



Meeting Notes

Attendees: Refer to list at end of notes

Date/Time: May 20, 2008 9:30 AM

Project No.: 10137.00

Place: Fall River City Hall
FRRA/OED

Re: Route 79/Davol Street Transportation Study-
Project Advisory Group Meeting #3

Notes taken by: LMC

The third Project Advisory Group (PAG) meeting for the Route 28/Davol Street Transportation Study was held to discuss the future conditions and alternatives analyses work completed since the last PAG meeting. Ken Fiola from the Fall River Office of Economic Development (OED) opened the meeting with brief remarks and introductions of all members present. K. Fiola introduced Mayor Correia, who also provided brief remarks. Mayor Correia indicated he has asked Governor to make the Route 79 project a priority to ensure that no additional federal funding is lost. Mayor Correia stressed that the project needs to make the waterfront "reachable" and asked the PAG to help the City devise a plan to achieve what it would like to do.

Bill Ashworth and Laura Castelli from VHB provided a review of existing conditions and chapter revisions made since the last PAG meeting. A summary outline was provided (see attached). It was noted that although several months have passed, the project has been moving forward and that there has been ongoing coordination between the City of Fall River, the Executive Office of Transportation (EOT), and the Southeast Regional Planning and Economic Development Department (SRPEDD).

L. Castelli presented the future No Build conditions, outlining the methodology used to determine future growth. She noted that although the regional travel demand model was not used as originally intended, the growth from both the regional and statewide models was considered when projecting future volumes. As such, the growth to regional traffic volume between 2006 and 2030 approximates the growth in the travel demand models. Locally, historic growth has been much slower and that is reflected in the 2030 traffic volumes at local intersections.

L. Castelli presented the alternatives considered for the preliminary alternatives analysis. These alternatives were presented previously at the September PAG meeting and at the October Joint Transportation Planning Group meeting hosted by SRPEDD. The findings of the preliminary analysis indicated that in addition to the No Action alternative only Alternative B (the creation of a six-lane boulevard) showed merit and should be studied in further detail. Based on concerns of providing only one alternative, VHB, with input from the City and EOT, developed a revised Alternative E. The revised Alternative E would consist of demolishing the existing Route 79 freeway and relocating it, in its current form, to the east. The merit of this alternative would be the reduction

of potential diversionary traffic, as explained in the analysis summary. Both Alternative B and revised Alternative E were evaluated in further detail.

B. Ashworth presented Alternatives B and E in detail, highlighting the land created for development (10+ acres for Alternative B versus 5+ acres for Alternative E) and very preliminary cost (\$45 million for Alternative B versus \$28 million for Alternative E) as well as other factors. L. Castelli reviewed the advantages and disadvantages of Alternatives B and E.

L. Castelli provided a summary of the development potential traffic operations expected under each alternative. She noted that a large portion of the impact related to Alternative B would be the potential diversion of traffic to Route 24, particularly in the peak direction during the peak hour. It is estimated that approximately 1,000 peak hour/peak direction trips could be diverted, which likely could not be accommodated by Route 24 if it were not widened by 2030. Although outside the scope of this study, other studies have indicated that Route 24 would need three lanes per direction by 2030 with the construction of approximately 3.3 million square feet of development in the Fall River area.

B. Ashworth reviewed the anticipated next steps going forward. The next step in the process, once comments are received on the draft report, will be to hold a public meeting. Once the report is finalized, it is recommended that an additional, more comprehensive study, be done on the alternatives including a new market study for development, detailed operational analysis for the I-195/Route 79, I-195/Route 24, and Route 24/Route 79 interchanges, and a more detailed cost analysis of the alternatives (including No-Action). Once the additional study is completed, an ENF would be filed and the project would move into the MEPA/NEPA process.

Comments on the presentation were as follows:

Ethan Britland from EOT asked about bulkheading the City Pier to increase developable land, as New Bedford was able to do. L. Castelli indicated that it would be looked at as an option going forward into the MEPA/NEPA process.

