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Gorham Bypass Study : Finding of No Significant Impact, 2005

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FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

GORHAM BYPASS STUDY, GORHAM,

CUMBERLAND COUNTY, MAINE

PIN 8151.10, Federal Project No. STP-8151(10) X

Description of Action

The Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) proposes to construct a two-lane, controlled access southwesterly bypass of Gorham Village connecting Route 114 just south of Waterhouse Road to Route 25 west of Cressey Road, and a separate, two-lane northerly bypass of Gorham Village connecting Route 25 near West Gorham to Route 25 at Mosher Corner in Gorham, Maine.

The following resources fully document the analysis and selection of the Preferred Alternative:

- o Gorham Bypass Environmental Assessment, dated June 11, 2003
- o Comments received concerning the Gorham Bypass Environmental Assessment
- o Crash Frequency Technical Memorandum, dated July 25, 2005
- o Revised EA Table 2-1, dated August 5, 2005
- o TSM Measurements Project Memorandum, September 2, 2005
- o Comparison of Transportation Alternatives, September 12, 2005, and
- o Response to Substantive EA Comments dated August 26, 2005.

The Preferred Alternative is the only alternative that fully satisfies the NEPA Purpose and Need Statement and the Army Corps of Engineers Basic Project Purpose. The Preferred Alternative:

- Provides traffic relief on Routes 4, 25, 114 and 202 where they converge in Gorham Village and throughout the study area.
- 12,570 (28.8%) vehicles, including 1,489 (28.2%) trucks, per day will be diverted from Gorham Village to the Preferred Alternative.
- Reduces congestion, improves travel times, and improves safety for the traveling public from the communities north and west of Gorham to the Interstate and Maine Turnpike highway systems, as well as Portland and other employment centers east of Gorham.
- Improves 10 of the 12 identified high crash locations within the study area and reduces the crash frequency by 25%, and
- Minimizes the environmental impacts.

Public involvement has included a MaineDOT public hearing, Gorham Town Council Public Hearing, 2 public informational meetings, 18 Public Advisory Committee (PAC) Meetings and a study website. Each PAC meeting included a public comment/inquiry

period during which members of the public could provide comments on the project or ask questions seeking clarification.

MaineDOT has responded to all of the substantive comments received on the Environmental Assessment and the responses are available upon request.

Environmental Issues

The Town of Gorham is located 9.5 miles west of Portland, Cumberland County, Maine. The study area is located in the southern third of the Town of Gorham and encompasses approximately 19 square miles. Gorham Village is the center of the study area that includes Mosher Corner, at its northeast corner. To the southeast, the study area extends along Route 22 to the Scarborough town line. To the southwest, the study area extends to the Buxton town line, near Routes 4/202 and Osborne Road. West Gorham is at the northwest corner of the study area.

The Preferred Alternative will affect approximately 20 acres of wetlands. The Preferred Alternative will not affect any State of Maine Wetlands of Special Significance. Avoidance and minimization efforts will continue through final design and permitting. See the "Mitigation" section of this FONSI for discussion concerning potential compensatory wetland mitigation opportunities. Construction impacts to project area wetlands will be further minimized by the implementation of MaineDOT Best Management Practices for Erosion and Sediment Control.

The Preferred Alternative will require the acquisition of approximately 23 to 25 residential and two (2) commercial properties. The Preferred Alternative will not disproportionately displace any low income, minority, or disabled populations. The Town of Gorham has identified that elderly persons occupy four of the potential displaced residences. The four properties are located in the West Gorham neighborhood where the bypass road will join existing Route 25. In subsequent phases of project development MaineDOT will interview residents of any displaced household regarding needs, income, preferences, and other factors pertinent for successful relocation. During final design, MaineDOT will analyze the potential to further avoid or minimize displacements. The Town of Gorham is a thriving community. There are several existing and proposed single-family homes and subdivisions available in the Gorham area. In accordance with the Federal Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 (as amended), MaineDOT is committed to providing comparable, decent, safe, and sanitary replacement housing, within the financial means of displaced families and individuals.

