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Martin's Point Bridge Advisory Committee : Meeting Minutes, March 22, 2011

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Martin's Point Bridge Advisory Committee
Martin's Point Health Care Center
Minutes of March 22, 2011 Meeting
6 to 8 pm

Attendees:

Committee members

Gene Gillies	Julie MacDonald
John Woodcock	Richard Weare
Cheri Juniewicz	Donald Hamilton
Kathi Earley	Ann Goggin
Don Gower	Alex Jaegerman
Mayer Fistal	Holly Winger
Hilary Bassett	Sue Ellen Bordwell

Other attendees

Leanne Timberlake, MaineDOT
Wayne Frankhauser, MaineDOT
Ben Condon, MaineDOT
Sally Oldham, Consultant to MaineDOT
Anthony Puntin, The Louis Berger Group
Jeff McEwen, Federal Highway Administration
Keith Wallace, Consultant to MaineDOT

Sally Oldham opened the meeting by thanking Patrick Costin for bring several CD copies of the lecture held last year, "The Art of Bridge Design: The Best in Integrating Architecture and Engineering" with Spiro Pollalis from Harvard University's Graduate School of Design and internationally know bridge designer, David Scott, from Arup in New York. Sally then explained that the goals for the meeting were to hear from MaineDOT about the Department's responses to the Committee's recommendation regarding the cross-section from the last meeting, to concerns raised about alignment options presented at that meeting and further, to begin the discussion about the Committee's preferences and recommendations for how to handle aesthetic issues in the RFQ and RFP processes. Sally asked for any comments on the minutes from the February 17, 2011 meeting. There were no comments and the minutes were approved.

Wayne Frankhauser provided the Department's responses to the cross section recommendations and comments about the alignment envelope proposed at the last meeting. He said that the Department would not be willing to require the cross section recommended by the Committee that included a separated multi-use path because they believe the cost would be greater than for a cross section without this separation due to the requirement for a separate pier structure to carry the path. In response to questions, he said the Department will require a 54' cross section for the bridge in the RFP. Wayne agreed that the Department will include in the RFP the information that the Advisory Committee's preference is for the separated multi-use path. Sally added that

D-B teams would likely include the separated path only if they could figure out a means to build it which would not add unduly to the overall cost.

Wayne explained that the Department has asked Louis Berger to revise the alignment envelope to pull in the outer range of the upstream and downstream alignments in response to both further research about existing conditions and comments from Advisory Committee members. Tony Puntin showed the drawings he is working on that are not yet complete. The revised alignment will be shared with the committee at a future meeting.

Richard Weare asked about whether the Department would include in the RFP as a preference of the Advisory Committee the provision for fishing platforms on the upstream and downstream sides of the bridge. Leanne responded that could be done, but if it is not specifically mentioned in the RFP, the Design-Build teams will have access to all of the minutes and other documents coming out of this committee.

Leanne presented the PowerPoint slides that had been sent in advance to Committee members. The presentation began with the consensus Need and Vision statements for the Martin's Point Bridge project and then highlighted the approach taken to Context Sensitive Solutions, to aesthetic issues and to public involvement in the Veterans Bridge D-B project regarding proposal requirements, criteria for evaluation and lessons learned about this process. The presentation then outlined questions to be addressed in the Martin's Point Bridge RFP regarding aesthetics and public involvement. Leanne concluded the presentation with a caution that cost will be a very important factor throughout in terms both of initial cost impact and future maintenance needs.

Sally called on Alex Jaegerman and Hilary Bassett, both participants in the Veterans Bridge public involvement effort, to comment on their insights and recommendations derived from that experience. Alex indicated the public involvement effort for the Veterans Bridge project is not yet complete and has become more extensive than any of the parties had anticipated. He said he thought the process had gone "reasonably well," acknowledging that the Context Sensitive Solutions approach to transportation planning, design and construction calls for this type of on-going public involvement. He commented on the extent to which he and other stakeholders found that by the time a Design-Build team was chosen, the choices remaining regarding how to best fit the bridge into the context were narrow. The budget was set at the time of the contract award and there was little room to change basic elements of the design. This realization surprised some stakeholders and led to initial frustration in the limited public involvement process proposed by the D-B team following the project award.

