



**Meeting
Notes**

Attendees: Ray Faucher, MaineDOT
Judy Lindsey, MaineDOT
Ernie Martin, MaineDOT
Mark Hasselmann, FHWA
Peter Kleskovic, FHWA
Jay Clement, USACE
John Edgecomb, PAC
George Howe, PAC
David Cyr, PAC
Paul Bouchard, PAC
Ray Mersereau, PAC
Linda Anne Cyr, PAC
Lisa Standley, VHB
Michael Paiewonsky, VHB
Susanna Liller, B&G

Date/Time: Tuesday, 02 October 2007, 3:00-5:00 pm

Project No.: 06520.02

Place: Caribou Inn,
Caribou, ME

Re: PAC Meeting Minutes

Notes taken by: M. Paiewonsky

The Aroostook County Transportation Study (ACTS) team met with members of the Public Advisory Committee (PAC) and the public to update them on the progress on the ACTS since the publication of the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) in June 2006 and the Public Hearings that were held in August 2006. Representatives from Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), and approximately 30 members of the public were present. The meeting was facilitated by Susanna Liller of Barton & Gingold.

Susanna began the meeting at 3:00 pm and welcomed everyone. She reviewed the ground rules for the meeting, did introductions and turned the meeting over to Ray Faucher.

R. Faucher of MaineDOT welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for coming. Mr. Faucher said that the purpose of the meeting was to update the PAC on the ACTS since the publication of the SDEIS in June 2006 and the Public Hearings that were held in August 2006. Since that time MaineDOT has developed several new alignment options for Segment 4, Caribou Route 1-161 Connector and Segment 7, Presque Isle Bypass, completed additional field work to gather additional information on wetlands and historic resources, and completed Phase I of the USACE Highway Methodology (HM) process. Mr. Faucher indicated that the next milestone for the project would be to complete the Highway Methodology process (culminating in the USACE identification of

the Least Environmentally Damaging Practical Alternative [LEDPA]) for both Caribou and Presque Isle. That would be followed by the preparation of the Final EIS. He then turned the meeting over to Lisa Standley.

With the use of a Powerpoint presentation (attached), L. Standley of VHB provided the PAC with specific details of the ACTS status. Ms. Standley indicated that MaineDOT is coordinating with the USACE and the US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) to complete the USACE HM process. L. Standley stressed that HM is a very important part of the project development process because, ultimately through this process, the Corps will identify the alternative which is the LEDPA and a USACE permit can only be issued for the LEDPA. She then reviewed the objectives of the HM process and details of Phase I and Phase II of the HM process.

Ms. Standley presented the revised Basic Project Purpose (BPP) for Segment 4, Caribou Connector (below) that was submitted to the USACE for their approval.

The purpose of the Segment 4 transportation improvements is to enhance regional transportation by improving connectivity and reducing travel times between Route 161 and Route 1 in Caribou, and to improve public safety and traffic flow/mobility in downtown Caribou by reducing conflicts between through (particularly truck) and local traffic.

Ms. Standley showed the three new alignment options for Segment 4 (4A, 4B, and 4C) which were developed as a result of comments from the USACE, USEPA, and the City of Caribou, and presented a series of tables comparing the environmental impacts and transportation benefits of all the HM Phase I alternatives for Segment 4.

Ms. Standley indicated that the alignment options dismissed from consideration in Caribou are Alignment Options 1 and 2 (high commercial property and wetland impacts) and Alignment Option 3 (high commercial property, wetland, and Section 4(f) property impacts). The alignment options advanced to Phase II of the HM process in Caribou are Alignment Options 4A, 4B, 4C, and the Transportation System Management (TSM) option. TSM measures include improvements in traffic signal timing, improved signage, or pavement markings. TSM measures were advanced to Phase II at the request of the USEPA.

Ms. Standley continued with Segment 7, Presque Isle Bypass, providing the revised BPP (below) that was submitted to the USACE for their approval.

The purpose of the Segment 7 transportation improvements is to enhance regional transportation by reducing travel times and improving north-south and east-west traffic flow, and to improve public safety and traffic flow/mobility in downtown Presque Isle by reducing conflicts between through (particularly truck) and local traffic.

Ms. Standley showed the two new alignment options (4A and 4B) which were developed as a result of comments from the USACE and USEPA. She then presented a series of tables comparing the environmental impacts and transportation benefits of the HM Phase I alternatives.

Ms. Standley indicated that the alignment options dismissed from consideration in Presque Isle are Alignment Option 4A (does not satisfy the BPP), Alignment Option 1 (high wetland impacts), and Alignment Option 4 (residential property impacts). The alternatives advanced to Phase II of the HM process in Presque Isle are Alignment Options 2X, 4B, 6 and the Route 1 Upgrade/TSM.

Ms. Standley concluded the Powerpoint presentation by describing the next steps in the ACTS. These include the completion of the HM process (Phase II Permit documentation is currently under review at MaineDOT), working with agencies toward consensus on a LEDPA, and preparing the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD).

Questions/comments from PAC members:

- George Howe asked if the proposal to construct a 4-lane highway has been dropped.

R. Faucher of MaineDOT responded that a 4-lane highway has not been dropped but that a 2-lane highway would be constructed initially. Sufficient right-of-way width would be purchased for the construction of a 4-lane highway when funding becomes available. However, it is not anticipated that funding for the full build out to a 4-lane highway would be available in the foreseeable future.

- Paul Bouchard wondered what the Cities of Presque Isle and Caribou think of these recent developments.

R. Faucher responded that two of the new alignment options (4A and 4B) in Caribou were developed as a result of input from the City of Caribou. Caribou prefers Alignment Option 4A (verbally affirmed by Caribou City Manager Steve Buck). Mr. Faucher indicated that Presque Isle has not indicated an alignment option preference.

