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**Interstate 295 Study : Advisory Committee Meeting Notice,
December 5, 2003**

Maine Department of Transportation

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**Maine Department of Transportation
I-295 Corridor Study Advisory Committee
Meeting Notice**

December 5, 2003
10:00 a.m.

PACTS
68 Marginal Way, Portland

Agenda

1. Introductions (10:00)
2. I-295 Corridor Studies and Investment Decisions (10:20)
3. Overview of Corridor History and Existing Conditions (10:40)
4. Current Study Purpose and Scope, and Coordination with Other Studies (11:10)

To evaluate the long-term needs of the I-295 corridor between Scarborough and Brunswick and to identify a set of recommendations to provide safe and efficient transportation service through the year 2025
5. Next Steps (11:50)
6. Adjourn (12:00)

Attachments

Study Participants
Past Studies
Current Construction Projects
Study Scope
Other Studies

Study Participants

Staff Participants

Ed Hanscom, MDOT Planning
Dennis Emidy, MDOT Planning
Holly Anderson, MDOT Project Development
Russ Charette, MDOT Office of Passenger Transportation
Tracy Perez, MDOT Office of Passenger Transportation
Randy Dunton, MDOT Division 6
Gerald Varney, FHWA Augusta
John Perry, FHWA Augusta
David Willauer, GPCOG
Maddy Adams, GPCOG
Eric Ortman, PACTS
John Duncan, PACTS

Advisory Committee Members (22)

Brunswick: Don Gerrish, Town Manager, and Theo Holtwijk, Town Planner
Cumberland: Bill Shane, Town Manager, and Carla Nixon, Town Planner
Falmouth: George Theborge, Town Planner, and Tony Hayes, Public Works Director
Freeport: Donna Larson, Town Planner, and Albert Presgraves, Town Engineer
Maine Turnpike Authority: Conrad Welzel, Manager of Government Relations
Portland: James Cloutier, City Councilor, and Larry Mead, Assistant City Manager,
and Mike Bobinsky, Public Works Director
State Police I-295 Troop: Lieutenant Ron Harmon
Scarborough: Ron Owens, Town Manager, and Joe Ziepniewski, Town Planner
South Portland: Tex Haeuser, Planning Director, and Steve Johnson, Public Works Dir.
Transit Providers Working Group: Peter Hefler, METRO General Manager
Westbrook: Paul Boudreau, Public Works Director, and Eric Dudley, Chief City Engineer
Yarmouth: Nat Tupper, Town Manager, and Dan Jellis, Town Engineer

Please refer to the meeting email distribution list for names of other interested parties. We will add names of additional people upon request.

Past Studies

PACTS I-295 Ramps Safety/Capacity Study (1998)

Produced recommendations for five interchanges.

Westbrook Street (#3) – The recommendation has been supplanted by a new layout that has been funded at \$3.7 million by MDOT and South Portland.

Main Street/Rte. 1 (#4) – The two recommendations were for new ramps that would allow new movements: southbound on to the highway, and northbound off to Main Street. PACTS has just funded a new study of this interchange, as requested by South Portland.

- Congress Street (#5) – The recommendation was supplanted by a new layout used for construction of the improved access to the Portland Transportation Center (train/bus station).
- Forest Avenue (#6) – The recommendation aimed to address the dangerous weaving situation there. The PACTS Policy Committee recommended to MDOT that this was the top priority of the five interchanges studied. MDOT and Portland have been working for the past two years or so on new layouts for this interchange in the context of the future train service.
- Franklin Street (#7) – One recommendation, to widen the *southbound* stretch between Tukey’s Bridge and the Franklin Street off-ramp to three lanes, has not been acted on. The study participants were unable to reach consensus on an acceptable recommendation to address the *northbound* off-ramp situation. See more on this on the next page.

Turnpike’s Regional Toll Study (1999)

The purpose was to look at what sort of “open barrier system” could be put in place on the southern portion of the Turnpike. This system would allow free turnpike travel within regions along the Turnpike corridor, and also offer other benefits. The Authority performed this study with an advisory committee of people from Kittery to New Gloucester. Before completion of the study, major opposition in Saco, Biddeford and Scarborough grew in reaction to fears that traffic diverted from the Turnpike due to the new toll plaza would create too much congestion on nearby roads. As a result, the Authority dropped the idea. As requested, the Authority recently reported to the Legislature that it is still reviewing the financial viability of the regional toll system, and that it would carefully address the potential negative effects of the concept before implementing it.

