

# Bow-Concord I-93 Transportation Planning Study

## Planning Group Meeting No. 10

### MEETING MINUTES

**DATE:** February 20, 2007  
**DATE OF MEETING:** January 30, 2007  
**LOCATION OF MEETING:** Horseshoe Pond Community Resource Center  
Concord, NH

#### ATTENDED BY:

#### Planning Group Members

<u>Name</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>
Eric Anderson	Town of Bow, Selectmen
Tom Aspell	City of Concord, City Manager
Bill McGonagle	City of Concord, Planning Board
Chris Northrop	NHOEP
Bill O'Donnell	FHWA
Bill Neidermyer	US Fish & Wildlife Service
Carolyn Russell	NHDES
Dan Lynch	NH Fish & Game
Brian Tufts	Town of Pembroke, Selectmen
Laura Scott	Town of Pembroke, Town Planner
Tom Raffio	City of Concord, Citizen Representative
Bill Norton	Concord 2020
Steve Buckley	CNHRPC
Howard Moffett	River Connection
Nan Hagen	Main Street Concord
Maura Leahy	Jordan Institute
Sharon Wason	CNHRPC
Rusty McLear	Lakes Region Tourism
Rosemary Monahan	EPA
Mike McDonough	Pan Am Railways
Don Lyford	NHDOT

#### Others

<u>Name</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>
Bill Hauser	NHDOT
John Butler	NHDOT
S. Sharma	NHDOT
Stephen Henninger	City of Concord, Asst. City Planner

<u>Name</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>
Deb Stohrer	Concord 2020
Liz Durfee Hengen	Historic Preservation Consultant
Dick Henry	Jordan Institute
Kevin Ripple	Concord
Leigh Levine	FHWA
Jed Merrow	McFarland-Johnson, Inc.
Gene McCarthy	McFarland-Johnson, Inc.

## **MEETING MINUTES:**

The Agenda for the meeting is attached and the meeting generally followed the Agenda. These minutes are formatted to follow the Agenda Items.

### A. Welcome

Gene McCarthy opened the meeting by welcoming and thanking everyone for attending. He mentioned that Steve Whitman had a conflict and would not be attending.

### B Approval of Minutes

Gene stated that the minutes for the last several meetings had been distributed via e-mail. He recognized that it was a mistake to combine all of them on one set of minutes, but it was not anticipated to take as many meetings to complete the screening. All remaining meetings will have their own minutes. There were no comments given at the meeting, but Gene stated they could be submitted later.

Bill McGonagle stated that the transportation consultant working for the City on its Master Plan came up with different conclusions about I-93. He wondered if the traffic numbers were different. Gene stated that both studies are using the same traffic numbers from the Central NH Regional Model. Gene stated that he wasn't familiar with the Master Plan results, but would look into any discrepancies.

### C. Alternative Screening

Gene began the discussion by saying that Opportunity Corridor Option 4 would not be the focus of the meeting. Don Lyford explained that representatives of the NHDOT, FHWA and City of Concord met to discuss Option 4. Progress was made and the hope is that an agreement can be made as to how Option 4 would be handled under this project. Several comments were made that Option 4 should be carried forward.

**Safety Improvements:** Gene stated that the Safety Improvements Alternative is a stand-alone alternative whereby existing safety issues would be addressed. The assumption is that no capacity enhancements would be included. Several questions were asked focusing on whether safety improvements could be a component or a phase of other build alternatives. Gene stated that safety improvements are assumed to occur for any build alternative that would alter I-93.

The initial screening indicated high scores for safety, but scores for other criteria were neutral or low. The lowest score was for mobility because no capacity improvements would occur. Several questions were raised concerning the screening scores for this alternative. The low Community Vision score for this alternative was questioned because safety improvements to Exit 1 on I-89 are part of the Bow Master Plan. Gene explained that the low score reflects that this alternative would not meet Concord's vision for the corridor. The neutral score for Access was also questioned. Gene stated that this alternative would not alter existing access. Several members mentioned that increased safety could improve access because some drivers would not be afraid to enter at Exit 1.

