

I-93 Transit Investment Study Summary of Comments

November 27, 2007

Andover Public Library, Andover, MA

The following comments were received at the public meeting for the I-93 Transit Investment Study held on Tuesday, November 27, 2007, at the Andover Public Library in Andover, Massachusetts. Responses to questions are in italics.

- When you developed operation and management costs for the bus service alternatives, did you base the costs on a private or public operator? *Response: The project team believes that these costs won't vary much between either a public or private operator.*
- What is the breakdown of costs for the \$70 million to start up a bus service utilizing the road shoulders? *Response: It will take about \$100,000/mile along the 50-mile corridor to upgrade the shoulders to accommodate buses (\$5 million), \$20 million for vehicles, \$30 million for bridge modification and the remaining amount for stations.*
- Do you know people are already driving in the shoulders on I-93 north of Route 125? *Response: Yes. The use of the breakdown in Massachusetts for peak hour travel is viewed as a temporary measure to relieve congestion in that segment of I-93.*
- Is there a specific idea of what is the baseline cost to carry an alternative forward? *Response: This will be evaluated by the study team.*
- What will prevent cars from driving into the shoulder lane intended for buses? *Response: We expect that enough buses will be using the lane to prevent "empty lane syndrome." We have forecasted 20 buses an hour will be on I-93 from New Hampshire. If we add in current Massachusetts bus services, there will be a bus approximately every two minutes.*
- Plans for the Lowell junction interchange is moving forward and 8,000 -10,000 new jobs are predicted. Was this factored into you forecasts? *Response: We use state provided data that includes projected regional job growth.*
- How many more trains will be coming through Andover if the Manchester & Lawrence (M&L) and Haverhill lines are put into service? *Response: More than double the number of trains (26 to well over 50) will be coming through Andover. One precondition of any M&L work is to double the track through Andover as it's currently one of the busiest pieces of single track in America. Besides the existing commuter train, 10 Downeaster and up to 12 freight trains use the track daily.*

- If you don't provide more parking at the Andover station that will be a problem.
- The bus from Andover is cheaper and offers more convenient times than the train. My daily commute by train, when you factor in \$2 for parking at the station, \$4 subway fare, and \$6.50 each way for the train, adds up to a lot of money. But, the ride on the train is smoother and more pleasant.
- The public doesn't realize the brutal social, environmental and safety costs of driving. Long commutes cause people to miss family. More needs to be stated about the costs of our road system.
- We're seeing real estate ads saying "we're near Haverhill station" or other stations. Clearly proximity to train stations has an economic benefit. You should advertise this benefit.
- Are you recommending double tracking? *Response: Yes.*
- Why couldn't you do both bus and train? *Response: That is a possible outcome.*
- It seems like towns should recognize the opportunity rail provides and get involved financially to make it work.
- So many studies show people would like not to have to drive their car but people get so used to their cars they don't think about transit.
- What role can we, as citizens, play at this stage to advance a project? How do we keep it moving? Is this study a sign of commitment that the state will help? *Response: It will be up to the legislators to decide if there is enough public support to fund transit. The study team will identify the funding needed and develop a strategic implementation plan for review by the two states.*
- When you use the year 2030 for planning transit, does this mean nothing will happen until then? *Response: No. 2030 is the year we use for forecasting, but service can be up and running before that.*
- How do you decide what to implement? Do you pick low hanging fruit? The things that make sense? *Response: Low hanging fruit may not be edible or laying on the ground so are not desirable. We will recommend the approaches that are effective.*
- It seems like it would be easier to get transit projects in Massachusetts. In New Hampshire we have a 30-year plan focused on widening I-93. Our elected officials have hung their hopes on widening I-93. We haven't been given a transit alternative.

- This study seems to be a good sign for transit.
- Every time there's a gas hike or with the threat of global warming you would think people would make the connection. All political and market forces should support public transit but it's just not happening.