



Place: Manchester Community College

Meeting Notes

Date: February 10, 2016

Notes Taken by: Karen Huberdeau

Time: 1-3 pm

Project #: 52392.01

Re: I-293 Exits 6 and 7
Manchester #16099
Technical Advisory Committee Meeting #1

ATTENDEES

Keith Cota	-	NHDOT
Trent Zanes	-	NHDOT
Marc Laurin	-	NHDOT
David Smith	-	NHDOT
Jamie Sikora	-	FHWA
David Boutin	-	State Senate
William Craig	-	City of Manchester
Bill Klubben	-	City of Manchester
Bruce Thomas	-	City of Manchester
Keith Hirschmann	-	City of Manchester
Adam Jacobs	-	Town of Goffstown
Meghan Theriault	-	Town of Goffstown
Mark Lemay	-	Town of Goffstown
Susan Huard	-	Manchester Community College
Jeff Nyhan	-	Manchester Community College
Tim White	-	SNHPC
Carolyn Cronin	-	Town of Hooksett
Marty Kennedy	-	VHB
Karen Huberdeau	-	VHB

Mr. Keith Cota began the meeting by introducing himself as the New Hampshire Department of Transportation's (NHDOT) Project Manager for this project. He also introduced Marty Kennedy as the Consultant Project Manager from VHB. Each of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) members were also asked to introduce themselves. Mr. Cota proceeded to state that this was the first TAC meeting since completing the planning study phase (Part A) of the project. He stated that the project is now moving forward into the preliminary engineering and environmental documentation phase (Part B). Adding that this next phase is when important decisions are made in regards to right-of-way (ROW) and environmental impacts.

Mr. Cota proceeded to describe the role of the Committee. He stated that the role of TAC members is to serve as a liaison to the community, in an advisory role, not as a decision-making body. Mr. Cota noted that the NHDOT in collaboration with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is responsible for project related decisions.

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Mr. Cota noted that the planning phase documentation is still available on the website www.293planningstudy.com

Mr. Cota proceeded to note that:

- Part B will involve a more detailed evaluation of the alternatives from Part A.
- The evaluation will consider numerous elements such as access management, maintenance, and funding.
- A multi-funding approach will likely be needed for the project.
- The project has been included in the statewide 10 year plan, which has been submitted to the legislature for approval.
- Issues related to constructability and the management of traffic during construction will play an important role in determining the phasing of which interchange is constructed first.

Mr. Cota provided an overview of the schedule for the Part B phase of the project, stating that this phase is scheduled to be completed by the spring of 2017.

Mr. Cota then introduced Marty Kennedy to provide a recap of Part A Planning Study.

Mr. Kennedy began with a review of the existing safety and operational deficiencies at Exit 6, noting the weaving and traffic signal operational deficiencies at the Amoskeag Circle, the vehicle queuing that spills onto I-293 from the northbound off-ramp, the short acceleration distances at each on-ramp, and the high volume weaving movements that occur between southbound on and off ramps. Mr. Kennedy proceeded to describe the alternative interchange configurations including:

- Single point urban interchange (SPUI)
- Standard diamond interchange
- Diverging diamond interchange (DDI)
- Diamond interchange with roundabouts
- Off-set diamond interchange

Mr. Kennedy then proceeded to discuss the alternatives that were developed for Exit 7. He stated that the primary deficiency of the existing Exit 7 interchange is that it only provides access to and from the south. The alternatives he discussed were:

- Diamond interchange (Current location) – this alternative would reconfigure the existing interchange to a full interchange at the current location. It was determined that although the new configuration fit geometrically, the proximity to Exit 6 continues to be problematic and would likely require the construction an additional weaving lane between the two interchanges.
- Relocating Exit 7 to the north – this alternative would provide connections to Front Street and Dunbarton Road. This alternative would support future development of the Hackett Hill Masterplan.
- Connection to Goffstown – this alternative would improve the Town of Goffstown’s access to the interstate and in particular, Goffstown’s industrial-zoned land that is expected to be developed in the future.