The consensus from the group was that the Safety Improvement Alternative was Unreasonable. This conclusion was reached because the alternative did not address enough of the goals for the project.

**Alternate Land Use:** Gene stated that there were two alternatives that suggested alternate land use. One was an Alternate Land Use alternative and the other is Opportunity Corridor Concept Option 3 that added alternate land use to the build components of that concept. No initial screening was conducted for these because not enough was known as to what the land use revisions would be.

There was a great deal of discussion concerning the difficulties making land use and zoning changes at the local level. Most communities can only make changes once a year and can only realistically make a few revisions each year. The difficulty in controlling this for a regional project was also mentioned.

Rosemary Monahan mentioned other areas where land use revisions were used to make reductions in the number of trips. It would not necessarily make a large reduction, but is something worth considering. Several others agreed that it was worth looking at even if only as a component of another alternative. Other comments included using some funding to support other modes of travel such as bike paths, realizing that the rationing of fuel may influence future travel.

The consensus from the group is that alternate land use by itself would not address the project goals and is therefore unreasonable. However, the consensus was that as a component it is reasonable and should be considered along with other build alternatives.

**Passenger Rail Service:** Gene stated that this is a stand-alone alternative where passenger rail alone would be used to handle future mobility. He again reminded the group that all of the project alternatives assume that the existing rail corridor would be preserved.

The extent to which passenger rail would affect traffic on I-93 was discussed. It was stated that passenger rail could address some of the commuter traffic, but since Concord is the job center, it could only affect a portion of the overall traffic. A comparison was made with the Downeaster rail service, where the traffic on I-95 was not affected when the rail service was implemented, even though the rail passenger numbers were high.

The land use and travel changes that would occur as a result of rail service were discussed. Passenger rail service creates opportunities for more clustered development around stations

that also promote walking, biking and other transit use. One commenter mentioned that rail service could come much sooner if fuel were rationed.

The consensus from the group is that the Passenger Rail Service as a stand-alone alternative would not address the project goals and is therefore unreasonable.

**1992 Feasibility Study:** This alternative was developed as part of a feasibility study conducted in 1992 for the I-93 corridor through Bow and Concord. This alternative proposed an eight-lane I-93 from I-89 to I-393, with many flyovers and new ramp configurations.

The initial screening indicated that this option would score well for mobility, safety and access, but low for aesthetics, community vision, implementation and support. The screening reflected the feeling that this concept supported the continued use of the automobile, without much consideration for other modes or considerations.

The discussion focused on the scoring in the screening. The neutral score under Natural Environment was questioned. Gene answered that the impacts for this alternative would be greater, but there would also be opportunities for enhancements. It was pointed out that this option did separate through and local traffic at the I-93/I-89/Logging Hill Interchange.

The consensus from the group is that the 1992 Feasibility Study option had too many impacts and was too focused on automobile traffic and is therefore unreasonable.

Gene then presented a list of additional Miscellaneous Alternatives to screen. He explained that these are alternatives or components that need to be screened to ensure all actions that have been discussed in the past received equal consideration.

**Transportation System Management (TSM):** TSM are short-term, low cost measures to reduce congestion or improve safety. These measures could include new signals, turn lanes, Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS), re-striping, ramp metering or ramp modifications. Gene explained that the signing that was installed on I-89 to slow traffic is an example of TSM.

The initial screening indicated mostly low scores (half red) for this alternative because it does not address many of the goals of the project. Implementation was half green because these measures are low-cost and do not disrupt existing traffic very much. The group rated Support with a Neutral score.

Gene explained that TSM is much like TDM in that it must be evaluated per NEPA as a stand-alone alternative. It was mentioned that it could also be considered as a component or phase of another alternative. It is reasonable because it is required under NEPA.

**I-93 Tunnel:** Gene explained that this alternative was mentioned by a member of the public during the public workshops in May 2006 and was previously discussed for the corridor. The tunnel would be located in the downtown area for an undetermined length. This option would provide a connection from the downtown to the river by allowing pedestrians to cross over I-93. It was discussed that this could be a component of a build alternative.