Alex recounted that design details were what could be addressed. The shape and form of the bridge deck and piers were already determined. A larger group of stakeholders was invited to several public meetings where feedback on specific design elements for overlooks, open spaces at the end of the bridge, bike/pedestrian path railings, pier treatment, lighting, seating and colors was sought. A smaller group of stakeholders then requested that they have the opportunity to continue meeting with MaineDOT project staff to provide further input as more refined design and landscape decisions were considered. MaineDOT agreed to facilitate this continued public input.

Alex stated that for the Martin's Point Bridge project a method of ongoing public involvement should be considered and outlined in the RFP. He found in the Veterans Bridge case that while the design score was given strong weight at 45%, this dealt with technical engineering design, not with visual aspects of design. Alex recommended that there needs to be a D-B team member whose skill and role is addressing the visual/aesthetic aspects and who is engaged fully in the public involvement process. This professional needs to serve a role on the D-B team to address the character-defining elements of the project and the overall visual effect. Alex concluded saying he has been impressed by the willingness to spend time and the good will evidenced by all engaged parties in the lengthy public involvement process for Veterans Bridge.

Hilary Bassett commented that in her experience MaineDOT staff has been very receptive to public input in the Veterans Bridge project. She strongly agreed with Alex that there needs to be a design professional or design architect skilled in aesthetic design as part of the D-B team. She has found it very helpful to have good visuals, renderings, tangible models including mock up railing designs and samples of paving for engaged stakeholders to review in the public involvement process. Simple study models have been extremely helpful. She would like to see this as a requirement for submission by D-B teams in their proposals.

Sally opened the floor to questions and comments from all, keying off of several questions included in the agenda. Holly Winger spoke up to question just what real impact the Advisory Committee's preferences/recommendations can have on the completed bridge if cost is going to be such a controlling factor resulting in the near certainty that the bridge will be a pre-cast concrete bridge with limited variation possible. Wayne acknowledged that a pre-cast concrete structure would likely be proposed. There would, however, be some possibility for different span arrangements and pier types. It would be possible for the Advisory Committee, for example, to pick perhaps 5 things they would want to specify (such as a railing type or lighting type) or to ask D-B teams to offer two or three packages of options for such elements so that each package could be aesthetically compatible and also within an allowed cost.

Holly spoke further to say she thinks the Committee should spend time on what it can affect and she is worried that the D-B process seems to have evolved to drum out design creativity and quality. Ann Goggin shared her experience in real estate development in responding to similar frustrations with the D-B approach by hiring an architect to prepare the package that was then put out to bid to D-B team prospects. She got a 50% better result in terms of aesthetic design approach with a 5% reduction in cost, an excellent outcome in her mind. She called into question whether the process as proposed is self-fulfilling in reducing quality in the overall design (not just technical engineering design). Ann strongly endorsed the recommendation that D-B teams be required to have an architect or other aesthetic design professional as part of the team.

Jeff McEwen explained his view that as this is a bridge low to the water and the majority of the cost is below the deck (in structural piers) it is primarily the topside deck that is of concern in its visual impact. Several committee members disagreed with this opinion, stating that they believe the below deck views are also important in the overall visual impact of the bridge.

John Woodcock related that the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is doing spill tests to determine needs in case of disaster. He suggested MaineDOT staff consult DEP to determine whether disaster-preparedness informed by these tests should be considered as one controlling factor for the span width. He asked further what MaineDOT's plan is on repairing areas of the causeway washed out by the Patriot's Day storm in 2007. Wayne responded that the RFP will require constructing stable slopes on the causeway.

