

MEETING SUMMARY

Project: Northerly Crossing Corridor
Congestion Mitigation Study

Memo Date: January 22, 2004

Meeting Date: January 13, 2004

Time: 10:00 AM

Place: Clarion Hotel
(Stroudsburg, PA)

By: Anita Wright

Subject/Purpose: Interagency Advisory Committee (IAC) Meeting #1

Attendees

Frank McCartney	DRJTBC
W. Michael Cane	DRJTBC
George Alexandridis	DRJTBC
Jeanne Pomager	DRJTBC
Bryan Hill	DRJTBC
Roger Sager	DRJTBC
Linda Spalinski	DRJTBC
James Yeager	Michael Baker Jr., Inc.
Mark Alisesky	Michael Baker Jr., Inc.
Amy Sokalski	Michael Baker Jr., Inc.
Marty Wade	Michael Baker Jr., Inc.
Anita Wright	Helen Neuhaus and Associates
Kathy Dimpsey	FHWA – PA
Doyle Nelson	National Park Service
Jack Kanarek	NJ Transit
Ron Tindall	NJTPA
Hamou Meghdir	NJTPA
Andrea Tingey	NJ – Historic Preservation Office
Bob Miller	NJDOT
Miki Krakauer	NJDOT
Laine Rankin	NJDOT-DPPD
David DuMont	NJDEP
David Dech	Warren County Planning Department
Bernard Rooney	Warren County Planning Department
Thomas Drabic	Sussex County Planning
Richard Cochrane	PennDOT District 4-0
Don Lerch	PennDOT District 5-0
David Lamereaux	PADEP
Peggy Howarth	Monroe County Transportation
John Woodling	Monroe County Planning Commission
Brian Langan	NEPA
Larry Malski	Monroe County Railroad Authority
Joe Gurinko	Lehigh Valley Planning Commission

MEETING SUMMARY

The first meeting of the Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission's (DRJTBC) Northerly Crossings Corridor Congestion Mitigation Study Interagency Advisory Committee (IAC) was held on Tuesday, January 13, 2004 at the Clarion Hotel, Stroudsburg, Pa.

Frank McCartney, Executive Director, DRJTBC, and W. Michael Cane, Project Manager, DRJTBC, welcomed the new committee and thanked its members for participating. Mr. McCartney noted that the Commission recently completed work on the Southerly Crossings study and that a Northerly Crossings study was the obvious next step. He indicated that the area included in the Northerly Crossings study has experienced tremendous growth in recent years, including a 19% increase in traffic volumes on I-80, and that continued growth is expected. Mr. McCartney also noted that the Southerly Crossings Study included a committee similar to the IAC, which proved to be very helpful in reviewing issues related to congestion and identifying possible solutions.

By way of background, Mr. McCartney briefly described the Commission's \$526 million capital program, which includes four major components:

1. System Enhancements - expansion or construction of new facilities (\$323 million)
2. System Rehabilitation - reconstruction of existing structures (\$152 million)
3. System Management – operational or service changes, including installation of EZ Pass on all lanes, ITS, etc. (\$33 million)
4. System Security – protection of transportation facilities, including conduct of a vulnerability assessment, installation of cameras at key bridges, etc. (\$18 million)

Following introduction of the project team and self-introductions, Mr. Cane provided an overview of the Commission, which is responsible for maintenance and operation of 20 bridges (7 toll, 13 toll supported) and 32 approach structures along a 139-mile stretch of the Delaware River.

Using a PowerPoint presentation and directing attendees to their handout packets, the project team briefly reviewed the meeting agenda before describing the components of the study and explaining the purpose and function of the IAC. An overview of the presentation, along with a summary of comments and recommendations, is provided below:

Study Purpose and Understanding

- the study is designed to identify existing transportation conditions and potential future needs and to develop conceptual alternatives to address the identified problems

MEETING SUMMARY

- four bridges are included in the study: 1) Portland-Columbia Toll Bridge, 2) Portland-Columbia Pedestrian Bridge, 3) Milford-Montague Toll Bridge and 4) Delaware Water Gap (I-80) Toll Bridge

Overview of the IAC (Mission and Membership)

