

**Meeting: Stakeholder Meeting**

**Meeting Date: 09/11/09 - 9-noon**

**Location: Portsmouth City Council Chambers**

- Purpose and Need Statement – Final ?
- Define Fatal Flaw analysis
- Identify Full Range of Alternatives

**Maine-NH Connections Study**

**Stakeholder Meeting Report**

**Portsmouth City Council Chambers**

**September 11, 2009**

**9:00 am - noon**

*Stakeholder Members Attending:* Christy Cardoso, Portsmouth Citywide Neighborhood Committee; Kinley Gregg, Town of York; Ken Herrick, Albacore Park; Gail Drobnyk, Kittery; Beth Wheland, Strawberry Banke; Josh Pierce, Seacoast Area Bicycle Routes; Steve Workman, New Hampshire Seacoast Greenway; James Horrigan, Portsmouth Conservation Commission; Deb Richards, Warner House; Phyllis Eldridge, Prescott Park Trustees of Trust Fund; Rose Eppard, Kittery; Nancy Carmer, City of Portsmouth Economic Development Committee; Doug Bates, Greater Portsmouth Chamber; Ben Porter, Save our Bridges; Roberta Place, Eliot; Roger Maloof, IFPTE Local 4 – PNS; Peter Somssich, Portsmouth Democrats.

*Others Attending:* Leigh Levine, FHWA-New Hampshire; Jamie Sikora, FHWA-New Hampshire; Tom Reinauer, Southern Maine Regional Planning; Scott Bogle, Rockingham Planning Commission; David Walker, Rockingham Planning Commission; Bill Hicky, Hanscom's Truck; Peter Michaud, NH Division of Historical Resources; Linda Wilson, NH Division of Historical Resources; Gerry Audibert, MaineDOT; Bob Landry, NHDOT;

Joe Grilli, HNTB; Paul Godfrey, HNTB; Carol Morris, Morris Communications

*Carol Morris, Morris Communications, delayed opening the meeting until 9:15 due to a 9/11 service outside.*

### **Introduction and meeting overview from Carol Morris**

Carol gave an overview of the agenda, noting that the focus will be on the Study Data, Fatal Flaw Analysis and brainstorming the proposed alternatives (solutions).

She said that while it is not on the agenda, she thought the committee and observers would be interested in an update on the federal stimulus application. She asked Gerry Audibert and Bob Landry to comment.

- Bob Landry: The stimulus application is still being prepared by NHDOT with assistance from MaineDOT. Application will be posted on the website when completed (as soon after September 15, 2009 as possible.)
- Rose Eppard: There is concern with MaineDOT not having put a share of funding in place and that citizens were led to believe at a (non-study) meeting in Augusta that MaineDOT was more involved in the application process.
- Audience: A media article suggested that Maine was going to get money to put up for the project, but they have not.
- Gerry Audibert: MaineDOT and NHDOT are jointly funding this study and Maine is in agreement with NH and actively working with NH on the stimulus application.
- Audience: What will Maine do after the stimulus application is completed?
- Gerry: We will continue with the study process. If the stimulus application is successful, then the study will be modified to incorporate a Memorial Bridge rehabilitation. If not, we will continue with the current study charge.
- Carol: To clarify, MaineDOT has already committed funding for next two years worth of projects (MaineDOT 2010-2011 work plan). There are no extra funds available. To support whatever solution is identified at conclusion of this study, Maine will have to ask for a bond or find funds in some other way.
- Ben Porter: I was at the Augusta meeting. A favorable stimulus application is one where both states put money in.

- *(There was general discussion among attendees reconstructing events: MaineDOT was initially of the understanding that the stimulus grant would fund everything, and that no state money was needed. Later, New Hampshire identified that having both states contribute would make the application stronger. This was an issue for Maine as all money has been allocated for the current work plan. It was also at this point that it was learned that there a \$100 million cap on the stimulus grants could be a favorable strategy.)*
- Gerry: Whatever the outcome of the study is, it will likely require a phasing-in of the bridge actions anyway. The dilemma is whether bridges can be funded at the same time.
- Jamie Sikora: It is unfair to ask for commitment at this point without knowing the outcome of the study and possible alternatives.
- Kinley Gregg: I read in the *Portsmouth Herald* that Maine's priority is not the Memorial Bridge and that is a concern to me and others from Maine.
- Gerry: Maine has many priorities. We have stated all along that Memorial is not the top priority, but is a priority.
- Ben: What is Maine's top priority?
- Gerry: I am not sure but can inquire and find out.
- POST-MEETING NOTE: Maine's priority bridge "watch list" can be found at <http://www.maine.gov/mdot/bridgeinfo/index.php>. These bridges have been identified as the top priority. Because bridge conditions can change quickly, Maine does not prioritize within this list but makes the decision on which bridges to repair as funding becomes available.
- Roger Maloof: Approximately one-half of all people working in the Shipyard are from Maine, so the dollars from income taxes should be available to fund bridge needs.
- Gerry: Highway and bridges funds for the state of Maine come through the gas tax, not income tax.
- Jim Horrigan: At one point, the NH stimulus application included Port investment – is this still true?
- Bob Landry: The Port investment is still in the stimulus application because Secretary LaHood said TIGER grants would be more likely to succeed with multiple pieces. He also noted that benefit/cost was improved with the Ports in the application. There are positive and negatives to both approaches.
- Jim: How much time is left before the Memorial Bridge becomes critical?
- Bob: Originally, about a year ago, it was a range of 2 to 5 years. We still believe this to be accurate.

