



SUMMARY OF MEETING ISSUES AND CONCERNS

Date: December 16, 2002 (Revised 1-24-03)

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: Waterford Town Hall

Date of Meeting: November 7, 2002 at 2:00 P.M.

Subject of Meeting: Study Advisory Committee (AC) Meeting No. 1

In Attendance: See sign-up sheet

Summary of Discussions:

- Carmine Trotta, ConnDOT Office of Intermodal Project Planning, presented an overview of current and programmed ConnDOT projects along I-95.
- Bruce Garrett, ConnDOT Bureau of Policy and Planning: I-95 was built between 1958 & 1964. In 1999 a ConnDOT study recommended 3 lanes on I-95 and implementation of ITS, Shore Line East improvements and improvements to problem spots on Route 1, especially at intersections. This Study will identify deficiencies, needs and specific improvements that will be required to address mobility needs in this corridor.
- John Markowitz, Transportation Strategy Board (TSB): The TSB is a group of 15 members equally divided among government, business and transportation investment areas. The TSB meets weekly and anyone is welcome to attend. The TSB endorses the study.
- Amy Jackson-Grove, Federal Highway Administration: This study will look at practical, prudent and feasible alternatives. If the study results in specific recommendations that meet these criteria then a CEPA / NEPA environmental evaluation will be conducted. Public involvement will be continuous and open. Recommendations must be sensitive to community values and resources while meeting transportation needs.
- A presentation of existing conditions was given by Rod Bascom. Rod stated that I-95 is not a typical highway because traffic in the peak hour is comprised of a mix of commuter, recreational, and commercial traffic. Rod stated the study would include analysis of existing conditions and an examination of alternatives, and would ultimately make recommendations for improvements.

The study team has completed traffic counts. Environmental data will be a “sensitivity level” analysis, not to the depth necessary for a NEPA / CEPA document. Projections of growth used in analysis will be through the year 2025. Alternatives examined will be multimodal.

- An extensive public outreach process was outlined that will be conducted throughout the study process. The study’s Advisory Committee will meet six times and there will be 40 local outreach meetings, 15 have already occurred. Six public information meetings will be conducted – two within each of the three geographical study segments. A website is being developed so the public can follow the course of the study. A toll free number, 1 –800-236-0794, has been established for public inquiries.
- A presentation on the findings, statistics and map exhibits relative to the first phase of this feasibility study: the Analysis of Existing Conditions (refer to meeting agenda and hand-outs) was given.

Questions and Comments of the Study Advisory Committee Members (*with ConnDOT or CHA’s response in italics*)

Area 1 (between Branford and the Baldwin Bridge(Old Saybrook):

- Between Interchanges 54 and 55 there is an increase of 1,000 trucks, is this correct? *Study team response was not recorded.*
- Provide summary/salient points of 1999 study on web-site. *Will consider.*
- Did we look at safety/capacity of impacts due to increasing speed limit from 55 mph to 65? *No.*
- Wouldn’t Level of Service problems be reversed for AM peak hours? *A different set of conditions exist in the AM peak hour. This study does not address the AM peak hour, therefore this cannot be answered accurately.*

Area 2 (between the Baldwin Bridge and the Gold Star Bridge (New London):

- 71,000 ADT at Interchange 74; how much of that traffic travels up to I-395? *24,000 ADT.*
- We should show Route 11 recommended geometry on study diagrams. *Waiting for CTDOT / FHWA to release Preferred Alternate as well as to provide traffic projections for the ‘future condition – no build’ scenario.*
- Does rubber necking for views affect traffic on Baldwin Bridge? *Yes.*
- Consider additional traffic (trucks) from proposed distribution center at State Pier in New London as well as those being proposed along I -395 Corridor (WalMart and Home Depot); these facilities may affect truck traffic volumes on I-95. Also, contact the Mashantucket Pequot to discuss their planned expansion. *Members of the study team will meet with the Mashantuckets as part of the project outreach.*

Area 3 (between the Gold Star Bridge and the CT/Rhode Island state line):

- The proposed Route 12 project is not shown at Interchange 85.
- How long would it take to construct major improvements that may be recommended by this study.
 - *Best case scenario:*
 - 5-6 years to start construction on the initial contract;
 - 8-10 years for construction to begin on all 60 miles;
 - 12-15 years to finish the corridor.

General Comments from each Advisory Committee Member:

1. The presentation was good but did not provide statistics regarding the dynamics of future growth of traffic. *That information will be provided upon completion of the second phase of the Study.*
2. Look at all modes of transportation to develop a balanced solution.
3. There will be resistance from the public to highway widening.
4. What can be done to enhance other east-west roads? We should investigate expanding parallel routes.
It is important to know how much traffic is local vs. regional in each segment under study.
5. I-95 is important for tourist traffic; recent changes in travel habits since 9/11/01 may affect I-95. (e.g. people are driving 500+ miles for tourism).
6. The FHWA has three priorities that the Study should address: 1) safety; 2) congestion mitigation; and, 3) environmental stewardship and streamlining (i.e. improve highways without impact to the environment).
7. Bridge crossings are a priority.
8. State Plan of Conservation and Development should be a guiding tool to balance environmental stewardship with transportation needs. Tourism is a very important need for I-95 improvements to consider.
9. ConnDOT doesn't look at the cost of inconveniences to local communities caused by major construction projects; must look at improving secondary roads as "relief valve" for construction congestion.
10. People are opposed to widening I-95; 'smart growth' not truly considered by State agencies. Need to identify "Customers" of the highway (e.g. Casino traffic; trucks from New Jersey). Why do these customers select I-95 vs. I-90 or I-84? Are we building this roadway only for people passing through? Maybe money would be better spent on I-84 because it is more centrally located.
11. Rhode Island DOT has no plans to widen its section of I-95...will keep I-95 at two lanes.

12. There are too many exits on I-95; the impacts of widening I-95 at Lyme Street in Old Lyme will be great.
13. Dismantling of tolls may have resulted in higher volumes on I-95.
14. Study should look at local initiatives for intermodal alternatives.
15. Want to be sure that the alternatives investigated will reduce impact on water resources.
Land use and economic development studies at state level to result in incentives and / or disincentives to development.
16. Proposed transportation center in Mystic/Groton area (i.e. buses between New London, Casinos, Groton, Mystic) should be considered in this Study.
17. Casinos did not exist 10 years ago, now they employ 26,000 employees. Approximately 60,000 – 80,000 vehicles per day could be generated by casinos.
18. Multi modal alternatives are good to consider but cars are here to stay.
19. Waterford is at a crossroads of several highways and safety is a big issue. The Town is “victimized” by interstates and casino traffic.
20. Exits are a big problem, fix these before adding 3rd lane.
21. Fix all “no-brainers”: a) get trucks off road; b) third lane may result in more congestion; c) fix secondary roads first.
22. Environmental stewardship is a key consideration.
23. Multi-modal important; ITS important
24. Alternatives to physical highway improvements are important because the added capacity will be used up quickly.
25. Use electronic toll collection methods such as EZ-Pass that do not require toll booths for ‘congestion pricing’ to get funds to pay for the improvements.
26. The closing of ramps or building new tolls will result in major negative reaction by the public based on TSB’s experiences on other highway projects.
27. Include bikeways in scope of alternates.

Re: I-95 Branford to RI Feasibility Study CONNDOT

Questions and Comments of the Public *(with ConnDOT or CHA’s response in italics)*

- Waterford citizen: Look at ways to compress the study schedule; short-term solutions are important.
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The next meeting of the study Advisory Committee meeting will be in March or April 2003.

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