



SUMMARY OF MEETING ISSUES AND CONCERNS

**Project: I-95 Branford to Rhode Island Feasibility Study
Connecticut Department of Transportation**

Location of Meeting: Waterford Town Hall

Date of Meeting: October 28, 2003

Subject of Meeting: Study Advisory Committee (AC) Meeting No. 4

In Attendance:

Robert Faulker – Clough, Harbour & Associates LLP (CHA)
Rod Bascom –CHA
Jeff Parker – CHA
Jim Andrini – Connecticut Department of Transportation (ConnDOT)
Carmine Trotta – ConnDOT
David Head – ConnDOT
Keith A. Hall – ConnDOT
Jill Barrett – Fitzgerald & Halliday Inc. (FHI)
Michael Chong – Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
T. Gerry Dyar – I-91 TIA
Jim Butler – Southeast CT Council of Governments (SECCOG)
Nicholas Mullane – SECCOG
Judy Gott – So. Central Regional Council of Governments (SCRCOG)
Stephen Dudley – City of Branford
Stewart MacMillan – Town of Madison
Joe Bragaw – Town of Stonington
Dennis Popp – Town of Groton
Mark Oefinger – Town of Groton
Mike Giannattasio – Town of East Lyme
Tim Griswold – Town of Old Lyme
Paul Eccard – Town of Waterford
Ed Steward – City of New London
Dan Morley – Connecticut Office of Policy and Management (OPM)
Fred Riese – CT Department of Environmental Protection (ConnDEP)
Ed Dombroskas – CT Dept. of Community and Economic Development (DECD)
Jean Davies – CT River Estuary Regional Planning Agency (CRERPA)
Jean Stimolo – Rideworks of Greater New Haven
Ed Lougee – Waterford Police
Stephen Devine – Rhode Island Department of Transportation
J. Michael Bennett – Rhode Island Department of Transportation

Summary of Discussions:

I. Purpose of Meeting

The purpose of this Advisory Committee (AC) Meeting was to present and discuss with the committee members, the preliminary I-95 improvement concepts that have been refined since the June 24, 2003 AC Meeting and second round of outreach with the corridor towns.

J. Barrett began the meeting with introductions of the Advisory Committee members and representatives from ConnDOT and the consultant team.

II. Project Status

R. Bascom gave an overview of the project status:

- The general purpose of this meeting was to gain consensus from the AC on the preliminary I-95 improvement concepts developed to before presenting them to the public in January 2004 as planned.
- The preliminary improvement concepts currently show the preliminary earthwork limits (cuts and fills) based on a six-lane typical section for I-95 and the interchange improvement concepts that have been developed.
- Additional impacts will be developed based on traffic analysis at the secondary roads and ramps which is forthcoming. This analysis will determine proposed lane usage and needs at the ramp termini and along the secondary road approaches.
- In areas where existing unsignalized intersections fail in the 2025 no-build, the study team will be recommending traffic signals.
- Environmental impacts are still being quantified and are not available for this meeting but will be available for the Public Information Meetings in January.

An AC member asked if the Route 11 improvements could be overlaid onto the project aerial photos and those improvements tied into the preliminary improvement concepts. R. Bascom noted that the preliminary concepts developed in that area account for the Route 11 improvements and those improvements would be overlaid onto the aerial photos.

E. Dombroskas from DECD made a general comment that he was disappointed in the lack of attention the Feasibility Study and preliminary improvement concepts gave the tourism industry. He suggested there should be analysis done to determine the destinations of I-95 users, noting that a significant amount of traffic is not commuter traffic, but through traffic to tourist destinations. E. Dombroskas further noted there was no discussion of, or considerations for, Tourist Information Centers or other means of communicating tourist-related information to the traveling public in the Feasibility Study.

C. Trotta noted that the State is currently implementing several ITS initiatives throughout the I-95 corridor and elsewhere. E. Dombroskas' response was that ITS systems are very

good for traffic and incident management, but do not adequately address tourists' information needs, which he stated should be communicated person to person.

R. Bascom asked E. Dombroskas how he thought these issues should be addressed in the Feasibility Study and if there are any specific areas where Tourist Information Centers could be located. E. Dombroskas responded that he believed the traffic analysis performed for the Study does not adequately address tourist traffic volumes and that a recommendation for a "destination study" would be beneficial.

