



**Meeting
Notes**

Attendees: Senator David Boutin – State Senate
Bruce Thomas – City of Manchester
Carl Quiram – Town of Goffstown
Tony Marts – Town of Goffstown
David Pierce – Town of Goffstown
Julie Chen – SNHPC
Susan Huard - MCC
Jeff Nyhan -MCC
Jamie Sikora – FHWA
Keith Cota – NHDOT
Mike Dugas – NHDOT
Marc Laurin - NHDOT
Marty Kennedy – VHB
Dale Abbott - VHB

Date/Time: February 28, 2013
1:00 – 2:30 PM

Project No.: 52196.00

Place: Manchester Community College

Re: I-293 Exits 6 and 7
Manchester #16099
Advisory Committee Meeting #6

Notes taken by: Dale Abbott

Mr. Marty Kennedy of Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. (VHB) opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and reviewing the meeting agenda, which included an overview of the decision making process, the evaluation criteria, the evaluation matrix, traffic volume projections for each alternative, and an update on the status of the conceptual designs.

Mr. Kennedy delivered a PowerPoint presentation beginning with a review of the study purpose and schedule. Mr. Kennedy proceeded to present an overview of the decision making process where he discussed the three part process (Parts A, B, and C), the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and the goal of the current Planning Study. With regard to NEPA (Part B), Mr. Kennedy stated that federal agencies must conduct an assessment of environmental effects of a proposed action prior to decisions being made on the proposed action. He stated that this process requires public involvement, thus resulting in better informed decisions. As for the goal of the current Planning Study (Part A), Mr. Kennedy stated that having conducted technical analyses and having conducted an open public forum, the goal of the Planning Study is to eliminate alternatives that don't make sense, while advancing to Part B reasonable alternatives and/or alternatives that need additional detailed evaluation in order to arrive at an informed decision.

In discussing the evaluation criteria, Mr. Kennedy described three elements; Highway Needs (study purpose), Community Needs (socio-economic benefits), and Impacts (highway noise, wetlands, cultural resources, etc.). Mr. Kennedy proceeded to hand out a draft copy of the evaluation matrix to the Committee so as to better describe and discuss the various components of the matrix.

With regard to the future traffic volume demands, Mr. Kennedy presented the 2035 PM peak hour traffic volumes for each alternative noting the differences in the various configurations.

Lastly, Mr. Kennedy provided an update on the progress of developing the preliminary conceptual designs for the alternatives - including showing some alternatives in various stages of completion.

Throughout and following Mr. Kennedy's presentation, the following comments/questions were raised:

- Mr. Carl Quiram asked if the criteria for meeting the study purpose, which is located in the top section of the Evaluation Matrix, will be based on a yes/no response.

Mr. Kennedy stated that a color coding system will be used to summarize how well each alternative addresses the purpose of the project and meets the needs of the community. Mr. Kennedy referred to the color coding system listed on the bottom of the Evaluation Matrix where green refers to substantially meeting the objective, yellow refers to moderately meeting the objective, and red refers to minimally or failing to meet the objective.

- Mr. Jamie Sikora asked how we propose to measure the community needs.

Mr. Kennedy responded that he recognizes that the measure for meeting community needs will be somewhat subjective, however he felt that through community input, we should be able to obtain a sense of which alternatives better meet their needs.

- Mr. Sikora followed up by suggesting that the community needs component of the evaluation matrix could be thought of as secondary goals and objectives to the transportation system purpose.

- Mr. Quiram asked what the evaluation matrix will look like when it is completed. Mr. Quiram expressed concern that he felt that the evaluation matrix appears to be a negative tool in that the negative impacts associated with the project are highlighted. Mr. Quiram also suggested that to the lay person, the matrix presents the alternatives in a negative light as opposed to emphasizing the economic benefits of the alternatives.

Mr. Kennedy stated that the purpose of the matrix is to present a concise easy-to-understand summary of how well each alternative meets the objectives and what the associated impacts of each would be. Mr. Kennedy noted that, in addition to the summary of information presented in the matrix, the study report will include a thorough discussion on the benefits and impacts of each alternative. The report would also document the input received from the community as to how well the various alternatives meet or fail to meet the needs of the community.

- Mr. Kennedy asked the Committee to take a copy of the draft matrix home and think about how well each alternative meets the objectives. He then asked the Committee to come to the next meeting prepared to discuss and offer their thoughts on how each alternative meets the objectives.
- Mr. Tony Marts asked if the evaluation matrix is a form generated by VHB or if it's a standard form.

Mr. Kennedy responded that the matrix was developed by VHB and is similar to ones that we have used on other similar projects.

- Mr. Marts asked if it would be possible to add footnotes to the matrix that note additional community needs.

Mr. Kennedy reiterated that he's hoping to keep the matrix as concise and easy-to-understand as possible. However, Committee members should feel free to suggest any modifications. He suggested that Committee members could e-mail him any suggestions.

- Mr. Sikora reminded the Committee that the Evaluation Matrix is simply a snapshot of the alternatives and that the Planning Study final report would contain an alternatives analysis that discusses in detail the positive and negative aspects of each alternative.
- Senator David Boutin asked if the number of alternatives currently listed in the evaluation matrix would be reduced prior to it being presented to the public. Senator Boutin suggested that it might be helpful to screen the alternatives so that it is clear which alternatives look feasible from those that do not.

Mr. Kennedy noted that it is important that the matrix show the full range of the alternatives that have been evaluated. However, he stressed that he would take the time at the next public meeting to explain the process, the purpose of the matrix, and how to compare the alternatives.

- Senator Boutin asked if a single alternative will be carried forward to the EA.

