



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: June 24, 2003

Subject of Meeting: Study Advisory Committee (AC) Meeting No. 3

In Attendance:

Robert Faulkner – Clough, Harbour & Associates LLP (CHA)
Rod Bascom - CHA
Jeff Parker - CHA
Jim Andrini – Connecticut Department of Transportation (ConnDOT)
Bill Peace – Town of Old Saybrook
Michael Chong – Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
Paul Stanton – Fitzgerald Halliday Inc. (FHI)
Jill Barrett - FHI
T. Gerry Dyar – I-91 TIA
Jim Butler – Southeast Ct. Council of Governments (SCCOG)
Joe Bragaw - Town of Stonington
Dennis Popp - City of Groton
Ed Dombroskas – Ct. Dept. of Community and Economic Development. (DECD)
Kurt Schmidt - ConnDOT
Tom Wagner – Town of Waterford
Jean Davies – Ct. River Estuary Regional Planning Agency (CRERPA)
Sgt. Henry Perucki - Connecticut Department of Public Safety
Linda Krause - CRERPA
Judy Gott – So. Central Regional Council of Governments (SCRCOG)
Tim Griswold – Town of Old Lyme
M. Murphy - Town of Groton
Ed Steward - City of New London
Jean Stimolo - Rideworks
Stewart MacMillan – Town of Madison
Fred Riese – Ct Department of Environmental Protection (CT DEP)
Samuel M. Sisisky – Town of Groton

Summary of Discussions:

The purpose of this Advisory Committee (AC) meeting was to review with the committee members those preliminary concepts that were developed subsequent to the first round of public outreach and from the May 21, 2003 Design Charrette.

I. Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was started with introductions of Advisory Committee members and representatives from the ConnDOT and the consultant team.

An overview of the Public Information Meetings (May 13, 14, and 15) was provided.

Overview Points -Attendance at the Meetings was disappointing. While notice, through press releases, news stories and paid advertisements, was made prior to the meeting, the small turnout suggests additional avenues of communication must be used for the next public meeting. ConnDOT requested assistance from the AC members in getting the word out for the next round of public informational meetings. An overwhelming majority recommended local shoreline *weekly publications* rather than the statewide daily publications. Shoreline cable access television was also recommended.

AC members were polled as to their preferred means of communication with representatives of the study team, particularly the project managers.

AC members unanimously chose email as the best way to communicate.

II. Future No-Build Conditions

Comments or questions were requested pertaining to the Draft Future Conditions Report previously submitted to the AC members. Few comments were provided. Comments included the investigation of noise walls in several locations. The response was that they will not be included or recommended as part of this study. This study will however identify sensitive receptor areas as part of the environmental sensitivity analysis. The environmental document that will follow this study will address this issue. It was stated that an addition of roadway capacity (a lane) at a sensitive location will require noise attenuation (barrier).

There was also a general comment related to how “bad” it will get by 2025 if nothing is done. The study team stated that eighty five percent of the I-95 mainline roadway is forecast to be at or beyond its theoretical capacity by the year 2025 without the addition of a third lane where two exist today.

III. Preliminary Improvement Concepts (Breakout Groups)

The towns identified several interchanges within the corridor during the first round of public outreach meetings as interchanges the design team should focus on. They were subsequently discussed in the break-out groups. Interchanges not identified as deficient and in need of improvement will be designed to accommodate the widened section and

will be brought up to current design standards considering acceleration and deceleration lengths, etc. The proposed typical I-95 mainline section was presented to the AC members. The widened section consists of three 12-foot travel lanes with two 12-foot inside and outside shoulders in each direction. A 10-foot concrete median barrier will separate the NB (northbound) and SB (southbound). Typically the median would be 10 foot for an urban freeway, but due to the amount of truck traffic, a 12-foot median shoulder is required. The 10-foot concrete median barrier is being proposed to accommodate illumination, overhead signing stanchions and bridge piers.

In order to facilitate discussion on concepts for the interchanges identified in the local outreach meetings, AC members were invited to participate in one of three break-out groups. The various break-out groups were set up in accordance with the *river to river* geographical sections that the study is often broken up into for discussion. They are Branford to the Baldwin Bridge, Baldwin Bridge to the Gold Star Bridge, and Gold Star Bridge to the Rhode Island border. First Officials or administrative staff of towns or regions, were invited to participate at the break-out group discussion in their respective area.

Two representatives of the study team were assigned to each of the three break-out groups to present and record input on the preliminary concepts.