J. Andrini noted that, as carried forward from the 1999 *Southeastern Connecticut Corridor Study*, the Summer Friday P.M. Peak Hour traffic volumes were used in this Study to include a larger percentage of recreational users and better represent the traffic volumes through the corridor. He further noted that current analysis shows more than 50% of the summer Friday p. m. peak-hour volume is comprised of "non-commuter" traffic.

E. Dombroskas further noted this segment of I-95 is unique in that it is the midpoint between two of the country's largest population centers (New York and Boston).

J. Andrini suggested a separate meeting with E. Dombroskas and DECD be held to further address these issues.

An AC member agreed the issue should be further discussed, as the Study figures do not necessarily agree with what the communities are experiencing.

R. Bascom added that based on the Study's traffic analysis, the year 2025 traffic volumes north of Exit 92 to the Rhode Island border do not warrant the addition of a third lane.

T. G. Dyar stated that he sent a copy of the draft Transit Study Report to an associate. His comments were that fewer than 50% of residents in the five boroughs of New York City (NYC) own cars and that even fewer than that own cars in Manhattan. As a result, these people rely on alternate transportation or mass-transit to reach tourist destinations, the majority of which travel to Long Island on weekends. It was expressed that the limited availability of alternate transportation or mass-transit in southern Connecticut is limiting the amount of tourist travel from NYC that could otherwise be captured.

III. Draft Cost Estimate of Improvements

- R. Bascom reviewed the draft construction cost estimate for the preliminary roadway improvement concepts, noting these costs do not include right-of-way (ROW) or environmental mitigation costs.
- The draft construction cost estimate is broken down into interchange areas and roadway segments between interchanges. The costs are presented in year 2004 dollar values as well as year 2012 dollar values using a 2.75% compounded annual inflation factor. R. Bascom noted the unit costs and inflation factor used to generate the estimate are values provided by ConnDOT.

***** PRELIMINARY DRAFT – SUBJECT TO CHANGE *****
COST ESTIMATE SUMMARY
PRELIMINARY IMPROVEMENT CONCEPTS
October 29, 2003

	MM	to	MM	Length (mi)	Cost (2004)*	Construction Completion Date	Annual Inflation Rate	Adjusted Cost
Section 1 - Branford to Connecticut River	53.27	-	78.44	25.17	\$416,500,000	2012	2.75%	\$517,800,000
Section 2 - Connecticut River to Thames River	78.91	-	93.55	12.11	\$190,900,000	2012	2.75%	\$237,200,000
Section 3 - Thames River to Rhode Island	94.70	-	111.25	16.45	\$175,200,000	2012	2.75%	\$217,600,000
TOTAL				53.73	\$782,600,000			\$972,600,000

* Excludes right-of-way and environmental mitigations costs. Also excludes local road improvements and major drainage structure replacement costs.

An AC member asked if the draft construction cost estimate included the Route 11 construction project. The response was “no.”

An AC member asked if the draft construction cost estimate included transit improvement costs. The response was “no.”

An AC member asked if ConnDOT had general “per lane mile” unit costs for ROW and environmental mitigation. C. Trotta responded that ConnDOT will be working with ConnDOT’s Offices of ROW and Environmental Planning to develop those costs based on the geographic location of the project.

IV. Break-out Groups to Review Preliminary Improvement Concepts

J. Barrett divided the meeting attendees into the three geographic discussion areas.

Branford to the Baldwin Bridge

Interchange 59: The preliminary improvement concept provides a “buttonhook” configuration for the northbound on and off-ramps. The ramps would intersect Route 1 approximately 800 feet west of the existing Route 1/Goose Lane/Soundview Road intersection. This configuration would take the ConnDOT salt shed. An alternative for the northbound on-ramp is still being investigated which would leave this ramp adjacent to its current location thereby reducing the environmental impact. This alternative is currently being analyzed from an operations standpoint because Route 1 and the on-ramp would still only be separated by 200 feet along Goose Lane.

Interchange 62: This preliminary improvement concept provides a buttonhook configuration for the southbound ramps connecting with Duck Hole Road east of the existing Duck Hole Road/Hammonsett Connector intersection. This concept also includes an operational lane in both directions along I-95 between the rest areas and the interchange ramps.

