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Minutes of December 13, 2007 Task Force Meeting

DECEMBER 13 MIDCOAST BYPASS TASK FORCE MEETING Attending: Don Jones, Arthur Faucher, David King, David Nichols, Ross Bertram, Tom Woodin, Bob Faunce, Norma Dreyfus, Dale Doughty, Ed Hanscom, Carol Morris MEETING REPORT Carol Morris described the agenda and handed out a draft post-public comment period Process Guide along with samples/examples of public comments. Public Meetings Seven of eight public meetings have been held (Alna is rescheduled for Dec. 17 due to snow). Attendance ranged from 25 to 80 people per meeting; in general the meetings were well attended, with a range of opinions expressed. Post-Public Comment Period Process Carol stated that the goals of the task force during the evaluation period should be to be flexible and designed to find common ground. To date there are approximately 80 public comments, with more coming in every day. The comments will be presorted into three categories: complex comments that require task force discussion, comments requiring technical assessment by MaineDOT, and comments that require no action or response. Dan Sortwell's comment was used as an example of the first category; Aaron Miller's comment was used as an example of the second; and the Windham person's comments was used as an example of the third. Every task force member will receive a copy of every comment to determine whether they have been sorted appropriately; that is, whether the task force feels it needs to review any additional comments - or any fewer - as a group. The 2nd category (comments requiring technical research and review) will be dealt with in the order in which the research can be accomplished by MaineDOT. The task force's role is to provide feedback, add additional local knowledge, and determine whether the MaineDOT's conclusion is logical. Once the task force has completed its review of the comments, MaineDOT will determine to what degree the public and task force input will change the DEIS impact evaluation; that is, affect the specific impacts of each of the routes. With this information in hand, MaineDOT will rank the alternatives and send a reduced number of alternatives back to the task force for final review and comment. Whether or not consensus on a solution is reached, MaineDOT will make the final decision. By request, any member of the public can see the comments received during the public comment period. Responses to all issues raised by the comments will be addressed in the Final Environmental Impact Statement, which will be published on the study website be available in other media as well. Q. What if we get to the point where MaineDOT and FHWA have narrowed it down to two alternatives, and you're looking at picking one, how are the impacts prioritized or weighted? A. MaineDOT/Dale Doughty: It's a value judgment on some things and a regulatory judgment on others. There is a regulatory hierarchy (wetlands, for example are very high) and some things trump others. Construction costs are just one of many factors. The feedback MaineDOT is looking for from the task force consists of recommendations like, "This would fit into the community better if this particular adjustment was made." The task force recommendations are not binding, however. Q. When MaineDOT buys properties, are they valued at a reduced rate because of the bypass? A. MaineDOT/Dale Doughty: No, they are not bought at drastically reduced prices because of the bypass situation. They are bought at fair market value based on comparisons with similar properties not in the bypass routes. Q. Arthur Faucher: Could my municipality have access to Morris Communications to look at the human impact of the displacements? Can we get data on economic and social issues for those who are displaced? The highest human impact is on the N-2 strip, and we don't have a good sense of the humanitarian impact. A. MaineDOT/Dale Doughty: Yes, you could have technical assistance from us. We would like to get our right-of-way and displacement assistance people here to talk to you about this. We could speak to a

group of people and meet with anyone who has discomfort about being impacted. Arthur: The people I'm talking about would be intimidated by any sort of meeting. They are humble and don't want to cause trouble. They are so frightened and nervous that they may not understand what's being presented. MaineDOT/Dale Doughty: Our displacement people are very compassionate and have spent their entire careers working with people in this situation. They are very good at this. They could do groups or one-on-one meetings with these individuals. Once we know which properties are being affected, we can send them letters and invite them to have conversations with us. We would work with you on such a mailing so that it's coming from their community as well as the state. Tom Woodin: My sense is that there are people who are very upset and that Art thinks that Carol could help with them. The right of way person at the meetings was very smart and very professional but could be intimidating. David King: If you do send out a letter, it should come from the town, not MaineDOT. MaineDOT/Dale Doughty: That would be great. We would love to have it come from the town. Arthur: It's interesting that I don't have to go after them—they're coming to see me. Some people tell me that their family has been living there for three generations, and they don't want to live outside Wiscasset. Carol asked if anyone had any additional comments or suggestions on the process described in the handout. Everyone indicated they were in agreement with the process as described. MaineDOT/Dale Doughty: Carol will get this document and the samples out to everyone who isn't at this meeting tonight, so that everyone is on the same page. Once the public comment meeting ends and after the holidays, Carol will be happy to make the first cut at sorting the comments and will then work on refining the sorting with MaineDOT. If MaineDOT gets Carol copies over Christmas week, the task force could meet Thursday, Jan. 24.

