



Meeting Notes

Place: Manchester Community College

Date: April 12, 2017

Notes Taken by: Karen Huberdeau

Time: 1-2:45 pm

Project #: 52392.01

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

ATTENDEES

Keith Cota	NHDOT	Meghan Theriault	Town of Goffstown
Marc Laurin	NHDOT	Nate Miller	SNHPC
Jamie Sikora	FHWA	Susan Huard	Manchester Community College
Keith Hirschmann	City of Manchester	Marty Kennedy	VHB
Bill Klubben	City of Manchester	Frank Koczalka	VHB
Bruce Thomas	City of Manchester	Karen Huberdeau	VHB
Adam Jacobs	Town of Goffstown		

Mr. Marty Kennedy, VHB’s project manager for the project, welcomed the Committee to sixth Advisory Committee meeting noting that that following a brief recap of the project schedule and project purpose, today’s discussion will focus on a new alternative configuration at Exit 6, the potential elimination of the Goffstown connector roadway alternative, and a review of some of the challenges with widening I-293 through the curve south of Exit 6.

Project Schedule

As for the project schedule Mr. Kennedy stated that the project team has been addressing various project issues since the fall of last year, which has led to a number meetings with the City of Manchester, Town of Goffstown and the resource agencies. He informed the TAC members that these meetings have provided some important guidance and direction as to which alternatives may be brought forth as the proposed action. Once the proposed action is established, we will proceed to a more detailed evaluation of that action – all of which will be documented in the Environmental Assessment (EA). Our hope is to complete the EA in the fall of this year so that we can proceed to a Public Hearing by the end of the year.

Project Purpose

Mr. Kennedy reminded the Committee members of the project purpose, which is to address capacity, safety, and access related deficiencies along a 3.5-mile portion of I-293 beginning north of Exit 5 and ending north of Exit 7 by:

- Correcting geometric and safety deficiencies while reducing congestion at problem locations;

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- Accommodating future traffic growth related to commuter trips and the transportation of commercial goods and services through the corridor; and
- Improving access to the highway consistent with the long-term vision of the communities of Manchester and Goffstown.

Modified Exit 6 Alternative

Mr. Kennedy provided an update on the status of the Exit 6 alternatives beginning with the Single Point Urban Interchange (SPUI), noting that the SPUI is not ideal due to the number and proximity of the traffic signals along Amoskeag Road, which result in long vehicle queues that extend back from one signalized intersection into another.

He then discussed the Offset Diamond Interchange alternative stating that this alternative works well operationally as the traffic signals are better spaced. However, it was recently brought to the project team's attention that there is an approved site development for a subdivision off Coolidge Ave that would be directly impacted by this alternative. He also discussed issues with the Coolidge Ave intersection and its proximity to the proposed signal stating that additional modifications would be needed at this intersection and potentially at Montgomery Street to safely accommodate traffic maneuvers in the area.

Given these new issues with the Offset Diamond configuration, Mr. Kennedy noted that the design team is currently looking at a modified SPUI interchange. The modified SPUI is like the previously discussed SPUI alternative with the difference being that the modified SPUI would not provide a connection to Eddy Road and Front Street. This would eliminate the need for the additional bridge crossing of I-293 as well as the additional signalized intersection, which had created the previously described queuing issues.

Mr. Kennedy added that eliminating this connector, which the Modified SPUI would do, would allow Eddy Road and Front Street to function as a local, low volume roadway. He stated that the proposed SPUI and Offset Diamond interchanges, currently project future traffic volumes to be about 1,300 vehicles/hour (vph) on Eddy Road and Front Street. He added that with the modified SPUI interchange, the traffic volumes would be substantially lower at approximately 400 vph. The lower traffic volume demand would be consistent with the City's multimodal vision by providing a corridor that would enhance connectivity for bicyclists and pedestrians. This would provide a nice bicycle route connecting the west side neighborhoods with the Manchester Community College.

Mr. Kennedy also noted the Modified SPUI has an advantage over the Offset Diamond alternative in that there is no signalized intersection at the Goffstown Road/Front Street intersection thereby reducing the potential impact of vehicles queuing back and blocking the Coolidge Avenue intersection. He added that the project team is currently still evaluating the traffic operations associated with this new alternative. He then asked the TAC members for their input on this modified SPUI alternative.