Mr. Kennedy continued by discussing the potential of widening I-293 to accommodate three lanes of traffic in each direction. He stated that the existing tight curve, historic buildings, and the Merrimack River along the segment north of Exit 5 creates a substantial challenge. The evaluation will consider how best to minimize impacts to the Historic Mill District on the west side as well as the Merrimack River on the east side. He discussed the implications of widening the highway towards the river, by cantilevering a lane over the river with a retaining wall system. He also discussed the

implications of widening towards the historic buildings on the west side, which have the potential of impacting the loading docks and parking operations at the existing businesses that currently occupy the buildings.

Mr. Kennedy stated that the Phase A Planning Study concluded that:

- There are substantial problems that need to be addressed.
- There are a reasonable range of alternatives to address the problems.
- TDM and TSM actions, alone, won't meet the study need.
- I-293 mainline, between Exits 5 and 7 will need 3 lanes per direction.
- I-293 mainline, through and north of Exit 7, could be retained at 2 lanes per direction.
- Each of the Exit 6 alternatives, with the exception of the Diamond Interchange with Roundabouts, operates acceptably and meets the study purpose.
- Reconfiguring Exit 7 at its existing location could be problematic given the proximity to Exit 6.
- Relocating Exit 7 to the north will meet the capacity and safety study purposes and support connectivity to important future economic development areas in Manchester and Goffstown.

Mr. Kennedy reminded the Committee that the planning study website is still operational, but is currently being reconfigured and updated for Phase B. He expects the updated site to be ready soon and will email the Committee as soon as it is ready.

Mr. Kennedy asked the Committee members to inform VHB if they would prefer to not have their contact information posted to the website. If not informed, the information will be added to the reconfigured website. He added that there is a feedback section on the website and encouraged Committee members to inform their communities to use this tool to ask questions and provide feedback.

Mr. Cota wrapped-up the presentation portion of the meeting by discussing some of the feedback that was received from the Planning Study. He stated that residents were concerned with traffic volumes on local roadways, noise, and property impacts. He noted that the study team will be evaluating these and other issues in more detail and will try to strike a balance between environmental impacts, traffic concerns, and cost.

Mr. Cota then opened the meeting up for questions.

Senator Boutin questioned whether moving Exit 7 further to the north would impact a future expansion of the Manchester Community College (MCC) campus, as the College is as vital part of the community.

Mr. Cota noted that there are representatives from the College on the Committee and stated that the project team will be looking into various options to minimize impacts to the College and all adjacent properties.

Senator Boutin also asked if anyone had spoken to the businesses who currently occupy the historic buildings beside the interstate to get their thoughts on how the widening would affect their operations.

Mr. Cota responded that the business owners have not been contacted yet. However, he added that ROW impacts will be fully addressed during this phase of the project and property owners will have the opportunity to participate during the Public Informational Meetings and Public Hearing.

Senator Boutin then questioned if there was a middle of the road option to avoid the worst case impacts to the Historic properties and to the River.

Mr. Cota stated that in an effort to best balance the cultural and environmental issues he expects that the ultimate solution will be somewhere in the middle. He added that the project team will be scheduling meetings with the resource agencies as the project proceeds to receive input and discuss these matters.

Mr. Keith Hirschmann asked if the project team had discussed the Black Brook Bridge and the Stark Lane Bridge.

Mr. Cota responded that there had been a previous project developed for Black Brook Bridge, but that project was put on hold to ensure that the solution for the bridge is consistent with the preferred alternative that results from the Exits 6 and 7 project. Mr. Cota added that the project team is aware of the condition of both bridges and understands that access needs to be addressed. Mr. Cota further noted that the Department is aware of scouring issues at the Black Brook Bridge and interim measures are being developed to address this issue.

Senator Boutin asked if the project will study the noise impacts to the nearby residents and condominiums as he has heard concerns about the increase in traffic and noise.

Mr. Cota responded that adding a lane to either side of the interstate will require a noise analysis for the permitting of this phase. He informed the Committee that the DOT's Noise Abatement Policy can be found online and that the project team will educate the Committee more on the subject as the project progresses. He added that this phase will look at noise closely, determining whether or not earth berms or sound walls can be constructed and the cost-benefit support of these alternatives.

Mr. Tim White asked if it has been determined that this phase would require documentation for an Environmental Assessment (EA) or an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Mr. Cota replied that it has been determined that Part B would proceed as an EA as no significant impacts are anticipated. He added that as we proceed, if a substantial issue arises that would elevate the impacts, it is possible that the effort could be elevated to an EIS, although he does not anticipate this occurrence.