Pam Haznar from MassHighway District 5 asked if there have been any discussions regarding the ownership of the Boulevard under Alternative B. Laura Castelli noted that it has been recognized that something would need to happen but there has been no discussion to date regarding what the arrangement might be or how it would be accomplished. That would also be a matter to look in to as part of the MEPA/NEPA process.

Roland Hebert from SRPEDD questioned the need for North Davol Street north of President Avenue in the future. The roadway may not be needed, and could be used to create new development opportunities. However, as B. Ashworth noted, the project team was charged with matching the construction limits of the existing plans for the Brightman Street Bridge project. These limits include accommodation for the roadway.

It was noted that the project will need to be closely coordinated with the commuter rail project going forward. There may be an opportunity to combine funding sources, as it is likely that the mitigation for the commuter rail project would involve a connection from the commuter rail lot to Davol Street. Based on the commuter rail project schedule, funding opportunities and potential mitigation would not likely be available until spring 2009.

Once this report is finalized, R. Hebert noted that a final presentation should be made to the Transit Oriented Design (TOD) task force for the commuter rail project. He suggested the presentation occur around September.

E. Britland noted that the current contract expires at the end of June. E. Britland would like to have the final report issued by then so that there is no need to extend the contract. As such, the public meeting should be held during the beginning of June. This should give VHB enough time to coordinate and address comments. Barring any significant comments from the PAG on the draft report, it was agreed that an additional PAG meeting would not be needed for this study.

Comments on the draft report should be emailed to Laura at VHB (lcastelli@vhb.com) by next Friday (May 30).

E. Britland thought it was a good idea to bring the preferred alternative and the other alternative if still feasible into the MEPA/NEPA process.

P. Haznar and Jim Hartnett of the Fall River Planning Department requested a electronic copy of the alternative boards. They will be emailed to the group with the meeting notes.

E. Britland noted that he spoke with others at EOT/MassHighway and that a decision has been made that this study will progress similar to Route 24, where the City would be the proponent of the development related components, and MassHighway would be the proponent of the roadway components. A letter from Commissioner Paiewonsky outlining the process was being forwarded to K. Fiola.

Attendees:

Kenneth Fiola, Jr., Fall River OED
Mayor Robert Correia, City of Fall River
Jim Hartnett, City of Fall River
Lanny Johnson, OED/FRRRA
Ethan Britland, EOT Planning
Pamela Haznar, MassHighway D5
Robert Gregory, MassHighway D5
Alolade Campbell, MassHighway D5
Roland Hebert, SRPEDD
Promise Otaluka, FHWA
Michael Chong, FHWA
Laura Castelli, VHB
Bill Ashworth, VHB

ROUTE 79/DAVOL STREET TRANSPORTATION STUDY

PROJECT ADVISORY GROUP MEETING

May 20, 2008

SIGN - IN SHEET

| NAME | ASSOCIATION | TELEPHONE | EMAIL ADDRESS |
|---------------------|--------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------|
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| 3. Ethan Britland | EOT Planning | 617 973-8236 | ethan.britland@eot.state.ma.us |
| 4. Alolade Campbell | Mhd 05 | | |
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ROUTE 79/DAVOL STREET TRANSPORTATION STUDY

AGENDA

May 20, 2008

9:30 - 11:00 PM

CONFERENCE ROOM

OED, ONE GOVERNMENT CENTER

6TH FLOOR

1. Introductions and Summary since last PAG meeting
2. Chapter 2 – Existing Conditions Updates and Revisions
 - a. Revisions based on new traffic signal timing information
 - b. Updates to several sections discussing origin-destination information for the study area
3. Chapter 3 – Future Conditions
 - a. Background growth
 - b. Site specific growth
 - c. Findings
4. Chapter 4 - Alternatives Analysis
 - a. Preliminary analysis
 - b. Revisions to alternatives
 - c. Findings
5. Chapter 5 – Evaluation of Selected Alternatives
 - a. Preliminary analysis
 - b. Revisions to alternatives
 - c. Findings
6. Discussion of overall study findings and recommendations
7. Next Steps