- Paul Bouchard stated that the primary purpose of the Presque Isle Bypass was to divert truck traffic
- Ray Mersereau asked what the time frame was on completion of the "next steps" listed on the Powerpoint presentation.

R. Faucher indicated MaineDOT is awaiting USACE written approval of the revised BPP and the HM Phase I submission. The HM Phase II permit application has been prepared by the project consultant and is under review at MaineDOT. Once submitted to the USACE, they will issue a public notice and work towards determining a LEPDA by early 2008.

J. Clement affirmed this schedule.

R. Faucher said that the FEIS and subsequent ROD should be completed by the fall of 2008 provided the Corps process is completed in early 2008.

- David Cyr asked if there will be interchanges or intersections at roadway crossings.
R. Faucher explained that in Caribou the 2-lane roadway will have at-grade intersections with Route 1 (at the southern end of the project) and Route 161 and a grade-separated interchange at Route 1 north of the Cary Medical Center roundabout. Route 89 will be overpassed with a bridge. In Presque Isle, proposed is an at-grade intersection with Route 1 (northern and southern end of the bypass) and at the intersection of Fort Road (Routes 163/167) and Conant Road. All other intersected roadways will be overpassed with a bridge.
- George Howe noted that Alignment Option 6 in Presque Isle has the best transportation benefit. He asked for that to be explained.

L. Standley explained that Alignment Option 6 performed so well in the traffic analysis (largest reductions in travel time, VHT, and VMT of all alignment options considered) because it provides the most direct, fastest and most efficient north-south travel path and

reduces the most downtown traffic. Ray added these benefits address both the regional and local perspective.

Questions/comments from members of the public:

- Peter Edgecomb asked if farmers could continue to use unused land within the right-of-way when MaineDOT initially constructs a 2-lane highway.

R. Faucher indicated that continued farming would not be possible and that a fence would be built at the property line, as per MaineDOT policy.

- Steve Buck (Caribou City Manager) stated that a public hearing (to be conducted during the HM Phase II Permit Application process) is absolutely necessary.

Jay Clement of the USACE stated that during the Public Notice period a Public Hearing can be requested. He went on to state that the USACE Public Hearings are very formal, expensive, and in his opinion, not very effective. He suggested that, during this period, a locally-based public meeting could be held to allow people more opportunity to express/discuss their opinions on the project.

- Jim Cyr stated that the public process for this project has been limited and that many public meetings are required.
- Tom Stevens (Presque Isle City Manager) stated that he has not received the economic survey he asked for.
R. Faucher stated that it is not complete.
Mr. Stevens stated that he and the City Council would need at least 30 days to review it before the USACE public meeting. L. Standley indicated that the economic analysis is expected to be ready for distribution in December 2007.
- Jim Brown stated that he is a fifth-generation farmer in Presque Isle and that Alignment Options 2X or 6 would divide his farm, making it useless. He also stated that he has not been contacted by MaineDOT about the potential taking of his land and when he has tried to contact MaineDOT he has been forwarded from one person to the next.

R. Faucher stated that MaineDOT has made substantial efforts to minimize overall farmland impact and not to cut diagonally across farmfields. Mr. Faucher also stated that every potentially affected property owner along Alignment Options 2X and 6 were contacted during the SDEIS review period. The potential farm impacts were discussed with the Department of Agriculture during preparation of the SDEIS.

- Linda Cyr stated that road building hurts the Aroostook County's agricultural economy, hurting real people. Maine DOT should more carefully consider TSM measures.

R. Faucher responded by stating that the ACTS was initiated by MaineDOT after LEAD (Leaders Encouraging Aroostook Development) obtained federal funding for the study. MaineDOT is the agency responsible for undertaking transportation studies that are federally funded. Mr. Faucher stated that MaineDOT is trying to balance wetland and farmland impacts.

- J. Cyr stated that Aroostook County needs to maintain its economic vitality. Aroostook County has already lost rail service and is not maintaining its existing roadway system. High fuel costs also contribute to high transportation costs. He stated that it is unfortunate that farmland would be lost but that wetlands are the driving force in the decision making process.
- Paul Bouchard stated that it is important to remember MaineDOT and USACE were invited by Aroostook County residents to look at the County's transportation network. That the project is trying to improve transportation but would impact someone's business or farmland.
- R. Faucher stated that these projects (Segments 4 and 7) are going forward first because Presque Isle and Caribou are the main transportation centers in Aroostook County and that these projects provide the greatest transportation benefits to the region.
- An unidentified citizen asked if the final design explore ways to remediate/minimize impacts?
- R. Faucher stated that adjustments have already be made to minimize some of the alignment options potential impacts, i.e. the changes in Alignment Option 2X. Prior to final design actual ground information will be collected for the preferred alternative and discussions will occur with individual property owners to attempt to further minimize impacts.
- George Howe asked if it was possible for affected property owners to receive compensation above fair market value.

Mark Hasselmann (FHWA) stated that fair market value is the minimum given to affected property owners. Additional benefits, such as relocation costs or closing costs, could be negotiated.

- G. Howe asked about MaineDOT's plans for the rest of Aroostook County.

R. Faucher stated that besides Segment 4 and 7, Segment 2 (Route 161 from Caribou to Cross Lake Township) will be going forward. The remaining segments will not be pursued at this time due to lack of funding.

- An unidentified citizen asked how Segment 4 and Segment 7 fit into the overall plan for Aroostook County.

R. Faucher responded that Segments 4 and 7 were selected to be the first segments to be advanced to construction as they are common to all of the other segments under consideration north of Caribou and south of Presque Isle. Segments 4 and 7 also provide the greatest transportation benefits of all the ACTS segments considered. .

The meeting ended at 4:30 pm.