



SUMMARY OF MEETING ISSUES AND CONCERNS

Date: September 24, 2002

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

State Project No.: 170-2295
CHA Project No.: 11530

Location of Meeting: Madison, CT

Date of Meeting: September 10, 2002 10:00 a.m.

Subject of Meeting: Local Outreach Meeting #10

Project Overview by Jim Andrini of ConnDOT and Rod Bascom of CHA:

- This Study is a high priority of the Transportation Strategy Board and will look at I-95 from Branford to the Rhode Island state line, including 85 intersections and some of the supporting road network.
- This is a two year study that is an outgrowth of the 1999 Southeastern Connecticut Corridor Study prepared by ConnDOT. The 1999 study identified a lack of capacity and recommended a more detailed study of alternatives and improvements. We are currently 2/3rds of the way through the analysis of existing conditions (Project schedule provided as a hand-out).
- I-95 was planned in the 1950's and constructed in the 1960's and used a planning window of 1975; therefore, we are overdue for a renewal of the highway's capacity and operations.
- Project will include studying the feasibility and environmental impacts of adding a 3rd lane in each direction for 58 miles on I-95 and will also look at alternative systems and ways to mitigate traffic on I-95 such as bus service, Rideshare and other intermodal transportation, including AMTRAK and Shoreline East.
- The Study includes a sensitivity analysis for environmental resources, which means that we will be looking only at major impact areas, not detailed environmental reviews or quantification of potential impacts.
- We will be looking at accident histories to see where rates exceed nationwide averages; as well as type and problem causes of accidents. Will use state database Suggested List of Study Sites (SLOSS).
- Current I-95 projects in this section of the study area (in planning phase or scheduled for construction) include:
 - 1) ITS (Intelligent Traffic Systems) projects: CONNDOT has two on-going incident management or ITS projects that will help manage congestion on I-95. These ITS projects will likely include: closed circuit TV traffic flow monitoring, pavement sensors to monitor

traffic, highway advisory radio, and variable message signs. An elaborate fiber optics network will connect the ITS to both Bridgeport (control center operated by State Police) and CONNDOT headquarters. The ITS projects include:

-Exit 54, Branford to Exit 64, Route 145. This project is in final design and is scheduled to begin construction in the summer 2003;

-Exit 64 (Westbrook-Clinton Town line) to Rhode Island State Line plus portion of I-395 from I-95 to Route 2. This project is the development state (preliminary design). Transcore is the consultant. Project schedule calls for bidding in 2003 with construction starting in Fall of 2003. The project will be constructed in 3 phases and may not be completed until 2011.

2) Route 11:

Final EIS being completed and the next stage is design. CTDOT has a copy of highway layout for anyone to review.

- Project recommendations will be practical and cost-effective and prioritized by need (ranked by cost/benefit, etc.). The Study includes an Implementation Phase and will involve stakeholders in prioritizing improvement projects. This will allow ConnDOT to identify deficiencies that can be addressed and corrected in the short term. These critical spot improvements can be “fast-tracked”; that is, constructed in advance of major highway improvements if they have minimum potential for environmental impact or property acquisition.
- Public participation is an important part of the Study. The Study will include Public Outreach on 3 levels:
 - 1) A Study Advisory Committee established specifically for this project and consisting of local, regional and state stakeholders, including COG/RPA and town representatives and special interest groups (6 meetings to start in November).
 - 2) Local Outreach: Meetings with local towns (40 meetings) that will be advertised broadly to the public there (hear their questions and comments).
 - 3) Public Informational Meetings (6 meetings)
- In addition, we will establish a 1-800 phone line, web page and Email address where people may learn more about the project and provide comments. The Email will be answered by Jim Andriani; all questions or comments will be answered.
- The outreach sessions will allow the Study team to learn about the specific conditions, issues and concerns locally and to better understand future traffic demand since we are requesting that Towns provide information relative to growth and land use (e.g. Plans of Development, major proposed developments, etc., especially major traffic generators defined as 100,000+ square feet or 200 parking spaces).

