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SUMMARY OF MEETING ISSUES AND CONCERNS

Date: August 20, 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: Stonington Town Hall; Stonington, CT

Date of Meeting: July 30, 2002, 1:00 p.m.

Subject of Meeting: Local Outreach **Meeting No. 6**, Town of Stonington

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

- Section 16 Legislation precipitated this project. In 1999, ConnDOT prepared a Southeastern Connecticut Corridor Study that identified lack of capacity and recommended a more detailed study of alternatives and improvements; hence this Study which will look at I-95 from Branford to the Rhode Island state line, including 85 interchanges.
- The Study is 100% State funded through T.S.B. and is endorsed by the regional Council of Governments.
- 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 not only study the main line of I-95 and its interchanges but will also include limited lengths of the feeder roads adjacent to interchanges.
- 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 Rideshare and other intermodal transportation, including AMTRAK and Shoreline East. The Study includes a sensitivity analysis for Environmental resources, etc.
- Project recommendations will be 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 constructed in advance of major highway improvements if they have minimum potential for environmental impact or property acquisition.
- Project methodology includes conducting traffic counts at 85 intersections for Friday p.m. peak hour. These counts are underway. ConnDOT will then generate future year 2025 traffic and growth of background traffic and new traffic generation from proposed development. (It is important, therefore that the towns provide information on projected growth in their towns). Once we have this projected traffic demand we can assess the capacity of the highway and look at traffic and safety improvements

for the entire corridor. The geometrics of each interchange will be analyzed and compared with current standards. We will also gather information about accidents and determine where trouble spots are. Does town have database on accident history?

- Project 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)
 - 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 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 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 August of 2003. The project will be constructed in 3 phases and may not be completed until 2011.
 - 2) Exit 81 of I-95 – replacement of Cross Roads bridge and relocation of north bound on-ramp. This project will be advertised in November 2002. The Bridge will be wide enough for 3 lanes in each direction on main line.
 - 3) Resurfacing of I-95 from the Baldwin Bridge to Waterford/New London Town line. This project will include bridge parapet replacement and improvements to sight lines. Project schedule calls for bidding in December of 2003 with construction in 2004-2005.
 - 4) Route 11 Extension Project: will finish Final EIS by late Summer/early Fall with preferred alternative. Next step will be design.

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

- The schedule for the construction of the ITS project is too long. The construction may not reach North Stonington until 2006. ConnDOT should make this project a high priority.
- Traffic “peak hour” in Stonington is not a relevant term since congestion happens at all hours and is a problem all year long but summer is certainly the most congested period. Will we compare summer volumes with other times of year? *No. We are only looking at summer peak hours, but the State DOT has data for other times of the year.*
- Will ConnDOT look into feeder roads leading to interchanges? *Not all feeder roads...only those in areas where congestion of the feeder roads will directly impact traffic operations at an I-95 interchange.*
- Town of Stonington has its own GIS mapping based on a 1999 flight. It is available on CD and we can obtain a copy by requesting it from the Board of Selectmen. *That would be very helpful.*
- Route 27 at Gerry Brown Road to be reconstructed (in design stage through ConnDOT). Public Informational meeting held 6 months ago was attended by many residents. Problems at this location include that there is no signal at exits from 95 southbound and there are high volume businesses on the opposite side of Whitehall which combine to create traffic problems. One of the key business driveway cuts is not located directly across from the I-95 ramps which is very confusing and dangerous.
- Route 27 at Coogan Blvd. has Saturday a.m. peak hours due to tourist travel to the Mystic Marinelife Aquarium. Recent improvements at this interchange provided a ‘through straight’ to the Aquarium from the I-95 north-bound off ramp so that tourist traffic does not have to turn right on Rt. 27, then left onto Coogan...it can access the Aquarium and the Old Mystic shopping center directly from a frontage road that is opposite the ramp; however, this frontage road is not used because the traffic/directional signs are not very clear. This creates unnecessary traffic congestion on Route 27.
- Downtown Mystic access should be signed at Exit 89, Allen Street to take traffic volumes off Route 27 but Groton has opposed this posting.
- Town has no counts on State routes.
- Scenic overlook between Exits 89 and 90 on north-bound I-95 is located much too close to the Exit 90 off ramp.
- Future land use or possible major traffic generators in Stonington include:
 - Mystic Marriott site which is located on north side of Rt. 27 at Exit 90, next to river.
 - Housing (housing development of the Perkins Farm 160 acres on east side of Jerry Brown Road) and other development near and within the ‘Golden Triangle’ (the area defined by Rt. 27, Coogan Boulevard and Jerry Brown Road. This land is zoned Highway Interchange Zone which allows dense commercial development.
- Exit 91 is disorienting because on/off ramps are not lined up (northbound).
- Exit 92 needs median to slow traffic. Has state studied medians to see if it slowed people? Is in highway interchange zone. Could be major traffic generators.
- Truck climbing lanes on I-95 through Stonington, are they needed? No, they create problems because trucks don’t use them and cars use it as a high-speed passing lane. They also merge back

into 2 lanes just before off-ramps so that traffic that is exiting the highway cannot do so from the truck lane...it has to merge back into the main line, then exit.

- Reservoir crossing of I-95 represents an environmental challenge.

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