The initial screening showed relatively high scores, except for implementation because of the cost to construct and possibly operate a tunnel. Howard Moffett thought the Community Vision score was too low at half green and the consensus was that a full green was appropriate. The Residential Neighborhood score was also upgraded to full green.

The consensus from the group is that an I-93 Tunnel is a reasonable component to consider.

**Shift I-93 to East side of River:** This alternative was presented in the Concord 2020 Vision report. It would move I-93 to the east side of the Merrimack River from south of Exit 13 to Exit 15.

The initial screening indicated a mixed result with high marks for Mobility and Quality of Life, but low scores for Implementation and Natural Resources. A question arose as to why Mobility was high. Gene answered that the assumption was I-93 would be widened as well as moved and Mobility would, therefore, improve. The group rated Support with a half red.

The consensus from the group is that moving I-93 to the east side of the river is an unreasonable component to consider due to its environmental impacts.

**Move the Merrimack River away from I-93:** This alternative was mentioned during the Public Workshops and has been discussed in the past. This option would move the river near the “pinch point” in Downtown Concord to provide a separation between the river and I-93.

The initial screening for this component indicated mainly neutral scores because it would be a component of a build alternative. The Natural Environment score was full red as well as the Implementation score. The Support score was full red.

The consensus from the group is that moving the Merrimack River is an unreasonable component to consider due to its environmental obstacles.

**Light Rail in I-93 Median:** This option would accommodate light rail in the median of I-93. There is no other light rail in New Hampshire and this would be a Central NH system. A commuter rail system would likely use the existing rail corridor. It was mentioned that a light rail system did not need to be in the median.

The initial screening indicated many neutral scores because it would not address many of the categories. The score for Implementation was full red because of the difficulty in starting up a new rail transit system.

The group felt it was not reasonable as a stand-alone alternative, but was reasonable as a component.

**Western Beltway:** This alternative would create a new corridor in western Concord. It would begin at Exit 2 on I-89 and connect to Exit 16 on I-93. This option was proposed at the Public Workshops by two different citizens.

The initial screening for this alternative indicated several full red scores due to the impacts that would be caused by it. The impacts to homes and communities would be substantial. Natural

Environment also received a full red because of a crossing of the Merrimack River and a substantial crossing of floodplains.

The consensus from the group is that a Western Beltway is an unreasonable alternative due to its impacts to neighborhoods, potentially historic properties, and natural resources.

#### D. Public Outreach

Gene stated that a Public Meeting would need to be held to present the results of the alternative screening. The current schedule would hold the meeting in April. The meeting would be held on a weekday night somewhere in Concord. The meeting could be filmed and played on CCTV over a period of time. The hope would be to reach as many people as possible to get comments. Gene mentioned that the project website address would be given out so that citizens could submit comments that way. A group member mentioned that Concord has had some success using a live call in format. Gene stated that he would contact CCTV to discuss this option. Laura Scott mentioned that Pembroke holds their Town and School meetings in March and that presenting alternatives during these meetings would be welcome.

#### E. Next Meeting

It was determined that the next meeting would be held in late February or early March. (It was later scheduled for March 7).

#### F. Summary/Classification Report

Gene explained that the final task to complete for Part A is a Summary/Classification Report. The plan is to complete the draft of the report after the Public Meeting. The draft would be distributed to the Planning Group prior to a final Planning Group Meeting. This would likely occur in May. The report would then be finalized and Part A would be complete.

#### I. Adjournment

Submitted by,  
Gene McCarthy, P.E.  
McFarland-Johnson, Inc.

## **Bow-Concord I-93 Transportation Planning Study**

Planning Group Meeting No. 10  
January 30, 2007  
Tuesday, 3:30 p.m.

Horseshoe Pond Community Resource Center  
26 Commercial Street, Concord, NH

### **AGENDA**

- A. Welcome
- B. Continue Alternative Screening
- C. Public Outreach
- D. Next Meeting
- E. Summary/Classification Report
- F. Adjourn