Q: Mr. Adam Jacobs, representing the town of Goffstown, asked where the traffic on Front Street and Eddy Road diverts under this alternative?

A: Mr. Kennedy responded that VHB is still analyzing the traffic model for this new alternative, but initial results do indicate that some traffic would be dispersed to other roadways, interchanges and connections particularly give the loss of connectivity between Dunbarton Road and the Amoskeag Bridge.

Q: Alderman Keith Hirschmann, stated that the bridge over Front Street is nice but asked how the residents who live along Dunbarton Road will cross the river into downtown with this alternative? He added that there are about many residents who will need to seek alternate routes to Elm Street, where will they go?

A: Mr. Kennedy described that there are various routes that these residents might choose including traveling north to Exit 7, traveling south on Eddy Road to cross the river at Bridge Street, or entering I-293 SB from Eddy Road at Exit 6 to travel to Exit 5. We will have more information on this once we complete the model runs.

Q: Mr. Adam Jacobs suggested developing a drive time analysis for present and future conditions for the residents in this area.

A: Mr. Kennedy agreed.

Q: Ms. Susan Huard, representing Manchester Community College (MCC) asked if Front Street would be widened under this alternative to better accommodate bicycles and pedestrians?

A: Mr. Kennedy stated that there is not a definitive answer to that yet, as it will be further analyzed once a proposed action is selected.

Q: Ms. Susan Huard asked if these modifications would introduce a traffic signal at the college entrance?

A: Mr. Keith Cota replied that it would be a question as to whether the intersection would meet the traffic signal warrants.

Mr. Keith Hirschmann stated that the residents in the neighborhood off Dunbarton Road would also need to seek alternate routes to the Northwest School area which is commonly accessed from Goffstown Road.

Q: Mr. Jacobs inquired about a connection from Front Street to Omega Street, or potentially a connection from the back side of the neighborhood to Goffstown Road, over near the cemetery.

A: Mr. Kennedy stated that the grade differential between Omega Street and Front Street is substantial, but the design team will look at this and other potential connections.

Q: Mr. Keith Cota, NHDOT's project manager for the project, asked Mr. Hirschmann about emergency response routes in this area and if they would be impacted with this alternative?

A: Mr. Hirschmann stated that Engine 4 is located north of the proposed Exit 7 location, which would respond to the area of Front Street and Eddy Road. He added that Engine 5 travels across the Amoskeag Bridge and would be impacted by the Modified SPUI alternative.

Mr. Bruce Thomas mentioned that the Manchester Transfer Station is on Dunbarton Road.

Q: Mr. Kennedy noted that we are hoping to get residents to show-up for the next public meeting. He asked the TAC members if they had any ideas on how best to get the word out.

A: Mr. Keith Cota suggested passing out flyers through the postal service to area residents, informing them of the public meeting or workshop and encouraging their feedback on these remaining issues.

Ms. Susan Huard offered to set up a public viewing kiosk at the MCC library for residents during the evening hours.

Noted.

Goffstown Connector Road

Mr. Kennedy discussed the need to decide on whether to carry the Goffstown Connector Road further through the design process and include it in the proposed action. He mentioned that the original need for the connection has changed due to the removal of the truck restriction on Goffstown Road. He asked the TAC members if the communities felt that there is still a need for the connection?

Mr. Cota added that if the connection is carried further, the project team would need to justify the need versus the impacts to the highly sensitive Black Brook area and the cost to construct it. He also mentioned that it would likely not be supported by turnpike funds and would require alternative funding methods which would likely include a local match.

Mr. Nate Miller, representing Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission (SNHPC), spoke of a letter the SNHPC had sent to the NHDOT Commissioner's office concerning the funding of the Goffstown Connector. He asked if NHDOT would have a conversation with the communities, money aside, to see if they would support it.

Mr. Cota reminded the committee that the connector road requires crossing Black Brook, which will be difficult and costly, with additional costs associated with mitigation and ROW acquisitions. He asked if, funding aside, whether the connector road still met the project's objective? He also noted that the commissioner's office would be willing to meet with the communities to discuss this issue.

