

REPORT OF MEETING



Date: January 17, 2003

Project: I-95 Branford to Rhode Island Feasibility Study

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

Location of Meeting: Mashantucket – Utilities Complex

Date of Meeting: January 7, 2003; 10:00 A.M.

Subject of Meeting: **Local Outreach Meeting No. 17:** Meeting with the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation

In Attendance: Kelly Reising - Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation (MPTN)
Bob Birmingham (MPTN)
Arthur Hewick (MPTN)
Joseph Colebut (MPTN)
Bob Desalvio (Foxwoods)
Todd Clement Mashantucket Public Works
H. Nelson Mars (Co-Chair MPTN Trans. Working Group)
Jim Andrini ConnDOT
Carmine Trotta ConnDOT
Mark Alexander ConnDOT
Francis Zapatka ConnDOT
Rod Bascom Clough Harbour & Associates LLP (CHA)
Vanessa Heaton CHA

Submitted By: _____ **Date:** _____
Rodney A. Bascom- CHA

Summary of Discussions:

I. Introductions

II. Summary of Presentation of Project by ConnDOT/CHA

- Introduction and overview of the study given by Jim Andrini.
- In 1999, CTDOT prepared the Southeastern Connecticut Corridor Study that recommended a more detailed study of alternates and improvements; hence this Study.
- Bonds authorized under June 2001 special legislation which created the Transportation Strategy Board (TSB) are funding this study.

- Project scope and public participation process was detailed: There will be public informational meetings in each of the three study areas.
 - Branford to Baldwin Bridge
 - Baldwin Bridge to Gold Star Bridge
 - Gold Star Bridge to Connecticut – Rhode Island border
- Environmental assessment will not be carried out at document grade level for this study, but will be a first cut, “sensitivity analysis” only.
- ConnDOT / CHA provided attendees with hand-outs:
 1. Draft Project Schedule dated 6/19/02
 2. Study Area Map
 3. Selected slides from Advisory Committee Meeting.
 4. Copies of ConnDOT’s 1999 Southeastern Connecticut Corridor Study

Questions and Comments (ConnDOT or CHA / Local Participant)

1. What are the main concerns? Safety? Amount of traffic? *Safety is always the main concern of ConnDOT. This section of the corridor was designed based on standards in effect in the 1950’s and 1960’s. Therefore, geometrics based on outdated standards result in many less than desirable interchanges which have an affect on traffic flow.*
2. Will the modeling of I-95 be carried out without improvements to Routes 2 and the extension of Route 11? *All model runs will include the extension of Route 11 to I-95. Improvements to Route 2 are also a given.*
3. What is the approximate time of construction? *There are 60 miles of highway to take into account in this study. There is still a lot of highway to study, not to mention improve. Each section will be studied, a recommendation will be made, an environmental assessment will be conducted, and then the design process will begin. Best case scenario; Construction start on first phase –5 to 6 years, construction underway all projects entire corridor –8-10 years, finish entire corridor –12-15 years.*
4. Are there any short-term solutions that could be put into action? Possibly removing the shoulder out of the highway to make wider? *Due to safety issues, removing the shoulder completely is not a feasible option as a solution. ConnDOT will begin making decisions on solutions in an upcoming study phase “Identification of Improvement Alternatives”. Short-term, as well as long term improvement recommendations will be made. If a recommendation is deemed high priority and could be done with minimal impacts and funds could be appropriated in the short term before the study is complete, efforts will be made to advance it.*
5. Will this study be multi-modal, or are roadborn vehicles the sole consideration? *A cross section of modes will be studied; including ferry, trains, buses, the big picture will be investigated. The demand for buses/trains will be quantified at problem times on I-95, i.e. weekends, summer. Transit usage based on system upgrades such as increasing Shore Line East operation to weekends will be estimated by use of ConnDOT’s model.*

6. Mashantucket would work with ConnDOT to create a link from New London. If more people were able to get to New London via rail, particularly on weekends, Foxwoods would have no problem providing buses to take them the rest of the way. This would be something that would help everyone involved.
7. How was the 50/50 makeup of tourists/commuters figure computed? *Past statewide Origin/destination studies and census data are input to the model. This process was used in the 1999 study and will be used in this study as well. More recent year 2000 Census data will be available and used in this study to update the process.*
8. *Other SE Corridor projects that are in the works were summarized.*
 - *Exit 56, Leetes Island Road; is 99 percent completed.*
 - *Waterford I-95 Exit 81 is in final design, construction start spring 03.*
 - *Rte 11/I-95: Administrative draft of EIS complete. Preferred alignment to be identified.*
 - *Safety Improvements at Baldwin Bridge to Groton/New London town line; surface improvements starting 2004.*
 - *Rte 2 at Exit 92: south side(to Route 78)widening is complete, improvements to the north, subject of EIS.*
9. Who will benefit most from the extension of Route 11 to I-95? *Travelers and residents of the towns south of the current Route 11 terminus that Route 85 passes through would both benefit. Travelers destined for points southeast and east would have a less congested alternative to Route 85 or the more circuitous Route 9. Residents would be afforded similarly by the diversion of traffic away from Route 85 to the completed Route 11. The completion of Route 11 has also been discussed as homeland security measure, given that the makeup southeast Connecticut is heavily weighted toward energy and defense.*
10. What is the proposed length of the connector? *10 miles.*
11. Do the towns have any 'say-so' to stop a project by objecting to it? Do studies supercede their opinions? *Projects are strongly influenced by local/regional forces. However, the biggest priority, again, is safety. Safety is one thing which cannot be influenced or compromised.*
12. *Will Foxwoods be growing or starting any new kind of expansion projects which may affect the study?* It is safe to assume that Foxwoods is always looking to grow and expand.
13. *Specifically, if there are any big plans in the next 20 years from the Pequots, it would greatly help to make a much more accurate model. Does anyone possess traffic studies, projections, origin/destination figures, figures on buses, on truck deliveries, etc.?* Any large scale proposed projects are subject to review and a majority vote by Mashantucket Pequot tribal citizens. Due to this process our ability to forecast future long term growth is limited. We can and will share approved projects with the public, including any applicable traffic studies.
14. There is a perception of a lot of accidents occurring along Route 2 around Mashantucket. *Most recent ConnDOT accident information along this section of Route 2 will be sent to the Tribe for their use.*
15. *Who would be the contact?*

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16. *Can you give any idea of your patronage? Any very general facts of employees, etc.?* The only figures we can release are the slot machine numbers, which again, is public information.
17. The Pequots will speak later and discuss if it would be in the tribe's best interest to release such information. If this is the case, Joe will communicate this to CHA and ConnDOT.
18. Any minutes compiled relating to this meeting will be presented to the Mashantucket for concurrence before circulation or public posting.