ROUTE 79/DAVOL STREET TRANSPORTATION STUDY

Summary of Efforts since last PAG Meeting

- The project team spent the past several months completing a thorough analysis of the alternatives and completing drafts of Chapter 3 (Future Conditions), Chapter 4 (Alternatives), and Chapter 5 (Evaluation of Selected Alternatives). Highlights of each chapter are summarized below.
- The following outreach meetings were held:
 - Joint Transportation Planning Group meeting hosted by SRPEDD (10/10/2007)
 - Alternatives Discussion meeting with EOT Planning (2/14/2008)
 - Alternatives Discussion meeting with SRPEDD (2/28/2008)
 - Alternatives Discussion meeting with Fall River's Mayor Correia (4/16/2008)

Chapter 2 – Existing Conditions Update:

- Additional data collection was necessary to determine the amount of traffic using Route 79 as a “through” route (a connection between I-195 and Route 24). The following was determined from these data:
 - During the peak hour, in the peak direction, approximately 60 percent of the traffic on Route 79 can be defined as “through” traffic.
 - During the peak hour, in the off-peak direction, approximately 40 percent of the traffic on Route 79 can be defined as “through” traffic.

Chapter 3 - Future Conditions:

- **Background growth:** To maintain consistency with other area-wide planning efforts, two growth rates were used to represent background growth:
 - A one-half-percent annual growth rate was applied to all local intersection traffic within the study area. This growth rate is reflective of the relatively little change in traffic volume realized by the City of Fall River over the last 15 years.
 - A one percent annual growth rate was applied to the existing regional traffic volumes in the study area. This includes traffic traveling Route 79.
- **Site-Specific Growth:** In addition to background growth, there are currently seven planned development projects that are expected to have an influence on future year peak hour traffic volumes on study area roadways and intersections. The traffic related to these projects, combined, adds an additional one to two percent annual increase in anticipated traffic growth in the study area:
 - **Fall River Commuter Rail Station:** Approximately 500 parking spaces
 - **Fall River Executive Park:** 3 million square feet of office park development
 - **Fall River Commerce Park:** 800,000 additional square feet of industrial development
 - **Riverfront Business Park:** 1.7 million additional square feet for development
 - **Campanelli Warehouse:** 730,000 additional square feet of warehouse development
 - **Downtown Fall River Redevelopment:** 100,000 square feet of office space, 200,000 square foot court house, and approximately 30,000 square feet of retail development.
 - **State Pier:** 10,000 square feet of Marine Museum expansion, 50,000 square feet of industrial/office space, and approximately 38,000 square feet of supplemental mixed-use development.

Chapter 4 – Alternatives:

- At the last PAG meeting, five alternatives were presented:
 - a. No Action
 - b. Demolish Route 79 and provide a four or six-lane cross-section (depending on need) with landscaped median and turning lanes, as necessary
 - c. Maintain the existing Route 79, combine Davol Street on the existing northbound side (one lane in each direction) and reclaim the land within the existing Davol Street southbound footprint
 - d. Maintain the existing Route 79 and Davol Street infrastructure but provide pedestrian and bicycle accommodations and transit service to the waterfront.
 - e. A longer-term alternative combining options d (short-term) and c (long-term) above.
- The regional travel demand model was not sufficient to perform the alternatives analysis; therefore a model had to be created specifically for this effort. This model matches the overall 2030 growth projections and origin destination information in SRPEDD's regional model.
- A preliminary transportation feasibility analysis was conducted as a first level screening of alternatives in order to identify fatal flaws in concepts. Those concepts with fatal flaws were either eliminated from further consideration or refined. Fatal flaws included unacceptable traffic operations, physical design constraints, and limited or no economic benefit.
- The findings are as follows:
 - **Alternative A** – The No Action alternative should be studied in detail regardless of whether it meets the goals and objective of the project.
 - **Alternative B** – This alternative meets the goals and objectives of the project and should therefore be studied in specific detail regarding transportation (all modes) benefits and impacts.
 - **Alternative C** – The preliminary analysis indicated that local traffic demands could not be accommodated by combining Davol Street on the existing northbound side. One lane per direction does not provide sufficient roadway capacity and there are no other available route choices for vehicles. Therefore this alternative was eliminated from consideration.
 - **Alternative D** – The preliminary analysis indicates that the addition of pedestrian, bicycle, and transit connections is not beneficial given the existing barrier Route 79 creates. Transit routes established for the site would be circuitous and require vehicles to travel past the site and u-turn to change direction. To maintain adequate service on such a transit operation would require additional buses and staff that would be outside the Transit Authority's means to provide. Additional pedestrian and bicycle connections are hindered by the existing Route 79. New connections would require tunneling under or bridging the freeway, with little gained for the high cost. Therefore this alternative was eliminated from consideration.
 - **Alternative E** – Since the purpose of Alternative E was to provide a phased implementation of Alternative D and Alternative C, this option was also eliminated. However, the City recognizes the importance of evaluating multiple alternatives and as such established a *revised* Alternative E.
 - **Revised Alternative E** – This alternative is similar to Alternative B in that it demolishes the existing Route 79 infrastructure. However, revised Alternative E rebuilds Route 79 as a limited access freeway just to the east of the existing roadway and provides a new connection from Davol Street North to Davol Street South at the proposed commuter rail station driveway.