Noise levels in certain areas currently exceed the noise abatement criteria of 67 dBA. Although construction of a bypass would reduce these noise levels by almost 7 dBA in some areas, it would increase noise levels by 5 dBA in other areas. Noise barriers were evaluated and determined not to be reasonable and feasible.

Impacts to existing land use from the Preferred Alternative are 120 acres of Undeveloped Land, 55 acres of Farmland; 6 acres of Utility right-of-way, 15 acres of Open Space, 39 acres of Commercial Property and 125 acres of Residential Property.

The Preferred Alternative avoids all impacts to properties on or potentially eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Properties including the Benjamin Mosher House/Farm (Mosher Farm) on Route 25. There are no impacts to any known resources protected by Section 4(f) of the US DOT Act of 1966 in the project area.

The Preferred Alternative shall be a controlled access facility with access to the new highway restricted to and from only those numbered highways, State Routes 4, 25, 114, and U.S. Route 202, which intersect the Preferred Alternative. No access to or from the Preferred Alternative shall be allowed from any adjacent properties or town roads.

In accordance with the Endangered Species Act of 1973, the Preferred Alternative shall not affect any known Threatened and Endangered species.

The O'Brien Mobile Home Park community water supply well (Public Water System #ME0009011) wellhead protection area, is approximately 24 feet from the Preferred Alternative proposed right-of-way. However, the well in question is located topographically, and likely hydrogeologically, upgradient from the Preferred Alternative, and is therefore not likely to be impacted by potential roadway contaminants. Opportunities to further minimization potential impact by roadway contaminants will be reviewed during final design. Once the Preferred Alternative advances to the final design phase, further investigation will evaluate the O'Brien Mobile Home Park public water supply well protection area before and after construction. A site contingency plan may be developed, as required.

The Preferred Alternative will result in the filling of approximately 5.1 acres of floodplains. Further avoidance and minimization to floodplains will be evaluated during final design through the detailed analysis of flood storage volume, and the potential for an increase in the basic flood elevation. If required, mitigation measures will be analyzed to minimize localized flooding impacts because of the construction of the Preferred Alternative.

Mitigation

MaineDOT is committed to providing compensatory wetland mitigation, as required, for the construction of the Gorham Bypass Preferred Alternative. On October 11, 2005, MaineDOT presented the state and federal Interagency Group with potential mitigation sites within the vicinity of study area watersheds and scheduled a field review of the sites. Potential mitigation opportunities include the restoration of hydrology by removal and/or alteration of existing agricultural ditches, habitat enhancement, wetland restoration, control of invasive species within transitional wetland sites, preservation of the riparian corridor along the Presumpscot River and along wildlife corridors.

In addition to compensatory wetland mitigation under Section 404 permit requirements, MaineDOT proposes other mitigation to include:

During final design, MaineDOT will incorporate, as appropriate, animal crossings at the structural crossings of Little River, Gully Brook, and/or Tannery Brook.

During final design, MaineDOT will refine the alignment and profile of the Preferred Alternative to minimize land use impacts to adjacent properties.

Decision

The FHWA has determined that Alternative 6d, the Preferred Alternative, will have no significant impact on the human environment. This FONSI is based on the:

- o Environmental Assessment, dated June 11, 2003
- o Crash Frequency Technical Memorandum, dated July 25, 2005
- o Revised EA Table 2-1, dated August 5, 2005
- o TSM Measurements Project Memorandum, September 2, 2005
- o Comparison of Transportation Alternatives, September 12, 2005, and
- o Response to Substantive EA Comments dated August 26, 2005.

The Gorham Bypass Environmental Assessment documentation has been independently evaluated by the FHWA and determined to adequately and accurately discuss the need, environmental issues, and impacts of the proposed project and mitigation measures. The documentation provides sufficient evidence and analysis for determining that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. The FHWA takes full responsibility for the accuracy, scope, and content of the Gorham Bypass Environmental Assessment.

October 21, 2005

Date



Peter Kleskovic, Assistant Division Administrator,
Federal Highway Administration, Maine