Mr. Kennedy stated that it's more likely that we would be advancing a range of alternatives that are determined to be reasonable or need additional detailed evaluation. Mr. Kennedy stressed that we want to advance the project as quickly and efficiently as possible through the EA process, but we need to be thorough as to how and when we eliminate alternatives.

- Mr. Sikora stated that at a minimum an EA must include a build and no-build alternative.
- Mr. Quiram asked how long it typically takes to conduct and complete an EA.

Mr. Sikora stated it depends on how controversial the project is and how problematic the issues are. A straightforward project could take 12 to 18 months. A controversial project could take 3-5 years or more.

- Mr. Keith Cota stated that the objective of the Planning Study is to examine the overall corridor and determine the potential reasonable alternatives to further study in the EA. Mr. Cota noted that an important element of the Planning Study is to develop and evaluate engineered concepts in order to determine whether or not an alternative addresses the safety and capacity needs. If the engineering components of an alternative do not work, then it would drop out. Mr. Cota further stated that what the Department sees coming out of the Planning Study is a Purpose and Need statement to lead the project into the NEPA process. The next phase of the project will include a more detailed environmental documentation. Mr. Cota mentioned that the process that the Department and VHB is using is a process that has been used over the last 30 years and that it's not meant to be negative, but it's necessary to compare alternatives.
- Mr. Quiram stated that the process often doesn't include the unstated benefits of the project. He feels that the process should consider benefits beyond safety and capacity.

Mr. Cota described the process of evaluating the capacity and safety of the alternatives by completing the conceptual engineering and tweaking the design. Mr. Cota noted that it's a give and take process, where you make improvements in one location and then look and see how those improvements affect other areas within the corridor and then balance the impacts. Mr. Cota acknowledges the challenge in trying to evaluate the subjective benefits of each alternative. Mr. Cota again reminded the Committee that the purpose of the project is to address capacity and safety related deficiencies within the corridor.

Mr. Cota stated that if the focus of the project turns more to economic needs, then we would need to go back and reassess the study purpose. Mr. Cota cautioned that relying on economic development as the basis for constructing a transportation project could substantially lengthen the entire process. Mr. Cota reminded the Committee that we're in the early stages of the overall project, where we are identifying the reasonable alternatives to develop a purpose and need to move forward in the NEPA process. If everything continues to go smoothly, the EA could take 12-18 months to complete. However, as issues become more involved and controversial, that time frame could extend considerably.

- Mr. Marts asked if the cost of an alternative really matters. Mr. Marts stated that it seems that marginally, cost is important, but does not make a difference when choosing the alternative.

Mr. Cota stated that cost is a consideration, but not the most important consideration. For example, if a particular alternative provides a good solution with minimal impacts but has a high cost it would likely still be advanced forward. Mr. Cota added that the timeliness to build the project often becomes an issue as the Legislature sets a yearly budget for projects.

- Mr. Quiram reiterated that the problem with this process is that we're only focusing on the safety and capacity issues, and we're missing the socio-economic benefit. He felt that we should be taking the opportunity for the communities to get together and work through these issues.

Mr. Cota stated that he understands Mr. Quiram's point, but the evaluation does consider human impacts. For example, the evaluation will consider the number of homes/businesses that could be impacted by an alternative as well as the potential noise impacts on sensitive receptors. Mr. Cota acknowledges the Town of Goffstown's desire for a new connector road at Exit 7 that connects to Goffstown Road and the City of Manchester's goal of developing the Hackett Hill area.

- Mr. Marts asked if more of the socio-economic benefits could be quantified.

Mr. Kennedy stated that the study will document all that we hear including the community's desire for economic development. However, he stressed that the Committee needs to be careful when adding additional socio-economic indicators into the Evaluation Matrix. Mr. Kennedy noted that what you view as a benefit may be viewed by others as an adverse impact.

- Mr. Quiram stated that he expects the DOT will need to fund the EA phase of the project based on a given number of alternatives. Based on the number of alternatives a dollar amount will be used as a placeholder in the TIP. Mr. Quiram stated that if we don't do a good job documenting the positive aspects of the project, the negative impacts could hold up the project at the state level.

- Mr. Marts asked if the future traffic volumes presented by Mr. Kennedy accounted for traffic diversion.

Mr. Kennedy stated that yes all the alternatives account for traffic diversion.

- Mr. Cota, in reference to the Exit 7 Connector Road 2035 PM peak hour traffic volumes, asked if the 340 vehicles turning left onto Dunbarton Road currently use Exit 6 or Exit 7 to get to the same location.

Mr. Kennedy replied that that volume is due to the relatively high residential land use demand on the south end of Dunbarton Road, which currently accesses the area by either existing Exit 6 or 7. Mr. Kennedy also noted that if the connector road is extended across Black Brook to Goffstown Road, the left turn volume on to Dunbarton Road would increase to over 700. For this reason, the configuration and location of the intersection at Dunbarton Road would depend on whether the crossing to Goffstown Road occurs. Mr. Kennedy noted that there could also be other locations for the crossing of Black Brook that could have reduced impacts and costs. This may suggest the need for additional detailed evaluation of the connector roadway alignment as part of the EA.

- Mr. Kennedy stated that he would send an e-mail to the Committee with the material that was presented at today's meeting so that Committee members could take a closer look at the material.

Mr. Kennedy closed the meeting by thanking the TAC members for attending the meeting and reminded them of the upcoming meeting with the Manchester Mayor and Aldermen on March 26th, and that the next TAC meeting would likely be held in early April. Mr. Kennedy noted that if the Aldermen's meeting and the next TAC meeting both go well, we could be ready to present the results of the evaluation at a public meeting in May.

The meeting adjourned at 2:30 PM.