- Doug Bates: Can you run through TIGER schedule one more time?
- Bob: By Tuesday, September 15<sup>th</sup> the application must be submitted to Secretary LaHood. Letters of support have been sent by state senators. A cover letter of support from MaineDOT and NHDOT will also be sent. This package of information will be under ARRA on the NHDOT website. NH and Maine have been told by USDOT that they officially have until February 17, 2010 to reach decision, but it is likely that decision will be in January of 2010.
- Doug: Who will make the decision?
- Bob: Jacob Faulk is a key person. Engineers from USDOT will review and then the policy folks next.
- Cristy Cardoso: Memorial Bridge deficiencies are connected to the Port, and the improvements should be tied together. (She also noted that time may not allow this.)
- Rose: Is the SHPO historical report included in the application?
- Bob: Yes, but the MOA (Memorandum of Agreement) is separate. The MOA is a culmination of the report.
- Rose: The historic preservation report should be included as an appendix.
- Bob: The application does include a note that bridge is one of the eleven most endangered bridges in the country.
- Ben: I am pleased to hear that the Governor from NH will submit a letter of support. Will Maine's governor also submit a letter?
- Gerry: Yes. I anticipate that Commissioner Cole will send a letter and that a letter has also been prepared for the Governor and Congressional delegation.
- Ben: Is the plan to have matching endorsements?
- Gerry: Yes. Part A of the application is the bridges and that it is a bi-state application. Part B of the application is for the Port and that is supported by NH only. These are separate but connected.
- Roger: Will Maine's cover letter prioritize stimulus applications?
- Gerry: No. The congressional delegation will prioritize.
- Gail: It will be important for Maine residents to contact their Senators and Representatives.

**Baseline Date: Paul Godfrey**

Paul presented an overview of baseline conditions, saying that we are looking to identify what story is unfolding - what might we be learning that was unexpected?

*The Categories of data are Cultural/Historic/Natural Resource/Land Use/Transportation.*

- Cultural and historic data essentially looks at what is on the ground, what we could run into if a new structure were built. For example, slightly upstream from the Sarah Long, there is likely to be old bridge footings from an earlier bridge. No digging has taken place yet. We have identified six national historic landmarks within the study area.
- We also pinpoint the location of all community facilities – government, state, non-profit, etc.
- Natural Resources: We identify hydraulic resources (the river is the 3<sup>rd</sup> fastest navigable river in the US) and map hydric (wet) soil locations.
- We identify wildlife and fisheries habitat. We know there are no endangered species – but there is a peregrine falcon on the high-level bridge, which is endangered in NH but not in Maine.
- Land use – Paul showed a map of current land use in order to illustrate what has evolved within the two primary areas. A large part of Kittery is residential, Portsmouth is more commercial. Complementing these are the zoning maps, showing what things are allowed in certain areas. The two towns are compatible in terms of zoning, which does not always happen between two contiguous towns, even when they are in the same state.
- Activity centers: These maps show what the communities' vision for growth is – where they are looking to concentrate residential and commercial growth. We need to know this because we want to make sure we would not be upsetting a predetermined plan. Red is where commercial is being planned; blue is where denser residential is being planned.
- Transportation: The Memorial Bridge carries 12,000 vehicles per day; the Sarah Long carries 13,000 per day, while the high-level bridge carries 85-90,000 per day.
- An important question is: how full are they? How close are they to capacity? The Memorial's capacity is estimated to be 850 vehicles per hour; the Sarah Long's is estimated to be 1,000 vehicles per hour. Both bridges are at 70-75% capacity.
- Other mode data: For rail we have one freight rail line, and no passenger rail. One bus stop downtown and Coast, which offers demand-response type service. There is no cross town (over bridge) public transportation.
- Lift Data: Paul reported that the Sarah Long opened 3,200 times in 2008, with 17% of those lifts for maintenance. Sixty-eight percent of the lifts only required the bridge to open 50' or less – so, we ask,

what if the bridge was a little higher? How might that improve traffic flow and capacity? The Memorial Bridge opened 4,000 times in 2008. Seventy percent were 50' or less. The same questions need to be asked.