MDOT’s Review of the Opportunities to Avoid the Need to Widen I-295 (2001)

At the request of the Legislature, MDOT investigated ways to avoid widening I-295 in the foreseeable future. Working with a study advisory committee, MDOT also reviewed several options for the Turnpike between Exits 6A and 9 as part of the effort. The early 2001 report offered several recommendations, but noted that “there are opportunities to divert limited amounts of traffic from I-295 and, at least, postpone the need to widen the highway.”

Destination Tomorrow Analysis and Recommendation (2003)

During the fall of 2001, PACTS planners worked closely with MDOT to review several new assumptions and new data not available to MDOT a year earlier. The *Destination Tomorrow* analysis showed that a significant diversion of I-295 traffic to the Turnpike might eliminate the need to widen I-295 in the next 20 years.

Destination Tomorrow offers ten conclusions and ten recommendations for the I-295/ Turnpike corridor. See Issue Paper 3 (available at the December 5th meeting) for details.

Portland Peninsula Traffic Study Analysis, and an MDOT/Portland Agreement

During 2001 and 2002 Portland and MDOT worked together on plans for I-295 and nearby streets as they related to the proposed passenger rail service running through the Bayside area. Portland's analysis was done as part of its PACTS-funded Portland Peninsula Traffic Study (now in final draft form).

In November 2002 MDOT and Portland signed an agreement regarding three improvements to be made to I-295, other improvements to be made on nearby streets, the start of this I-295 corridor study in 2003, and several other topics.

MDOT's Passenger Rail Service Environmental Assessment

MDOT has been working for several years on the Environmental Assessment required before Federal Transit Administration funds can be used for the extension of the Boston-Portland passenger rail service to Brunswick. Many members of this I-295 Corridor Study advisory committee have worked with Ron Roy, Tracy Perez, Russ Charette and others at MDOT, NNEPRA, Amtrak and other organizations during this time. Ron Roy briefed the PACTS Policy Committee two months ago. One of MDOT's several challenges remains the completion of a business plan for financing the operating subsidy for the new service.

Current Construction Projects

- Capital funding for extension of passenger rail service between Portland and Brunswick.
- Forest Avenue Interchange (PIN 10557.00): Since completion of the PACTS I-295 Ramps Safety/Capacity Study, MDOT and Portland have been working on layouts for the Forest Avenue interchange in the context of the future train service. There is \$1.7 million programmed so far for this project. The total cost estimate for improvements to this interchange in *Destination Tomorrow* is \$17 million.
- Widen I-295 Southbound Between Exits 4 and 3 (PIN 11231.00): \$900,000 to widen from 2 to 3 lanes in South Portland.
- Exit 3 Ramps Modification (PIN 10988.00): \$3.65 million for this project in South Portland.
- I-295 Connector Road (2 PIN's): \$9.7 million for construction of this new road between Commercial Street and the Congress Street interchange.

Draft Scope for This Study

On October 14th Ed Hanscom presented this draft scope to the PACTS Technical Committee.

1. Data Collection

- A. Aerial Photography of Study Area (MDOT)
- B. “As-Built” of Study Area (MDOT)
- C. Existing Traffic Data (ATR sites & ramp counts) (MDOT)
- D. Identify Existing High Crash Locations (MDOT)
- E. Available Environmental Data (MDOT)
- E. ? Land Use Data (PACTS)

2. Evaluate Existing Conditions

- A. Determine AM & PM Peak DHV from Existing Traffic Data (MDOT)
- B. Determine Existing Capacity and LOS (MDOT)
 - 1. Basic Freeway Segments
 - 2. Weaving Sections
 - 3. On and Off-Ramp Sections
- C. Evaluate High Crash Locations (MDOT)
- D. Evaluate Existing Roadway Geometrics (MDOT)
- E. ? Evaluate Land Use Conditions (PACTS)

3. Evaluate Future Conditions

- A. From PACTS Model Develop AM & PM Peak DHV (PACTS)
 - 1. No Build (PACTS)
 - 2. Commuter Rail (MDOT-OPT Study)
 - 3. MTA Widening Plans (MTA)
- B. Determine Future Capacity and LOS (MDOT)
 - 1. Basic Freeway Segments
 - 2. Weaving Sections
 - 3. On and Off-Ramp Sections
- C. ? PACTS Land Use Policy (PACTS)