There were no objections to this preliminary improvement concept.

Interchange 63: This preliminary improvement concept was developed as a result of meetings with Town of Clinton Officials and study staff. Glenwood Road will be bridged over I-95 to connect opposite North High Street at Route 81. The northbound ramps will be in a buttonhook configuration intersecting North High Street just west of Route 81. The previous concept provided a cul-de-sac of North High Street that was not attractive to the Town since it would direct additional traffic on Route 81 to Route 1 making the existing traffic situation worse along Route 1. The southbound ramps would remain in their existing locations.

This preliminary improvement concept was accepted by the group.

Interchange 67 (Elm Street): The half diamond (to/from the east) will remain as currently configured. M. Chong from the FHWA said they are reviewing the improvement concepts and would be commenting in the near future on this location.

Interchange 67 (Route 154) / 68 / 69: The preliminary improvement concept provides a full service diamond interchange at 67 (Route 154). The southbound off-ramp at Interchange 68 would be eliminated. The northbound on-ramp at Interchange 68 would be relocated to Interchange 69 with a slight realignment of Route 1. Interchange 69 would be reconfigured as a high speed freeway to freeway connection. No new bridges over I-95 other than what were presented in previous concepts are included in this concept. Under this concept several homes on the south side of Springbrook Road would be impacted along the Route 9 to I-95 southbound ramp.

There were no objections to this preliminary improvement concept, but it was noted that the AC member representing Old Saybrook, W. Peace, was not in attendance and would need to review this new concept.

Baldwin Bridge to Gold Star Bridge

Interchange 70: The preliminary improvement concept provides a full service interchange at Route 156 and removes the existing northbound on-ramp and SB off-ramp at Lyme Street. The southbound ramps have been aligned with Halls Road (Route 1) to create a four-legged intersection with Route 156. The existing bike path has been relocated to the north side of the southbound ramps.

There were no objections to this preliminary improvement concept.

Interchanges 71 / 72: In order to remove the northbound mainline weave between Interchanges 71 and 72, the northbound off-ramp to Rocky Neck Connector and the northbound on-ramp from Four Mile River Road have been designed as “scissors ramps” where individual movements are separated. In this configuration, northbound traffic to Rocky Neck Connector exits with northbound traffic to Four Mile River Road west/south of Interchange 71 and crosses over the northbound on-ramp from Four Mile River Road. Similar “scissors ramps” have been designed to remove the southbound mainline weave between Interchanges 72 and 71. In this case, southbound traffic to Four Mile River Road exits with southbound traffic to Rocky Neck Connector east/north of Interchange 72 and crosses over the southbound on-ramp from Rocky Neck Connector.

Concerns were expressed that this concept eliminates the connection between Four Mile River Road and Rocky Neck Connector via I-95.

An AC member questioned why the exit lanes were designed as long as they are. J. Andrini noted that extra ramp length is required to accommodate appropriate advance signing for both Interchange 71 and 72 destinations.

Interchange 73: The preliminary improvement concept relocates the northbound off-ramp to a location west/south of the Society Road overpass due to site constraints created by the addition of a third lane at its existing location.

It was suggested that a perpendicular intersection with the northbound off-ramp and Society Road be created to maximize intersection sight distance at this location.

Interchange 74: The northbound off-ramp has been aligned opposite the driveway on Route 161 and the northbound on-ramp has been reconfigured as an inner loop to the northbound off-ramp. Standard horizontal curvature has been provided for the southbound ramps and their alignment and intersection with Route 161 correspond to the Town’s plan for future development.

J. Andrini noted that the preliminary improvement concept does not preclude future development by the Town in this area.

Interchanges 81 / 82 / 82A: Under the preliminary improvement concept, the existing northbound and southbound mainline weaves between Interchanges 82 and 82A are removed from the mainline by extending the frontage road system to Route 85. The northbound frontage road off-ramp has been moved upstream to a point west/south of Route 85 such that traffic is removed from the freeway onto a frontage road serving Route 85 and Vauxhall Street. An exit from the northbound frontage road system to Vauxhall Street Extension has

been provided. Buttonhook ramps have been provided at Vauxhall Street to the southbound frontage road system, which intersects Route 85 at grade. This frontage road continues on westerly connecting to the existing Parkway North. A pair of buttonhook ramps located between existing Interchange 81 and Route 85 replaces the southbound off-ramp to Parkway North and the southbound on-ramp from Route 85. Slip ramps to the mainline I-95 will be located along both northbound and southbound frontage roads north of Vauxhall Street to alleviate traffic volumes along the frontage road system.