- There was some discussion as to whether this data included “automatic” lifts, i.e., the bridge opens every half hour June-October – are all these really necessary? It was noted by audience members and Paul that there is always a boat that needs to go through in summer. Doug Bates commented that this does not capture the economic impact of the different lifts.
- Origin/Destination Survey: The data showed that: the majority of people who use both bridges are from Maine (54%).
- Trip purpose: The highest percentage of trips on all bridges was home to work or work to home. But, the Long Bridge carries a higher percentage of commuters, and the Memorial carries more shopping-type trips.
- Trip Length: The average trip length was 5.9 miles for the Memorial Bridge vs. 16.7 miles for the Sarah Long.
- Bike/pedestrian Survey: In terms of bike volumes vs. pedestrian volumes, it is 2-1 pedestrian vs. bike. There is a high level of bike/ped commuters during the week and a high level of recreational use on the weekends.
- Overall, Paul noted that what we learned is that there is a lot of resources out there - if we contemplate a new something, someplace, we will run into a lot of things that would be impacted.
- Based on the O&D data, we also evaluated: what if the bridges were not there. We find it is likely that all traffic would not shift to another bridge. Some trips might not be taken – folks would just choose not to go or find services on their side of the river.

*(NOTE: More detailed information is available in the PowerPoint Show for this meeting and in the Study Data section of this web site.)*

### **Fatal Flaw Analysis Process: Paul Godfrey**

- Paul explained the need to screen AND DOCUMENT all possible alternatives – so if someone comes back and says – why didn’t you look at a hovercraft, for example – we can say yes, we did, and it did not pass criteria. That is the purpose of this analysis.
- He said we will evaluate pros and cons of each bridge alternative individually, and we will look at the benefits and best value for both, focusing on the Memorial and the Sarah Long. The I-95 high-level bridge is assumed to continue as it is.

- Paul presented a draft matrix to be used as part of the Fatal Flaw analysis. He noted that the team is not looking to evaluate aesthetics or economic impact at the fatal flaw level, but will be doing so during next phase.
- Matrix categories currently include:
  - Regional Mobility and Accessibility
  - Structural Deficiencies
  - Lift Span Reliability
  - Bridge Design Features as they relate to Vehicular Traffic Flow and Safety
  - Bridge Design Features as they relate to Marine Traffic Flow and Safety
  - Bridge Design Features as they relate to other modes (bike, ped, rail)
  - Vehicular and Emergency Access to Portsmouth, Kittery downtowns and the PNS
  - Rail Access to Portsmouth, Kittery, and the PNS
  - Life Cycle Costs
  - Property and Neighborhood Impacts
  - Natural Resource Impacts
  - Physical Resource Impacts
  - Historic Resource Impacts
  - Permittabl
  - Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT), Vehicle Hours Traveled (VHT), and Emissions
- Ben: In terms of regional mobility and accessibility, the term regional conveys a large area - is there a local equivalent you are measuring?
- Paul: We are measuring within the study area.

*(General agreement that this is an appropriate area to measure.)*

*NOTE: Matrix will be change to say study area instead of regional.*

- Jim Horrigan: What is financial feasibility?
- Paul: That is life cycle costs: Construction, operation, ROW purchase, ultimately any cost of mitigation, though we will not be looking at that in the fatal flaw analysis.
- Jim: What does feasible mean? I could go into this because I could say that money could be no object to me.

Paul: Let's say we had six alternatives, with one at \$100 million, one at 80, one at 20, one at 600, one at 70. The \$600 million would be considered to be not feasible compared to other alternatives. (NOTE: NOTE: Often when evaluating an alternative's costs, the word "prudent" is used as that more clearly describes the benefit/cost analysis used to determine the reasonableness of the costs and/or if they are of an extraordinary magnitude.