4. Develop Alternatives to Existing Interchanges

- A. Determine Feasibility of Alternatives (MDOT)
- B. Determine AM & PM Peak DHV for Alternatives (MDOT)
- C. Determine Capacity and LOS for Alternatives (MDOT)
 - 1. Basic Freeway Segments
 - 2. Weaving Sections
 - 3. On and Off-Ramp Sections
- D. ? Determine Land Use resulting from 3 C. (PACTS)

5. Public Participation Process (PACTS & MDOT)

- 1. After Existing Conditions are completed
- 2. After Future Conditions
- 3. After Alternatives are developed
- 4. Completion of Study

Other Studies

Destination Tomorrow Expansion (DTx)

In 2004 PACTS will complete an expansion of the scope of its *Destination Tomorrow* recommendations to cover the area from Biddeford to Freeport. The PACTS Planning Committee and a subcommittee have been working on this with staff and a consultant for six months.

On November 17th GPCOG and PACTS staff met with councilors and staff from Freeport, Cumberland, Falmouth, North Yarmouth and Yarmouth to discuss regional transportation and land use issues, and the recent work of the Coastal Corridor Coalition (see below). On December 1st we also held a forum for the general public regarding “DTx” and the Coastal Corridor Coalition.

In December or January the Policy Committee will prepare a list of concepts to be studied for the expanded plan. Many of the ideas listed below will be on the list. We will coordinate carefully the several study/plan efforts underway.

One November 17th forum idea was to eliminate the $\frac{3}{4}$ interchange at Exit 16 in Yarmouth, and to replace it with a new full interchange north of Tuttle Road in Cumberland where the land is flat and probably has less ledge.

PACTS Arterial Project Land Use Policy

PACTS members spent a lot of time during the development of *Destination Tomorrow* on the complex connection between land development and transportation. A key recommendation was this policy that would require that all “major” transportation projects be supported with a land use plan. A PACTS/MDOT/SPO subcommittee is working on how to turn this into a workable tool. This I-295 Corridor Study may turn out to be test case for application of the policy. (See November 24th Portland Press Herald article, and November 26th editorial.)

The *Destination Tomorrow* planning consultant’s analysis process included consideration of estimates of the effect of major transportation investments on future regional population and employment growth. These estimates might be applicable in this I-295 corridor study.

Coastal Corridor Coalition

During the past two years GPCOG staff has explored several regional initiatives with the town managers of Freeport, Falmouth, Yarmouth and Cumberland. The greatest attention has been focused on transportation and land use planning policy. MDOT has helped by providing 80 percent of the cost of the effort, and by helping to shape the scope of work.

GPCOG will complete a draft final report during the next month. The report will provide recommendations for consideration by the towns, by MDOT and by PACTS members in the development of *Destination Tomorrow* Expansion.

MDOT Exit 16 Preliminary Engineering

The 2004/2005 BTIP includes \$250,000 for preliminary engineering of a northbound on-ramp at Exit 16 in Yarmouth (PIN 11086.00).

PACTS Exit 4

As noted above, several months ago PACTS funded a second study of Exit 4 of I-295 in South Portland – the Main Street/Route One interchange. Currently the interchange does not have ramps for southbound access onto I-295, nor for northbound exit from I-295 to Main Street. It is likely that the objectives of this PACTS study will be achieved by the MDOT corridor study.

PACTS Falmouth/Cumberland Access to I-95

Several months ago PACTS also funded Falmouth’s request “to evaluate the issues surrounding improved access to I-295 by travelers in the Cumberland, Yarmouth and Falmouth areas”. It is likely that the objectives of this PACTS study will be achieved by the MDOT corridor study.

GPCOG’s Bus Rapid Transit and Light Rail Transit Study

Last week GPCOG staff hosted a meeting of people invited to serve as an advisory committee for a study of opportunities for “bus rapid transit” and “light rail transit” in Greater Portland. This effort will further explore the feasibility of proposals from several past studies.

PACTS Yarmouth Route 1 Study

Several months ago PACTS also funded a study of Route 1 in Yarmouth between Exit 17 of I-95 and East Main Street. The study advisory committee held its first meeting on November 21st. One component of the study will be to test how much Route 1 traffic would divert to I-95 if the Exit 16 northbound on-ramp were built.