J. Andrini noted that high traffic volumes and less than optimum geometric conditions at the existing southbound off ramp at Interchange 81 dictated the need to relocate the off-ramp under this concept.

An AC member questioned if the preliminary improvement concept precludes a future connection between Parkway South and the northbound frontage road system. J. Andrini noted that it does not.

Gold Star Bridge to Rhode Island

Interchange 90: The following comments and/or observations were made regarding the Interchange 90 Preliminary Concept:

- There was a general agreement that a tourist information center in this region was necessary. The Visitor Center in North Stonington was misplaced and that an ideal location would be at Exit 93.
- As a general comment, it was felt that there should be a Strategic Plan for Tourist Information Centers and Weigh Station locations.
- It was noted that the Town is applying for a grant to study Coogan Avenue.
- It was suggested that a Transportation Center could be built in the NW Quadrant of Jerry Browne Road.
- It was felt that the Scenic Overlook was not a good location for a tourist information center.
- It was suggested that the concepts be presented to the owners of the Mystic Village and Aquarium prior to the actual Public Information Meeting.
- The general feeling of the concept design was that it is expensive, however, everybody felt it is a good solution for the operational and safety issues at the interchange area. It was also suggested that the similar concept for the interchange, with the removal of the scenic overlook also be presented to public.

Interchange 93: The following comments and/or observations were made regarding the Interchange 93 Preliminary Concept:

- A roundabout concept was presented by one of the committee members. This concept has been endorsed by the local Planning and Zoning Board and was being presented to the Select Board tonight. This concept also included a “buttonhook” SB

off-ramp, terminating opposite the NE corner of the truck stop. This configuration has been endorsed by the Select Board.

- The double buttonhook concept design presented was felt to hinder economic development through the area, where the roundabout concept was felt to encourage it.
- It was also felt that the current truck stop would be an ideal location for a Tourist Information Center.
- This concept would be analyzed by the study staff for its applicability to the conditions present at this interchange.

V. Planning for Public Outreach Meetings

J. Barrett concluded the breakout sessions and spoke about the upcoming Public Information Meetings tentatively scheduled for mid-January 2004. J. Barrett stated that the Study team was looking to the AC members to help promote the Public Information Meetings in an attempt to “drum up” attendance.

R. Bascom and J. Andrini will be taping a segment about the project for Public Access TV.

J. Barrett noted that the Study team was looking at other electronic means of notifying the public through the Towns as well as advertising in some of the smaller local publications.

J. Andrini further noted that the Study team was willing to meet with interested stakeholders and encouraged people to contact the Study team with comments, concerns, or suggestions.

An AC member suggested linking the I-95 Feasibility Study web site to the web site for the I-95 corridor study in Southwestern Connecticut.

VI. Transit Update

R. Bascom updated the group on the status of the Draft Transit Report, noting that the Executive Summary and Introduction had been revised based on comments from the previous transit workshop.

It was stated that the transit alternative outlined in the study would not alleviate the need to widen I-95 in the future. Enhanced transit service could however, be a component of the widening alternative.

Several questions/comments ensued which are outlined below.

VII. Questions/Comments

J. Andrini solicited comments on the Draft Transit Report:

- E. Dombroskas noted that the Department of Tourism stopped marketing to NYC non-motorist tourists due to limited availability of alternative transportation or mass-transit.

- It was suggested that the closing paragraphs of the Executive Summary include recommendations for potential improvements to the system and a recommendation for future transit studies to be conducted.
- It was suggested that the link between transit and economic development be evaluated.
- The cost recovery benefit of tolls and “capacity pricing” lanes should also be evaluated.
- It was suggested that a broader statement be made regarding the role mass-transit plays in the overall improvement concept with a recommendation that it be further studied as part of a statewide transit plan.
- A question was asked as to what mass-transit can provide in the interim and during construction.