These discussions related directly to the Preliminary Concepts exhibits developed for the meeting.

Branford to the Baldwin Bridge (Connecticut River, Old Saybrook)

Interchange 59: Primary Concept concern is the vicinity of the NB off ramp to Route 1. Environmental (stream) impact and a State maintenance facility would be affected. Concept 1, was considered acceptable. As a variation on this concept, it was suggested to investigate leaving the NB on ramp in its correct location to reduce the environmental impacts and separate the traffic accessing I-95 at this interchange.

Interchange 62: A concern at this interchange is the proximity of the NB ramps with Duck Hole Road and the width of the Hammonasset Connector at this location. Another concern at this interchange is the weave created with SB on traffic crossing traffic exiting at the rest area. Both concepts presented solve the intersection spacing concern by relocating the SB ramps east to intersect with Duck Hole Road. This is an acceptable solution. The weave concern is addressed in Concept 2 by providing an auxiliary lane to the rest area. It was agreed that this auxiliary lane is needed.

Interchange 63: A concern at this interchange is the NB off ramp that connects to a local road (North Main Street) requiring traffic destined for Clinton Crossing Mall to make two lefts within a few hundred feet. Another concern here is that the school, mall and through traffic on Route 81 mixes with local traffic on North Main Street and Glenwood Road. The concept presented

connects North Main Street and Glenwood Road at a four-leg intersection via a structure over I-95. All I-95 ramp movements would be accommodated by a single point diamond interchange over I-95. This concept was acceptable to the group.

Interchange 67 (Elm Street): The town of Old Saybrook would like to see a full diamond constructed at this location. A full diamond is reflected in the town's Plan of Conservation and Development. Completion of this half diamond would facilitate emergency response to incidents on I-95 and provide better access to the Central Business District.

Interchange 67 (Route 154): Only SB on and NB off movements are currently allowed at this interchange. Both concepts presented would provide full access to I-95. Providing full NB and SB movements here would result in the possibility of closing the SB off and NB on ramps at Interchange 68. Closing these movements may result in a negative impact to the commercial businesses along Route 1 between Interchanges 67 and 68 by eliminating the drive-by traffic. It was suggested that two concepts be progressed. One that closes the ramps at Interchange 68 and one that leaves them open as discussed below.

Interchange 68/69: If Interchange 68 is not closed, Springbrook Road would need to be shifted and widened to accommodate the SB off movement. The NB on ramp would be provided with a standard diamond configuration in close proximity to a realignment of the intersection of Springbrook Road and Route 1. Interchange 69 would be reconfigured to provide higher speed freeway to freeway movements. I-95 NB to Route 9 NB would go under I-95. Route 9 NB to I-95 NB would go over I-95 resulting in a three level interchange. It was agreed that a three level interchange at this location was not appropriate due to aesthetic and noise concerns and cost. It was suggested to take a look at the existing ramp geometrics to determine if the current configuration can be maintained.

Baldwin Bridge to Gold Star Bridge (Thames River, New London)

Interchange 70: Most voiced concern over potential for traffic back-up on Halls Road under the existing offset arrangement that currently exists at Halls Road and the SB on ramp. People agreed with the concept of a slight northerly relocation of the SB on ramp terminus opposite Halls Avenue. One person pointed out that the existing I-95 Bridge over Lyme Street just west of the partial Exit 70 interchange is a stone arch and is located at the northern end of a National Register Historic District. This person wasn't sure if the bridge itself is historic. Concept 2 seemed to be most favored.

Interchanges 71 / 72: Participants were very cognizant of the dangerous weave situation that currently exists along the mainline roadway in both directions between these interchanges. The collector-distributor (CD)/frontage road concept was looked upon as very favorable here as

separation eliminates weave problems. People liked Concept 1 SB but did not like the fact that the frontage road ties into the existing light on Four Mile River Road. Participants did not like Concept 2, possibly due to property takes associated with NB frontage road. There was overwhelming opposition to concept 3 NB - scissor configuration – the review group asked to drop this NB configuration from further consideration. They liked the SB configuration though, but did not like the new loop to the east of the Rocky Neck connector due to increased wetland impacts. Concept 4 - Participants seemed to like the NB configuration better than the SB configuration. Concept 5 - same comment as concept 4. Overall, the participants liked the NB configuration shown on Concepts 4 and 5 and they liked a hybrid SB configuration using Concept 1 and Concept 3. They liked the loop ramp to the south of the Rocky Neck Connector shown in Concept 1, linking to the frontage road concept that flows under the Four Mile River Road Bridge shown in Concept 3.

