

I-93 Transit Investment Study

Technical Advisory Committee Meeting Summary
Thursday, September 27, 2007
1:00 PM

New Hampshire Department of Transportation

Attendance

TAC members who signed in:

Lynn Ahlgren	Massachusetts Executive Office of Transportation (EOT)
Bill O'Donnell	Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) – New Hampshire
Ram Maddali	New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT)
Matt Caron	Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission (SNHPC)
Steve Williams	Nashua Regional Planning Commission
Dennis DiZoglio	Merrimack Valley Planning Commission (MVPC)
Anthony Komornick	MVPC
Cliff Sinnott	Rockingham Planning Commission
Peter Stamnas	NHDOT
Bill Cass	NHDOT
Chris Curry	Northern Middlesex Council of Governments
Paul Foundoukis	FHWA
David Preece	SNHPC
Paul Nelson	Massachusetts EOT
Rosemary Monahan	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Other attendees:

Rodrigo Marion	Central New Hampshire Planning Commission (CNHRPC)
Nick Alexander	CNHRPC
Catherine Corkery	NH Sierra Club
Tom Irwin	Conservation Law Foundation

Consultant staff:

Ken Kinney	HNTB Corporation
Julia Suprock	HNTB Corporation
Marcy Miller	Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc.
David Nelson	Edwards & Kelsey (E& K)
John Weston	PB Americas, Inc.

Welcome and Introductions

Ram Maddali welcomed everyone to Concord, New Hampshire and New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT). He asked that everyone introduce him or herself. He next asked if we could move the modeling discussion up in front of the first item on the agenda. There were no objections, and John Weston proceeded with the modeling discussion.

Model Preview

John Weston first explained that the project team is developing a travel demand model because the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) requires a cost per user benefit, which is essentially travel time savings. The travel demand model is a four step process. The model predicts reaction of travel based on changes in the transportation system, prices (fuel costs, parking costs), and future population and employment. The model will also produce ridership forecasts and FTA user benefit measures.

The SUMMIT travel demand model is currently being utilized to estimate travel times. The model uses a combination of the Mass State Model, NH State Model and the CTPS Model. While the model will be calibrated to the 2000 Census information and utilize the official MPO approved projections for 2030, there are two other actions that will be taken related to the population and employment projections. First, the model results will test sensitivity of growth by incorporating the projections developed by the Delphi panel. Second, the population and employment forecasts will be coordinated with the station area planning work also occurring in the study. It was noted that the station area sensitivity forecasts will be a redistribution of projected population and employment, where the Delphi panel sensitivity will incorporate additional growth.

There was a comment that the model area should be expanded on the east side (to Route 125). John stated that he believed that there was not a significant amount of travel in the corridor generated from that area, but that he would check on that. There was a question on the population forecasts and what was in the current model. John stated that what is in the current model is the MPO approved forecasts, but that the team was also planning to perform the two tests described earlier. Rosemary Monahan stated that the Delphi panel estimates are based on highway improvements only and not additional transit improvements. It may be worth noting this.

Operating Plans

Ken Kinney stated that for the operating plans, the team wanted to focus on the concepts and get concurrence from the TAC that these are the operating plans that the team should move forward with in more detail. David Nelson, from E & K last presented four rail alternatives and four bus alternatives on two corridor alignments to the TAC at the June 2007 meeting. He quickly reviewed the two alignments, the Eastern corridor and Highway corridor alignment, as well as the two modes of transit improvements, rail and bus transit service. David stated that the team is still trying to find a way to get the rail alternatives past the airport to downtown Manchester.

David reviewed the proposed operating plans for the rail alignments in more detail, including the five proposed stations for the eastern rail alignment and the six proposed stations for the highway

rail alignment. He discussed service schedule and number of trains that could operate per day on weekdays as well as on weekends and holidays.

David next discussed buses and the shoulder bus alternative. He stated that buses traveling on shoulders is the best way to get an increased capacity, especially for the short-term timeframe. Operating plans, including bus headways was discussed in detail. For the shoulder bus service alternatives, there would be five terminals along I-93 and each would have express peak service to one station in Boston. Midday trips may be coupled together to reduce costs.

There was a question on whether it made sense for these buses to make stops at other locations, such as Andover, before reaching Boston. David stated that these other destinations before Boston often have free parking, and transit service to these locations has not been successful in the past. In addition, each of the terminal location can fill the buses by going to Boston alone, so it does not make sense to stop to pick up more passengers or drop off the few that may want to get off in Andover. David reminded the group that the goal was to provide successful transit service and essentially gain as high as ridership as possible. Ken Kinney also suggested that in the detailed operation plans for the buses, it may make sense to assume that there is some sort of successful connective services in the destination locations.

David questioned NHDOT on their intent to build one lane as a high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane in the I-93 corridor. Bill Cass clarified that the plan was to build four general purpose lanes, one of which could be converted to a HOV lane at a later date. So for the purpose of this study, the team should assume four general purpose lanes.

There was a concern that downtown Boston would not be able to accept additional buses. David stated that he did not think this was an issue. New Hampshire buses could be allowed stop on the streets, instead of dropping everyone off at South Station.

David also addressed the preliminary operating plans, including hours of operation and headways, for bus rapid transit (BRT) service. There would be five stations, and buses would stop at all stations. There was a question about the length of the walk from the middle of a park-n-ride lot to a station. David said that it would likely be a couple hundred yards and pedestrian improvements to the lot would likely be necessary. Another TAC member questioned where the BRT would travel in Massachusetts. David answered that the buses would travel in the shoulders.

Ken Kinney questioned the TAC on whether there were any objections to the preliminary approach to developing the operating plans. There was a concern about connecting the rail service to downtown Manchester and including this analysis in the model. John Weston acknowledged this concern and said the team would consider it. However, an issue with including this in the analysis at this time is that it will greatly reduce the cost-benefit of the analysis. An additional major capital cost could likely prove to make the project not cost-effective.

Land Use Policy Report

Ken Kinney introduced Julia Suprock from HNTB Corporation. Julia presented her analysis so far on the land use policy report. In addition, she would also give this presentation at the CTAP Conference on Saturday.

She first reviewed different Transit Oriented Development (TOD) tools. She stated that there were two kinds of TOD, bus and rail, with 91% of all TOD development occurring around or near rail stations. She also reviewed two different examples of TOD development, an urban example in Somerville, MA, and a more rural example in Wisconsin.

Julia next presented focused on six of the communities that were studied for this analysis: Derry, Londonderry, Manchester, Salem, Windham, and Methuen. She outlined land use trends, existing practices that each community encouraged, and opportunities to implement the use of additional TOD tools.

There was a comment that it would be beneficial to the more rural communities to include density transfer as a TOD tool. Julia stated that this would be incorporated into the policy report.

Conceptual Station Area Planning

Ken Kinney stated that station area concepts are underway. These initial concepts have been drafted and are presented along the back wall today. He asked that TAC members review these and provide comments as they would also be presented to the communities at the CTAP conference.

Public Meeting Planning

Marcy Miller, from Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc., stated that it was time to start planning for our next round of public meetings. The team had much information to present that has been gathered since last April. She stated that the team was hoping to host two public meetings (one in each state) the week of November 26th. Any suggestions for locations for the meetings will be appreciated. It was suggested that Salem would be a good location for the New Hampshire meeting, perhaps at Salem High School. In addition, the team is also looking to plan a Stakeholders group meeting in the beginning of December.

Next TAC Meeting

The next TAC meeting will be scheduled for November 15, 2007. Ken stated that one item he would like to discuss at the meeting is the Manchester & Lawrence rail line, and its physical and financial feasibility.