Mr. William Craig asked for clarity as to how the level of noise is evaluated with regard to future traffic growth.

Mr. Cota explained that there is normal traffic growth (and associated noise impacts) that will occur regardless of the project and then there will be noise impacts that will result directly from the project. The evaluation will consider the build and no-build conditions.

Ms. Carolyn Cronin, representing the Town of Hooksett, asked if there was a formal process in place for the TAC liaisons to communicate feedback and concerns to and from their communities.

Mr. Cota replied that the Committee members will need to determine the best means for their communication with others in their respective communities. He noted that Committee members can email himself and Marty Kennedy directly with questions or comments. He added that the project team will be willing to schedule public officials meetings to update town officials if necessary. Mr. Cota also stated that if there are concerns being expressed that this input should be brought back for overview with the entire Committee. It is hoped that resolutions to these issues can be discussed and determined during the TAC meetings.

Mr. Bruce Thomas asked if there would need to be a 'sales pitch' provided to the communities if the DDI alternative became the preferred alternative.

Mr. Cota responded that if the DOT and FHWA determines that DDI alternative meets the project's purpose and need and is advanced as the preferred alternative, there would need to be an educational element because this particular interchange configuration would be unfamiliar to NH motorists. Mr. Cota stressed the need for public outreach - well before that alternative is advanced to implementation - to educate motorist on how to travel through a DDI interchange. He reiterated that the Single Point Urban Interchange (SPUI) was new and different at Exit 5 and the motorists adapted to it quite well.

Mr. Thomas commented that he thought it would be best to construct Exit 7 first, which would provide some traffic relief to Exit 6.

Mr. Cota replied that this phase of the project includes a comprehensive evaluation to determine the constructability and phasing of the project. He stated that the 10 year plan currently shows funding for Exit 6 being constructed first. However, he stressed that that can be changed once we complete the evaluation.

Mr. Hirschmann noted that he would like for Exit 7 to be constructed first, but he stressed that there are also critical needs at Exit 6. He described the significant degradation that currently exists throughout the Amoskeag Circle and noted that the City doesn't have the funds to keep up with the needed maintenance.

Mr. Cota responded that there are potential interim solutions to the existing problems at Exit 6, which will be considered. He stated that they will be discussed throughout this phase of the project.

Ms. Meghan Theriault asked if preliminary design will be completed for all of the alternatives or if decisions will be made to narrow down the options beforehand.

Mr. Cota replied that Part A of the project was a very broad look at potential solutions from a planning level perspective. He stated that the focus of Part B will be to develop the design and evaluate the alternatives in greater detail to provide the proper documentation needed for approval of a preferred alternative.

Mr. David Smith added that the documentation from Part A has already begun the process of narrowing down the alternatives.

Mr. Kennedy noted that we need to develop each alternative to a sufficient level to compare the impacts. However, once a particular alternative drops out, we're not going to continue the development of its design. Our hope is to get to a preferred alternative as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Mr. Cota explained that the public hearing will address one preferred alternative that seeks the support of the public.

Mr. Hirschmann asked about the difference between the previous public meetings and the public hearing.

Mr. Cota noted that the previous meetings were to provide the public with information about potential alternatives to address the defined deficiencies at a planning level and to informally seek the public's input. He stated that the public hearing is a formal meeting that will present the preferred alternative and address all critical ROW impacts and how the project would affect abutting properties and their access.

Mr. Bill Klubben asked about a TAC schedule and future meetings. He also asked if he could be provided a list of data the project team is collecting.

Mr. Kennedy replied that we expect to hold approximately nine TAC meetings throughout the project's expected 18-month duration, which is approximately one meeting every other month. However, he noted that there will be times when there will be a need to meet more frequently. Mr. Kennedy also stated that he would provide a list of the types of data that the team is collecting and he also expects to present much of that data collection at the next TAC meeting.

Mr. Kennedy reminded the Committee that the next meeting will likely be some time in April and that he would send out an email reminder, closer to the date.

Mr. Cota concluded the meeting by thanking everyone for attending and serving on the Committee.