Patrick Costin explained how he works with clients to identify in a given project what dollars are required to meet technical requirements of structure and what discretionary dollars are available to create a satisfactory and appealing outcome and wondered if it would be possible to make a similar identification in this project of what the expected cost is to satisfy the minimum technical requirements and what would be available to achieve an outcome satisfactory to the Advisory Committee. Patrick explained he assumes that MaineDOT has in mind a cost per lineal foot based on past experience.

Patrick referenced the approach described by David Scott of Arup in the bridge lecture that is used in European countries where public authorities identify a budget amount upfront and then ask proposers to give their best proposal meeting both technical and additional requirements up to that amount rather than putting such strong weight on the low cost factor. He said it seems counter productive to ask teams for the most cost effective solution based on technical structural needs which then creates a situation that essentially ensures that the selected team and the public involvement group will end up at logger heads, with the D-B team fighting to keep costs within the agreed price and the public stakeholders fighting to secure dollars for elements that meet the community's expectations for this public investment. Patrick said he thinks it important to incentivize creativity during the D-B proposal phase to get a good result. Wayne indicated that D-B as a process has its limitations, but that it is a good vehicle for effective results regarding constructability as well as maintenance of traffic.

Tony Puntin spoke up to say that the Louis Berger team that proposed for the Veterans Bridge felt they were missing some information regarding input from the public in that project and he believes that this Advisory Committee has an excellent opportunity to influence and inform the D-B teams about their preferences that can result in this project providing real value as a community asset.

Sally then asked the Committee to divide into four groups to consider several questions posed by Leanne in the PowerPoint presentation as follows:

1. Define the setting (physical context) of the bridge and its approaches:
 - From the River
 - From the Falmouth side
 - Residential neighborhood
 - From the Portland side
 - Commercial/hospital
 - Park/Recreational areas
 - Residential neighborhood

2. Recommend how you would like to see aesthetic issues addressed in requirements included in the RFP:

A. Would you want to specify a general style to be used?

Examples: modern/contemporary;
retro;
other;
none

If there a style were required, how would you specify and describe it?

B. Would you want to specify a theme for the bridge?

This could be medical/Martin's Point Marine Hospital
Marine/nautical
Other
Or none

3. What requirements would you like to see included in the RFP that would help ensure a design with strong aesthetic qualities that would meet the Martin's Point Bridge Need and Vision statements?

At the conclusion of these discussions, Sally asked for reports from each group. A summary follows:

Define the setting (physical context) of the bridge and its approaches.

- Program requirements in the RFP should include description of:
 - Vehicular requirements
 - Bike environment
 - Pedestrian environment
 - Fishing environment
 - Seating (bump-outs)
 - Lighting (not a unanimous opinion, consider collateral impacts)
 - Portland and Falmouth landings and nodes (need to be fully detailed)
 - Parking access on the Portland side
 - Landscape treatment
 - Treatment of the natural area
 - Maximize access
 - Utility requirements
- Don't want this bridge to look the same as all other bridges. Maybe consider form liners on the piers and sides to give a uniqueness to the look.
- The experience is different driving north than south.
 - Driving toward Falmouth there is release. The terrain becomes flatter. You're approaching a suburban and less dense locale.
 - Driving toward Portland you're rising, the sense is of compression, approaching an urban area, greater density, arriving in the city.

- The bridge should recognize and reflect the differences in the driving experience from one point to another.

Recommend how you would like to see aesthetic issues addressed in requirements included in the RFP. Would you want to see a general style specified? Would you want to see a theme specified?

- If there is a reference to a style, it should reflect Maine, Southern Maine, the context of this bridge as part of a coastal – local roadway.
- The bridge should appear thin, small, maybe contemporary. Reflect the Vision statement in its reference to bringing forth the experience of passage across the bridge. Railings should be open, not obstruct views of the water. If there is reference to a theme it should be of a gateway.
- The bridge should link the communities; one side is historic/more urban and the other side is cottage/residential; fit the architectural modes on each side of the bridge
- Recommendation is for no style, no theme.

