



Project Background

The widening of a 20-mile segment of I-93 between Exits 1 and 5 from the Massachusetts Stateline to Manchester, NH is one of the most ambitious projects that the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) has ever undertaken.

Why is this project so important? Simply put, it is needed to reduce congestion and improve safety. Traffic frequently backs up between the Stateline and Manchester, especially during morning and evening rush hours. This section of I-93 was built in the early 1960s to accommodate 60,000 to 70,000 vehicles per day. In 1997, average traffic volumes were in excess of 100,000 vehicles per day in Salem, with segments between interchanges two and five carrying up to 80,000 vehicles per day. With so many cars currently using only two lanes, drivers are forced to drive closer to each other, limiting their ability to react and maneuver to avoid an incident in front of them. When an incident does occur, drivers often have nowhere to go, which can result in multiple car accidents. This chronic congestion can also directly affect emergency responders, such as ambulances, fire trucks and police, increasing their response time in getting to an emergency. All these factors combined create increased risks to the traveling public.



Projections indicate that traffic will increase to 140,000 vehicles per day in Salem by the year 2020. If we don't do something now, motorists will experience even more congestion and have less time and maneuvering space to react, which will further compromise safety. NHDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) decided to widen the highway after carefully reviewing several construction alternatives and their environmental, social, economic and cultural impacts on the southeastern New Hampshire region.

A wider I-93 is a safer I-93.

Through the evaluation of several alternatives during the Preliminary Engineering Studies, the project will add an additional two travel lanes in each direction over the entire 20-mile segment and improve the five interchanges south of Interstate 293 to the Stateline. Twenty bridges will be replaced and 23 will be rehabilitated or widened. New park-and-ride facilities have been built at Exits 2, and 5, with one planned at Exit 3, and space within the median is reserved to accommodate future commuter rail trains. In addition, bus service and other commuter ride-sharing opportunities to Boston and northern Massachusetts have been expanded and enhanced. For more information on details of the rebuilding see the Project Overview page.

Rebuilding I-93 is more than just a roadway and bridge construction project. NHDOT, FHWA and OEP have invested in several other concurrent initiatives that will continue to maintain and improve the quality of life in New Hampshire. These initiatives include:

- The Community Technical Assistance Program (CTAP) is helping communities meet the wide range of challenges faced in the I-93 corridor by providing technical assistance and access to tools for innovative land use planning.
- NHDOT's Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) and Traffic Incident Management (TIM) programs are improving safety, easing congestion, and more effectively providing traffic related information to the public.
- The Transit Investment Study has looked at alternative means of providing transit through the I-93 Corridor. The Study team, over a period of two years, analyzed a wide range of alternatives, including commuter rail and bus options, and also reviewed local land use policies that impact growth in the region, and potential for transit-friendly land use. The Final Report is forthcoming.
- The Accelerated Construction Technology Transfer (ACTT) workshop investigated and evaluated ways to speed up the rebuilding of I-93 to help save tax payers dollars and minimize disruptions to the traveling public and communities.
- The NHDOT is protecting the environment through wetland mitigation. They have committed \$3M in funding to the NHDES Drinking Water Supply Land Grant Program, \$3.5M in funding for CTAP to assist communities by addressing growth and development associated with the corridor improvements, and with the NHDES, conducted a chloride surface water quality study. An Implementation Plan for controlling the amount of salt used in winter snow removal operations was released in early June of 2009.

I-93 provides a critical link between the communities in south central New Hampshire and the greater Boston metropolitan area. When completed, the project will dramatically improve this important stretch of highway, reducing congestion and increasing safety for decades to come.