



**MaineDOT**



## ***MAINE-NEW HAMPSHIRE CONNECTIONS STUDY***

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*For more information: Carol Morris/Morris Communications/207-329-6502*

### **Maine-New Hampshire Connections Study on Kittery-Portsmouth Bridge Alternatives to Begin**

AUGUSTA, Maine – The Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) and the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NH DOT) have jointly launched a transportation connections study to evaluate the long-term viability of the bridges connecting Kittery, Maine and Portsmouth, New Hampshire over the Piscataqua River. Work on the connections study has started. A study Web site will be launched soon and initial traffic data collection is set to begin. The first public informational meeting will be scheduled for late April 2009. More details on the meeting will be available next week.

The connections study will identify all possible alternatives for the river crossings and select the one(s) that best addresses the needs of the communities over the next 20 years and beyond.

The impetus behind the study is the condition of the 88-year-old (built in 1921) Memorial Bridge and the 69-year-old (built in 1940) Sarah Mildred Long Bridge; both bridges will need major repairs soon. Last year, the two state DOTs requested bids to rehabilitate the Memorial Bridge. The lowest bid came in at \$59 million, approximately \$15 million over the estimate. In a time of tight transportation budgets, this was a major concern to both DOTs.

"The cost to repair the Memorial Bridge approached the cost to construct an entirely new bridge, one which would have significantly lower maintenance costs and a much longer life," said Gerry Audibert, MaineDOT project manager for the connections study. Bob Landry, NHDOT project manager, added, "The annual operating costs of both the Memorial and the Sarah Mildred Long Bridges now exceed \$1 million annually for each bridge, and last year an additional \$1.3 million was spent on unexpected repairs to the Sarah Mildred Long Bridge." Audibert said, "Looking forward, the long-term multimodal needs of the two communities and the region have not been fully evaluated. Before we make a decision on an expenditure of this magnitude, we should be able to answer questions about the area's transportation needs."

"Making a long-term decision that will serve both communities well and uses taxpayer dollars wisely requires more information," Audibert said, "which is why this connections study is so important." New Hampshire agrees, "We know there is a lot of local concern about the future of these bridges," said Landry. "But in an environment where our transportation needs greatly outweigh revenues, we need to ensure our investment is the best long-term decision and that all funding options are explored."

MaineDOT in conjunction with NHDOT, has selected the consultant team led by HNTB Corp., a nationally known transportation firm with an office in Westbrook, Maine. The team includes experts in the fields of public involvement; moveable bridges; traffic modeling; historic, archeological and cultural resources; and other specialties. The list of alternatives to be evaluated will include all options associated with both of the existing lift-span bridges. By October 1, 2009, the initial list of alternatives will be reduced to those that are considered feasible and meet the "purpose and need" of the project. The purpose and need statement will be developed with public input. Ultimately, a "preferred alternative" will be selected that best meets the stated purpose and need.

Final selection of the preferred alternative is scheduled to be made by June 2010. Persons or groups who want to receive updates on a regular basis can contact Carol Morris by calling (207) 329-6502 or by e-mail to [cmorris@morriscomm.net](mailto:cmorris@morriscomm.net).