the river the statement should include "upon" the river.

It was questioned as to whether the word sustainable needed to be defined, and the group agreed that it did – but Steve Workman indicated that that discussion would be handled effectively by Cameron Wake in Group 1 and suggested the group wait and see what they came up with.

The next discussion centered on the Needs section of the P&N Statement. Steve Workman had developed a new Needs Statement and Carol read it to the group. They agreed it should replace the existing paragraph in front of the needs bullets, with a few changes. They wanted to add "rail" to the multi-modal list. There was concern that the statement made some assumptions that have not yet been proven regarding the bridges' functional lifespan and capacity to meet functional demands. Both those sections were stricken. They also objected to the statement that the "continued operation of the bridges requires ever-increasing annual maintenance costs," agreeing to change it to "current operation of the bridges requires increasing annual maintenance costs." The group also agreed that the statement should end by requiring the bullets to be considered: the word "shall" was changed to "must."

The bullets in the need section were generally accepted; however the group agreed that reducing traffic and river crossing delays was not a high priority and should be moved into the Goals section.

The group deleted the word "necessary" before "operational and maintenance cost."

The group stated that maintaining the bike/ped access was not sufficient because the current access does not allow bicyclists to actually ride across the bridge due to the deck surface. It was agreed to delete maintain and let "improve" stand along.

There was a considerable amount of discussion regarding the bullet about "minimizing or avoiding detrimental impacts to the historic significance of the Kittery-Portsmouth area." Some felt that to "avoid" only would be stronger.

Some also felt that the bullet should refer specifically to the bridge. Others pointed out that this would be defining the solution. Joe Grilli pointed out that it was the historic significance of the area that was the strongest, most non-negotiable need. In the end, it was agreed to leave the bullet as is.

Jim Horrigan suggested that along with conserving the aesthetic setting of the River, the environmental quality should also be conserved and added to the bullet. Carol suggested it should be a separate bullet because it is two different measures, and the group agreed.

There was discussion of the word "conserve" vs. "preserve." Carol stated that to preserve something could be an unrealistic expectation. Jim Horrigan described how they define the word at the Conservation Commission. Carol asked if he would send her the definition.

The group discussed the bullet that indicates the need to "minimize long-term transportation costs for the local and regional system." They did not want to include it. There was concern that this would direct the DOTs to choose the least expensive option. Carol asked, as taxpayers, weren't they interested in a cost-effective solution? The group did not agree, but indicated that they wanted to add the word "costs" to the bullet that directs the study to "address current multi-modal needs and opportunities" in order to provide a more balanced directive. Carol and Joe agreed to evaluate this solution, noting that they both had some concerns.

Finally, there was discussion of prioritizing the Need bullets, but it was agreed that they are all important and "must" be considered.

(End of Breakout Sessions)

OVERVIEW OF BREAKOUT GROUPS

(Paul and Carol gave a brief overview of their groups' comments as indicated above.)

Carol: We'll want to go through another round of feedback from you via email before we bring this to the public meeting in August. There's one caveat: certain legal parameters might affect how things are said or presented in final draft. We'll make those things clear to you so there's no confusion.

Paul: If there needs to be revisions for whatever reason, we'll let you know.

Study Overview – Paul Godfrey

Paul: These items have been completed to date:

1. 1st public meeting, Steering Committee and other meetings
2. First round of data collection complete
3. Origin/destination survey
4. Noise data
5. Land use and zoning data

6. Available parcels and aerial mapping

We've pieced together aerial maps. We have the zoning for the two communities—the zoning between the cities is very compatible, which doesn't always occur and here presents a great opportunity.

Carol: All this data will be on the website (www.maineNHconnections.org) in the next couple of weeks.

Paul: Activity centers. We've looked at identifying centers of activity—showing and mapping these centers will be important when we start breaking down the feasibility of alternatives.

Paul: Tasks to be completed in near future

1. Travel demand model
2. Summary of Origin and Destination survey
3. Resource mapping
4. Historic and Archeological field work
5. Summer traffic counts
6. Bike/ped counts; Analysis of O&D survey

Chris Holt: What about navigational traffic?

Paul: Thank you, I missed that point. We've met with the pilots and Coast Guard and have been compiling lift data, etc.

Doug: Keep in mind the weeks of the Tall Ships festival.

Gail: That's a good point—anytime a big event such as the Tall Ships is taking place, there's an influx of overflow parking in Kittery because the parking situation is so bad in Portsmouth. This means significant event-related pedestrian traffic. It might be a good thing to measure.

Richard Candee: Will we have access to the bridge inspection data that NH is collecting?

Paul: Yes, not yet, but we will.

Rose: Have we factored in summer construction?

Paul: Yes.

Wrap up - Carol Morris

Carol: I will send you a meeting report next week and ask for your comments within a three-day turnaround in order to keep this process timely. Comments will then be incorporated prior to posting the report on the web site.

Everyone here has the ability to ask questions via the web site and have the answers posted. Please utilize the site, you can ask questions, make comments,

etc.. It's meant to be interactive.

Our next meeting will be September 11. And if you have any questions in the interim, please do not hesitate to call me at 207-329-6502.

Peter Bowman: You are doing a good job of guiding us through this process—keep the flow going.

Rose: The budget for bridges will be on website?

Carol: The maintenance costs? Yes, we will post that.

The meeting ended at 12 noon.