This alternative allows for the creation of approximately five additional acres for development along the waterfront. This alternative meets many of the goals and objectives of the project and should therefore be studied in specific detail regarding transportation (all modes) benefits and impacts.

Chapter 5 – Evaluation of Selected Alternatives:

Alternative B:

- Creates 10± acres of land for potential development
- Preliminary Construction Cost Estimate: \$45 million
- Development Potential (from Fall River Harbor and Downtown Economic Development Plan):
 - 10,000 square feet of retail space
 - 200-room hotel
 - 5,000 square foot restaurant
 - 210,000 square feet of office space
 - 100 berth marina
- Advantages of Alternative B:
 - provides the greatest additional land for development
 - provides enhanced pedestrian and bicycle connectivity between the waterfront and the existing neighborhood
 - improves mobility along the corridor by eliminating u-turns and recirculating traffic
 - creates additional parking
 - allows development large enough to support/offset remediation costs
 - improves job diversity, business sales, and taxes
- Disadvantages of Alternative B
 - very likely regional through traffic (I-195 to/from Route 24) would shift to Route 24
 - if Route 24 is not widened to three-lanes per direction diverted volume will exacerbate poor traffic operations along the corridor
 - vehicle miles traveled (VMT) increase under this alternative
 - vehicle hours traveled (VHT) may also increase

Alternative E:

- Creates 5± acres of land for potential development
- Preliminary Construction Cost Estimate: \$28 million
- Development Potential (same elements as Alternative B without the office space)
 - 10,000 square feet of retail space
 - 200-room hotel
 - 5,000 square foot restaurant
 - 100 berth marina

- Advantages of Alternative E
 - maintains the regional through traffic connection between I-195 and Route 24
 - does not increase VMT or VHT compared to No-Action alternative
 - provides enough additional land to support development at City Pier
 - provides some additional pedestrian and bicycle connectivity from the proposed Fall River commuter rail station
 - allows development large enough to support/offset remediation costs
 - improves job diversity, business sales, and taxes
- Disadvantages of Alternative E
 - limits multimodal connections to the waterfront
 - relies on a connection to Fall River station to be a viable alternative
 - Maintains Route 79 as a barrier between neighborhoods and waterfront.

Next Steps

- Public Meeting
- Finalize and submit Transportation Study Report including a recommendation on which alternative(s) will move forward to the MEPA/NEPA evaluation process.
- Develop scope of work for MEPA/NEPA work.
 - Should both Alternative B and Alternative E be chosen to move forward, it is possible that a new study could be undertaken to analyze impacts to the appropriate level of detail such that a preferred alternative be chosen and advanced through the MEPA/NEPA process.
 - The MEPA process would then commence with only the preferred alternative. Items needing to be addressed during the next phase(s) include:
 - New market study for development
 - Detailed operational analysis for the I-195/Route 79, I-195/Route 24, and Route 24/Route 79 interchanges
 - More detailed cost analysis of alternatives (including No-Action)