- the IAC is designed to assist the Commission by providing advice on critical issues and guidance in defining a range of conceptual alternatives that could be advanced to implementation
- the IAC includes representatives of federal, regional and state (Pennsylvania and New Jersey) agencies with regulatory and approval authority
- the IAC will meet four times over the course of the 18-month study
- all meetings will be documented with general meeting summaries

Summary of Study Work Plan and Project Schedule

The project team reported that an inventory of the existing transportation system is being prepared. This will involve collection of data from previous studies and proposed projects, aerial photography and surveys, and conduct of environmental screenings. In addition to analyzing existing traffic operations, the project team will be forecasting future conditions in order to develop a range of concepts to mitigate congestion in the area for the analysis periods (years 2010 and 2030). The project team expects that some of the initial concepts will be fatally flawed; it will look to the IAC to assist in eliminating these early on and in evaluating and prioritizing the remaining alternatives. It was also noted that this multi-modal study will examine issues related to pedestrian and bicycle use, as well as auto, truck and bus movements.

The following questions and comments were raised regarding data collection efforts, primarily in connection with origin and destination (O&D) information:

- Survey work conducted in the 1990s at the Delaware Water Gap and along I-80 showed a high number of trips destined for Morris County. Suggestion to survey employers in that area.
- O&D analysis conducted for the Lackawanna Cutoff rail study also identified a large number of trips headed for Morris County.
- Utilize data from EZ Pass or TRANSCOM's Transmit Project.
- Questions relating to how REEBIE data will be used and what information will be extracted for the study.

MEETING SUMMARY

- The North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority is expanding its model to include northwest New Jersey. This work will be running concurrently with the Northerly Crossings Study.
- The New Jersey Transit has a model that extends into Pennsylvania that may be beneficial.
- The Monroe County Railroad Authority has been working for a number of years with the involved counties covering related issues. Suggestion that the opportunity exists for exchange of information between the two projects.
- Discussion related to the increase in traffic on I-80 and the impact of the new Route 33/I-78 interchange on I-80 truck traffic in recent years. DRJTBC noted that trucks comprise approximately 24% of the traffic on I-80 and 35% of the traffic on I-78. Truck traffic on I-78 is projected to increase due to further development of Port Newark and Port Elizabeth and new facilities along the Hudson River Waterfront in Bayonne and Jersey City.

Draft Technical Memorandum #1

The project team briefly summarized the contents of Draft Technical Memorandum #1, the first project deliverable, which will be distributed to IAC members prior to the next meeting. The Memorandum includes four (4) distinct components: a Community Involvement Plan (CIP); a description of the Study Area; a summary of Previous Studies; and an abstract of Local and Regional Planning Perspectives.

A summary of comments, by section, is provided below:

CIP

- Suggested North Warren High School, Blairstown (NJ) as a possible meeting location for public forums.
- Consider scheduling meetings to accommodate residents in northern and southern portions of the study area rather than conducting forums for each State.
- Suggested additions to the Northerly Crossings Forum (NCF) membership list include: Tri-State Transportation Campaign, Pocono Mountains Chamber of Commerce, Kittatiny Canoes or similar livery service, County Conservation District, Delaware and Lehigh Heritage Council, Appalachian Trail Park Council, Delaware RiverKeeper.
- Facilitate discussions at NCF and IAC meetings by providing large-scale graphics that clearly illustrate counties and other key locations in Pennsylvania and New Jersey.
- Include the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Philadelphia Division) on the IAC.

MEETING SUMMARY

Study Area

- Overlay Lackawanna Coalition rail project (rail line and proposed station locations) on maps of study area.
- Expand cordon area to include Morris County if the area is found to be a major commuter destination.
- Expand study area to the south to include the Route 33-I-78 interchange, with regard to truck traffic.

Previous Studies/Local and Regional Planning Perspectives

IAC members offered a number of comments and suggestions regarding additional studies and reports to be considered, along with possible contacts to be explored:

- Coordinate with the Reconstruction of Exit 308 Interchange project (Notice to Proceed was recently issued), as traffic counts will be collected as part of the work
- Contact TransOptions as source of information on major area employers
- Contact Martz Trailways for ridership data
- Obtain a copy of the Lower Delaware River Wild & Scenic River Management Plan, which covers the area from Washington Crossing to the I-80 bridge
- Obtain information from Monroe County Planning regarding the County's implementation programs

In closing the meeting, Mr. McCartney thanked all participants for attending and providing their input and commented that "the River became a little narrower today."