



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: Groton Town Hall Annex: Groton, CT

Date of Meeting: July 30, 2002, 3:00 p.m.

Subject of Meeting: Local Outreach Meeting No. 7, Groton

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

- ConnDOT prepared a Southeastern Connecticut Corridor Study in 1999 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 intersections.
- 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 in Old Saybrook - Old Lyme 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)*

- There is a great need for capacity on I-95, why not build 4 lanes on I-95 especially since Mass Transit is not forthcoming? *Physically, economically and environmentally, it will be difficult to expand I-95 beyond 3 lanes in each direction.*

- If you can't build 4 lanes, why not build a new parallel road inland now rather than looking at only 3 lanes? *This project's focus is on identifying deficiencies and opportunities of the I-95 corridor; however, we are open to all ideas. We will also look at frontage roads as alternatives to adding lanes on the main line.*
- Town of Groton can provide us with any GIS information they have.
- Pending development or proposed major traffic generators: significant 'players' in Groton include Electric Boat, Pfizer, the Navy base and other major employers that are constantly adding space.
 - Sub base has over 10,000-11,000 employees.
 - E.B. formerly 20,000 employees, now 8,000-9,000.
 - Pfizer is in constant building spree, should meet with them.
 - Exit 88 Industrial Zoned (office park) with significant potential, maybe 3M S.F. (on north side) 2 or 3M S.F. on south side of Exit 88.
- Time horizon for study may not be far enough into future.
- What are assumptions regarding construction of Routes 11 and 2? *The Study will assume that these projects are to be constructed and will match up with their respective designs.*
- Biggest task is to convince much of the public that mass transit is a long-term solution. We must build the 3rd lane now (they won't want the 3rd lane). Suggests being careful about explaining this and stating they are not mutually exclusive projects.
- City of Groton owns the reservoir.
- Allyn Street has sight line problems.
- Exit 87 west bound is designated truck exit in City. Left climbing lane, hard for trucks to merge with traffic.
- DOT has promised jersey barriers over reservoir with valves on storm drains, but funding has postponed project.
- Need to widen bridge over Mystic River, near exit 90 and construct a flyover so that Aquarium traffic is not mixed in with Route 27 traffic.
- Some Exit 87 Southbound back-ups occurs due to Pfizer traffic.
- Clarence B. Sharpe Highway a problem beyond Meridian Street because it narrows down to one lane.
- Friday night is not peak hour, Sunday night is worse.
- Lots of accidents between exit 88 and 89 (on Straight road, why?).
- Tie Ups on I-95 (due to accidents) can paralyze all city streets, even minor accidents. Having better and faster incident management would help. Also, shoulders would provide option for clearing traffic and providing emergency lane.
- Current notification of accidents is late and not well coordinated.
- Will we look at noise abatement? Riverview Avenue in Groton is a big noise problem. *Only to recommend where is may be needed?*
- Lack of east-west arterial roads in town means that I-95 is used heavily by local traffic. Will we be able to quantify that in this study to help determine if local road improvements would help take a lot

of traffic off I-95? *CTDOT can run trip assignment/distribution model for theoretical determination model for theoretical determination but origin/destination study is not part of this project.*

- Will we look at possible ramp closures to help traffic flow on main line. *Yes.*

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