What requirements would you like to see included in the RFP that would help ensure a design with strong aesthetic qualities that would meet the Martin’s Point Bridge Need and Vision statements?

- Present the visual representation (perspective) of the bridge from the following vantage points:
 - Falmouth, Portland - East Deering and Martin’s Point, 295, Mackworth.
 - Driver, pedestrian perspective
 - Boater perspective
- An architect/designer should be strongly represented on the D-B team and engaged in the post-bid design development process.
- The post-bid design development should engage stakeholders in detail/final design decision-making.
- The below deck should be open so that neighbors and boaters have a maximized view upstream and downstream; as few posts as possible.
- The bridge should be as invisible as possible; i.e.: as little disruption of views of water, estuaries, and sky for all.
- Entrances should be welcoming and encouraging and obvious for all users
- Lighting should be both "mood setting" for non-vehicular users, and not disruptive to neighbors; vehicular traffic should be safely lit, but not intrusive to residences; all lighting should be non-polluting, i.e.: all light directed to bridge users and not polluting sky.
- Include platforms through bump outs – providing for fishing/provide seating as a way to get away from traffic

- Maximize the view of the water from the bridge
- The bridge will be visible for 3 to 4 generations. It will be seen from many contexts and must be successful from each of these – 295, Mackworth Island, Falmouth and Portland. It needs to work on all levels aesthetically.
- Regarding the budget – consider whether MaineDOT could establish a total project cost budget and then allow teams to respond choosing the best proposal even if it is not the lowest in cost.

Sally raised three final items.

1. Cross section design: She asked that Committee members review Leanne’s cross section diagrams again for a brief discussion at the next meeting to assess whether the Committee wants to come to consensus on a required design to specify in the RFP (see attached). The concept design that had initially received equal votes with C2 was B. It would be possible to require B but to indicate the Committee preference for a separated multi-use path (C2) if a D-B team was able to incorporate it in their proposal.

2. Sally indicated that the question of whether to specify 11’ or 12’ lanes is still an open one which should be determined by a meeting of MaineDOT, Portland (Mike Bobinsky), Metro Transit District and Jay Reynolds. MaineDOT will initiate this meeting. If 11’ lanes are chosen, this would impact on the cross section options.

3. Sally asked if there were volunteers who would be willing to draft language describing the various physical contexts of the bridge, for review by the Advisory Committee, and then for use by Leanne in drafting the RFP in order to provide guidance and clarity to D-B teams about the communities’ views of character-defining features of the physical context. Cheri Juniewicz, Sue Ellen Bordwell and Patrick Costin volunteered.

Mayer Fistal asked if it would be possible to transmit to Advisory Committee members the Bridge Aesthetics images that Leanne had provided at the meeting in a notebook. Leanne said she would figure out the best way to do this. Sally thanked everyone for their input and their time, reminded participants of future meeting dates (below), and adjourned the meeting.

Action Items:

- Sally will send an agenda and background information prior to the next meeting.
- MaineDOT will initiate a meeting with Portland and Falmouth Public Works and Metro Transit to determine the vehicular lane width requirement
- Cheri, Sue Ellen and Patrick will draft language describing the physical contexts of the bridge for review and use by the Advisory Committee and MaineDOT, prior to the next meeting if possible, or if needed, for a future meeting.
- Committee members are asked to review the attached cross section diagrams prior to the next meeting to assess whether the Committee wants to come to consensus on a required design to specify in the RFP.

- Five copies of the Bridge Design lecture from March 2010 were handed out. John Woodcock offered to make additional copies to bring March 29 if others would like to view this lecture.
- Leanne will endeavor to format the Bridge Aesthetics notebook images in a format that can be emailed to Advisory Committee members.

Next meeting: Tuesday, March 29, 2011
Time: 6:00-8:00 pm
Location: Martin's Point Health Care center, 331 Veranda Street, Marine Hospital Building

Future meetings: Tuesday, April 26, 2011