

## 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:** Branford

**Date of Meeting:** September 12, 2002 - 3:00 p.m.

**Subject of Meeting:** Local Outreach Meeting No. 13

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

- The State's Transportation Strategy Board deems I-95 Corridor as No. 1 priority in the State. This Study will look at I-95 from Branford to the Rhode Island state line, including 85 intersections and some of the supporting road network.
- I-95 was planned in 1950's and built in the 1960's and 1970's; the state has gotten a lot of utility out of the highway.
- 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. (e.g. we will not be "flagging" wetlands, but relying on existing maps identifying wetlands. A full EIS would be done in the future once specific projects are identified.
- Project recommendations will be practical and cost-effective and prioritized by need (ranked by cost/benefit, etc.).
- 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 (The first of 6 meetings will be on November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2002).
  - 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 Andrini; 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).

- Current I-95 projects in this section of the study area (in planning phase or scheduled for construction) include:
  1. Q-Bridge Contract D (see meeting #11)
  2. Leetes island road exit reconstruction
  3. ITS Projects (see earlier minutes)
  4. Route 11 (see earlier minutes)

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

1. The Q-Bridge project should teach CTDOT that secondary roads cannot handle the impacts of diverted traffic from I-95. The Route 80 widening project needs to be constructed to help with impacts, as well as Mill Plain Road and Cherry Hill intersections turn-out lanes, cedar realignments at Todd's Road, etc., as well as the railroad station project. All these improvements and others should be done in advance of any major improvements to I-95. *The Study includes an Implementation Phase that 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.*
2. Current problems that Branford experiences that are associated with I-95 include:
  - The reverse commute is larger in Branford.
  - At the east end of Town at Guilford town line (between exits 56 & 57), there are many accidents along this stretch of I-95 which could be due to: a) it is the first stretch of I-95 from New Haven that does not have illumination; b) it's more inland, colder roads with less sun to melt ice and snow; c) glare.
  - Between Moose Plain Road and Granite Road at the rock cut, there are crosswinds that create a problem on I-95.
  - The ITS Opticom System with emitters on fire trucks to control lights (preemption system) is not maintained because receivers on poles get out of alignment.
  - State Police don't ever monitor cameras to control Route 1 lights when traffic is diverted off I-95. Also, traffic interconnect (coordinated signals) was supposed to be functional, but they have never worked; especially from Main Street to Alps Road. CTDOT's District Office has been notified about the problem but so far no results.
3. Will this study get input from CTDOT District Maintenance Offices, so that things like shaded highways can be addressed?
4. Adding just one more lane in each direction will not solve long-term capacity needs. Is Design Year realistic at 2025 because that seems too close considering that it may not be built until 2025? *There are funding issues that might result in longer term implementation; however, most*

*of construction will be FHWA funded, it is FHWA that requires 20 year planning horizon. Additionally, even if money was available, there may not be physical improvements (beyond 3<sup>rd</sup> lane) that would be practical or approvable.*

5. *Why not count traffic on Sundays? ConnDOT traffic officials determined that Friday counts would be more representative because they pick up commuter traffic as well as weekend through traffic.*
6. *Traffic south-bound on Sunday, all afternoon, is terrible in Branford. Some Sunday afternoon's may exceed Friday peaks; however, CTDOT uses 30<sup>th</sup> highest hour for design purposes.*
7. *Are there permanent traffic counters in I-95? Yes, at East Lyme, Guilford, Branford and just across the state line in Rhode Island.*
8. *Any large undeveloped tracts in Branford? Yes. 300 acres between Exits 56 & 57 on the north side of I-95 in Branford. Curagen will be 400,000 sf (1200 parking spaces) in Branford. Plus 200 acres in Guilford.*
9. *Any GIS mapping available in the Town? Only topographical and aerial photos (1999) (2' contours at 100 scale) purchased in conjunction with the Water Authority.*
10. *Who will be Town's contact for technical data? Either the Town Planner or the Town engineer.*

- END -