Questions and Comments (*with ConnDOT or CHA's response in italics*)

1. What are the impacts that the current highway can't handle? *Highway was designed for 1975 volumes (planning horizon), therefore, many aspects of the highway do not meet current national standards; for example, geometric standards for length of merges and deceleration lanes are shorter than current standards require. While this Study is funded 100% by state funds, the improvements proposed would be constructed with State and Federal funds; therefore, the highway will have to meet federal standards.*

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2. What are macro issues of I-95? *Basically, there are not enough lanes to handle seasonal traffic. Currently, approximately 50% of traffic is commuter and 50% is non work. Congestion is especially a problem Friday evening and Sunday PM. The 1999 Study recommends 3rd lane to accommodate current and project traffic volumes.*
3. What about truck traffic? Will study look at ways to reduce truck traffic by using containerized cargo, for example? *We will reference existing studies for these options.*
4. I-95 now experiences traffic problems 7 days a week; it has been like this for the past 3 or 4 years. The traffic congestion seems to be mostly commuter traffic and due in large part to geometric deficiencies. An example is eastbound at Exit 59; there is a hill where the highway crosses a marsh, for no apparent reason, traffic is often congested here...could be that people just like to look out over the marsh.
5. Saturday morning is particularly bad time for traffic congestion... and all through the weekend.
6. The Hammonasset Connector at Exit 62 is also a problem. The Town has already developed a preliminary design in coordination with ConnDOT through the COG. However, the solution proposed won't work if I-95 is expanded to 3 lanes. The problems at this interchange is a major public concern.
7. Will 3 lane option get chosen? What are the chances? *Recent growth and projected growth and safety issues mandate 3rd lane. The three lanes are the major recommendation of the 1999 Study. Costs and environmental impacts will have to be considered for some sections where it will be difficult to add a lane; but spot widenings will not be allowed or approved by FHWA.*
8. What about theory of "build it and they will come" where capacity that is built will quickly be consumed? *The 1999 study indicated that in the year 2008, without another through lane in each direction, 52 of the 60 miles of I-95 being studied, will be at or approaching capacity, therefore, it is not a question of development following and using up excess capacity, but a situation where current volumes require more capacity.*
9. Is there enough right-of-way width for a 3rd lane? *Not everywhere, some right-of-way acquisition and 'takings' of building s will be required.*
10. Traffic congestion is only a recent change on I-95 (since 1977 and 1978); it is due to interstate traffic and very fast speeds. Local traffic not as big a problem as interstate.
11. Think bigger (20-40 years). Maybe a deck is needed to carry through traffic on lanes above the highway; a 3rd lane may be only a "band-aid".
12. How about off-setting congestion by disallowing trucks on 3rd (fast) lane?
13. What alternate routes are there for trucks? *I-84 used for Boston and New York traffic.*
14. Maybe another alternative is to build another parallel road, inland? *Permits required for that would be prohibitive. This project won't fix congestion, but manage it.*

15. Rail needs to be more cost-competitive. *CTDOT will look at weekend operations of shoreline East, bus-rail connections, etc. to enhance intermodal transit and get people out of their cars. Shoreline East already heavily subsidized (due to low ridership).*
16. Another problem interchange is at Mungertown Road; Exit 59, where I-95 is situated too close to Route 1. Most cars going to Madison and would otherwise take Exit 60... if it was a full diamond. Improvements at this interchange will require right-of-way acquisitions.
17. A development proposal for the old Airport property calls for 192 houses. This will have minimal traffic impact; but commercially zoned property on north side may result in future traffic impacts.
18. Davis property (40+ acres) off Copse Road proposed for Business/Offices but not commercial/retail. There may be concept plans for a frontage Road at this location.
19. Will the digital mapping that is being acquired by ConnDOT for this project be made available to towns? *This will be checked.*
20. Look at expanding commuter parking lot at Exit 61 (it's not heavily used now, but town wants to store school buses there; 50 buses). *This will be checked to see if this could be done.*

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