- Jamie Sikora: FHWA requires this for an economic measure.
- Rose: Can you give us clarification on the term structural deficiencies?
- Paul: We would measure this based on the lifespan of the bridge. We are looking at a minimum of 50 years.
- Gerry: We are looking at a 100-year lifecycle on cost measures only, on bridge and infrastructure improvements – we can't project traffic volumes out that far.
- Rose: A 50-year bridge would be less expensive, so it would rate higher.
- Paul: We are measuring over the 100 year term, so if an alternative were projected to last for only 50 years, we would then take into financial account that we would have to do something else for the next 50 years to provide the same capacity.
- Linda Wilson: We are in a regulatory environment. Federal statutes and case law define feasible and prudent. This is not our interpretation but what federal law and case law has determined. It must be taken into consideration. What are the screening criteria? The handout, screen and matrix are all different. There has to be parity.
- Paul: What you are seeing in the memo and on the screen is a general overview. The matrix is the actual tool we will be using.
- Roger: Should we have another measurement regarding pedestrians, bikes and cars? It is trucks that fatigue the bridge the most



- Paul: Even though we may assume a bridge is only for cars, we will look at the effect of trucks as well.
- Scott Bogle: We can look at life cycle costs, but not at capacity costs. It is very difficult to do that.
- Paul: If we find in the model that in 2035 there are a lot of poor Levels of Service, we would assume there will need to be some kind of fix – and we will put that into life cycle costs.
- Doug Bates: It is very important to make it clear that we are using present value for the dollars we show.
- Paul: Good point, we will make sure that is noted.
- Christy: I have a study area question. How does I-95 fit into the picture in regards to roadway capacity? Usage shows all the bridges have some connection to I-95, and there are problems with the way the connections function. Plus it is a major link to Maine.
- Paul: We will forecast traffic to 2035 and if the high level bridge is at capacity, we will be mindful of that. We want that bridge to be there for a long, long time.
- Christy: Is data from the I-95 high-level bridge part of the picture?
- Paul: Yes.
- Christy: What does rehabbing I-95 mean?
- Bob Landry: It is a truss bridge, which can't be widened easily, and it would cost \$550 million to replace, which is not feasible. So we include rehab because we intend that bridge to be there for a long time.
- Gerry: The traffic model will be useful to determine how any change would affect the high-level bridge.
- Christy: If an alternative has a bad effect, we will flush that out?
- Paul: Yes. By definition if a change pushed that bridge over capacity, it would be a fatal flaw.
- Peter Somssich: How about calling this category, "Satisfying structural needs for at least 50 years?"

*(General agreement to make the change.)*

- Jim: Some of these measures are qualitative, but for financial feasibility, it is more of an absolute. Is high cost a fatal flaw?
- Paul: If you look at the Purpose and Need Statement we all spent time on, you will see that we are looking for a balance. We will not be weighting categories in the fatal flaw phase of this study.

*(It was then noted that it is easy to overanalyze a process and that it would make sense to go through the exercise of rating a hypothetical alternative. The group chose having no bridges except the high-level bridge. This exercise seemed to satisfy the committee that the process was workable and would provide satisfactory results.)*

### **Purpose and Need: Carol Morris**

- Carol noted that there was just a half-hour left in the meeting and asked the group if they wanted to spend any time on the Purpose and Need Statement, slightly revised from the August 20 Public Meeting, which they had received prior to the meeting.

*(The group indicated that they accepted the draft as final, with the caveat that if something substantially changed during the study they would want to revisit it.)*

- Carol indicated she would post this final version on the study website.

### **Brainstorming Alternatives: Paul Godfrey**

- Paul showed the list of alternatives that was included in the study scope of work, emphasizing that the list had been generated only to estimate the level of work that would be needed.
- Carol said that today's session was for the purpose of adding to this list and that everyone should consider it a brainstorming session.
- It was asked what replacement meant – is this the same alignment or a different one?
- Paul said it could be either immediately adjacent or in the same location.

*The list generated by the committee is below:*

#### Memorial Bridge Alternatives

- Ped/bike/cars only (no trucks)
- Rehab: "as is" but historic
- Rehab with bike lane
- Replacement with lift bridge – not historic
- Replacement with increased clearance
- Replacement with new alignment

- Replacement with draw bridge
- Replacement with fixed span
- Replacement with mid-level movable

#### Sarah Long Bridge Alternatives

- Rehab: "as is" but historic
- Rehab with bike lane
- Replacement with lift bridge – not historic
- Replacement with increased clearance
- Replacement with new alignment
- Replacement with draw bridge
- Replacement with fixed span
- Replacement with bascule
- Replacement with mid-level movable
- Replacement with realignment to help navigation – wider opening
- Replacement with realignment to help navigation – better angle (less skew)
- Replace or Rehab with rail only

#### Other Alternatives

- Vehicle Tunnel(s)
- Rail Tunnel
- No bridges at all
- Ferry (s)
- Mono rail
- Single high level bridge
- Add trolley to Memorial Bridge
- Light passenger rail
- Paul said that the Study Team would do some work on this list to organize it and would bring it to the September 24 Public Meeting and to the Steering Committee for additional ideas.

#### **Closing – Carol Morris**

- Carol said that there would be another meeting of the Stakeholder Committee either in late October more likely in November to provide feedback on the to-date results of the fatal flaw analysis.

*The meeting was adjourned at noon.*