Q: Mr. Kennedy asked the committee members if there is still a need for this connection?

A: Mr. Adam Jacobs, representing the town of Goffstown, spoke of a letter from the Goffstown Board of Selectmen which stated that if the truck restriction stays lifted then they do not see a need for the connection to the proposed Exit 7 interchange.

A: Mr. Hirschmann said the City of Manchester would defer the decision to the town of Goffstown. He added that Manchester would need to maintain the roadway and they currently do not have funds for that.

Mr. Kennedy stated that it appears that the TAC members have reached a consensus and they would inform the public of the removal of the Goffstown Connector Road from the proposed action at the next public meeting to get their input.

Ms. Meghan Theriault, representing the town of Goffstown, agreed that the significant environmental and ROW impacts of the connector road seem to outweigh the need for it at this time.

Mr. Bruce Thomas, representing the City of Manchester, suggested that we verify the decision with Kevin Sheppard (Manchester DPW) and the Manchester Board and Alderman.

I-293 Mainline Challenges

Mr. Kennedy discussed the design challenges that the team is up against in the area along Interstate 293 between the historic mill buildings and the Merrimack River, with tight geometric curves. He informed the committee that the Manchester Fire Department has discussed the need for 26-feet of width for emergency access behind the mill building that borders the interstate. He stated that maintaining this width pushes the widened interstate out over the river, which results in needing to design a very costly cantilevered wall structure to minimize impacts to the river.

He explained that the design team is currently developing preliminary costs of the potential impacts to the historic building or acquisition versus impacts to the river and the preliminary estimate of the wall.

Mr. Cota explained that the Bureau of ROW has conducted a preliminary analysis of the property and said the cost could be upwards of \$10 million dollars, which does not include the costs of having to relocate the businesses within the building. He added that the cost of the wall is also substantial, and would result in high maintenance/life-cycle costs. He noted that there are more questions that need to be answered about the wall, hydraulics and the historic significance of the building before any decisions can be made.

Mr. Cota mentioned that at the southern corner of the building, there is currently only 22-feet of clearance for emergency vehicles, and down at Exit 4, they recently constructed a wall that has only 16-feet of clearance. He stated that ultimately there will likely be a compromise to design the widening between the two resources and minimize impacts, but without further information, the result is still unknown.

Mr. Cota summarized some of the unknowns which could drive up the cost, stating that this is a highly sensitive archeological site, and there is a potential need for piles and expensive wall design in the area. He also mentioned that because of the tight radii of the curves along this segment of the interstate that there is a need for additional roadway width to accommodate required sight lines for safety.

Mr. Frank Koczalka, from VHB's highway design team, added that once you begin reducing shoulder widths in this area, you are compromising those sight lines and the safety of the interstate.

Mr. Kennedy reminded the attendees that there is still work to be done in this area before reaching a decision. He discussed the need for more input from the resource agencies and the public. He stated that currently the design team has looked at the extreme conditions of widening to the east and to the west. He also reminded the committee that the proposed action is to add an additional lane in each direction – the specific details of how and where the widening will be is what is still being evaluated.

Mr. Cota noted that the project team will need to be prepared for a range of questions at the public meeting such as where are the potential locations for sound walls?

Q: Mr. Keith Hirschmann asked Mr. Cota about interim maintenance of the roadway surfaces in the Exit 6 rotary, who is responsible, for how long?

A: Mr. Cota stated that he would have a discussion with turnpike and put them in contact with Manchester Public Works to have a dialog about maintaining the rotary until the construction of this project.

Q: Mr. Thomas asked for a copy of the meeting presentation.

A: Mr. Kennedy responded that the presentation would be posted online.

Mr. Thomas also noted that the repairs of the Amoskeag Bridge are being accelerated due to one side already on the red list and the other anticipated soon.

Mr. Cota discussed that the next steps will be to brief the NH DOT commissioner's office and to meet with the resource agencies to get some additional feedback. After these meetings, the project team will schedule another TAC meeting just before the next public meeting.

Mr. Kennedy thanked everyone for attending. The meeting ended at 2:45 pm.