Interchange 74: It was agreed that the NB configuration creates more problems than it solves. There is a new hotel located just south of King Arthur Drive just west of the Self Storage Facility. The proposed relocated King Arthur Drive and reconfigured access to Motel 6 and ConnDOT Maintenance Facility goes right through the hotel. The new intersections don't line up. Flanders Road is a heavily congested corridor and the disjointed intersections will create further congestion. Apparently the Town of East Lyme, who was not represented, is in favor of the SB configuration. The participants also liked the SB configuration as it eliminates the sharp curve of the existing off-ramp. It was also pointed out that there is a new Wendy's Restaurant located just to the north of I-95 on the east side of Flanders Road - not presently shown on the aerial background. The SB concept of reconfiguring the on and off ramps into a button hook arrangement is consistent with the Town's Plan of Development.

Interchanges 82 / 82A: This portion of the corridor was only briefly discussed, due to time constraints. Participants liked the frontage road concept, but felt that the proposed NB configuration at Interchange 82A had too much impact on the neighborhood just west of Vauxhall Street. It was suggested that 82A NB be eliminated in favor of the NB Coleman Street/frontage road interchange. Both Waterford and New London did not support the concept to eliminate a frontage road connection at Coleman Street.

Gold Star Bridge (New London) to Rhode Island

Interchange 90: As a general comment, it was noted that this interchange was the most important interchange from a tourism perspective. The removal of the Scenic Overlook south of the exit based on decision-making distance and ramp spacing was quickly dismissed as not an acceptable alternative.

Concept 1 – Grade separated access as a fly-over to the Village / Aquarium would require further discussions with the Village and other Stakeholders.

Concept 2 was the preferred alternative as it made the most sense and required relatively minimal impacts to the surrounding properties.

It was discussed that many tourists get off the exit without an exact destination in mind. It was thought that signing alone would not solve the problem. Some type of Kiosk or Information Center would be beneficial. It would make sense to locate this information center at the scenic overlook. If possible, this should also be incorporated into Concept 2. The slip right on Greenmanville Road should be maintained for traffic flowing to the downtown. It was discussed that an Information Center could be combined with the Scenic Overlook area which would be part of the Exit 90 off ramp. A NB Information / Rest area would also be beneficial for through traffic.

Concept 3, which required significant ROW impacts was looked at previously and dismissed as a viable alternative.

Interchange 91: Although this interchange was not evaluated during the Design Charrette, it was suggested that realigning the NB off ramp to opposite the NB on ramp would be beneficial. Currently, NB off traffic wishing to get immediately back on I-95 mistake Route 234 Pequot Road as the on ramp. Realigning the off ramp would eliminate this confusion.

Interchange 92: The facility in the NW quadrant of the southern exit has doubled in size. There was a discussion that the rest area between the north and south Exit 92 was misplaced, and that it should be in the Exit 90 vicinity. It was suggested that the Exit 92 Rest Area be closed and a new Rest Area at Exit 90 be built. However, it was further discussed that the rest area at Exit 92 is very popular among motorists, particularly truckers.

Concept 2 was the preferred alternative, as it required minimal improvements. In addition to the improvements shown in Option 2, the NB on ramp at the southern Exit 92 should be added, striving to minimize environmental impacts.

Interchange 93: Tightening up the SB ramp closer to the overpass was preferred over realigning the ramps to intersect with the new London Turnpike.

IV. What's Next

The following items were presented as upcoming meetings:

- Transit Meeting (September)
- Local Outreach Meetings:
 - Further Concept Discussion (Aug/Sept/Oct)
- AC Meeting #4
 - Preliminary Transit Concepts (Oct)
- Public Information Meetings:

Concept Presentation (Nov)

V. Public Remarks

An issue was raised over the effects that the widening would have on the existing weigh station through the corridor. It was stated that the widening would affect 40% of the weigh stations which would adversely affect the State Police's enforcement efforts. While the study does not intend on removing any of the weigh stations, provisions for accommodating or reconstructing them in their current locations should be noted in the study report. A copy of the 1998 Weigh Station Study conducted by the Connecticut State Police will be forwarded to CHA.

It was noted that closing the rest area in Westbrook would deny truck drivers a place to sleep and therefore, these drivers would need to be accommodated at another location, possibly the rest area in Madison.