Information Requests Carol stated that the minutes included a number of information requests, and Dale and Ed have responses. 1. Ed has given a copy of a map of the historic district overlaid on the proposed routes to Don Jones. He will email a copy to Carol, who will email it to the group. Don stated that he had requested that map and continues to be disappointed that it was not made available at the public meetings. 2. The traffic by route methodology explanation has been written and delivered. Don spent considerable time with Ed reviewing it and still has concerns about some inherent assumptions, not calculations, and what they imply. Carol will make the explanation available to the group. Don noted that human behavior cannot be mathematically predicted. Dale agreed that human behavior cannot be accurately modeled. Don noted that the assumption that people will divide themselves evenly between the two routes so that the traffic times equalize, implies a complete knowledge that drivers will not have and is not a realistic assumption or a good foundation for the calculation. Task force members gave personal examples of how they make their own route decisions. "For example, every time I cross the Wiscasset bridge, I decide whether to take the Eddy Road or not, based on the traffic directly in front of me." 3. Don had asked about annual operating costs for routine and substantive maintenance and whether they have been factored into the cost of the different routes. Dale stated that only substantive differences in lifecycle costs enter into the decision. MaineDOT will look at elements such as repaving, bridge maintenance costs and deck replacement, but not at de minimus (minor) costs such as mowing. Arthur asked whether municipalities will eventually become responsible to maintain the bypass. Dale and Ed stated that by law maintenance is the responsibility of the State. 4. Carol stated that a few comments were received on the lack of information about the future of Davey Bridge. She said that in the existing plan, the Davey Bridge will remain. 5. Information regarding the effects of the addition of additional interchanges was requested, and MaineDOT has indicated that this discussion, and the design and research needed to assess impacts, will be part of upcoming task force meetings. Ed stated that MaineDOT will look at vehicle usage prior to ramp design and

that he sees this research starting at Stage 2. (Stage 2 design is described on page 20 of the DEIS.) Don asked whether MDOT would do a design based on a simple “diamond-shaped” interchange. Dale stated that MaineDOT’s goal is always to build the simplest connection with the smallest footprint that is safe and meets the need 20 years into the future. Don expressed hope that MaineDOT is thinking of the simplest design. He is concerned about the very long ramp from Route 27 that passes under the proposed N2N8C version and passes almost to the Sheepscot River, nearly a mile, before merging. Dale stated that MaineDOT will design it as simply as possible to meet federal and state regulations and be safe. David King noted that Woolwich had experienced issues with MaineDOT developing designs for non-bypass related work that had higher impacts than the town thought was necessary. He asked whether the town will have any input on intersection design. Dale stated that MaineDOT will work closely with towns and selectmen on design and that the design process will include public meetings.

6. Carol asked whether it is true that, as someone stated at a Wiscasset public meeting, emergency vehicles have no trouble getting through Wiscasset Village. David Nichols described how emergency vehicles have gotten through in the past. Dale stated that it’s counterintuitive that it’s always possible to get through Wiscasset when it’s backed up. Ross Bertram and Tom Woodin described how traffic moves over on the bridge to allow room for emergency vehicles. Art recommended that Maine DOT contact Roland Abbott for an accurate perspective, and the group also recommended that they check with Robbie Hamm in Boothbay. Both run EMT operations.

7. Carol noted that there was a question about how noise is calculated and how mitigation is addressed. Dale will email the policy to Carol, who will share with the task force. He also briefly described how berms will be constructed to reduce noise and also help reduce construction cost by reducing demolition waste. Dale explained that MaineDOT measures average noise on a highway and uses federal models to model noise levels. Art described how MaineDOT has created additional wetlands for other projects and how the addition of many frogs reduced the perception of highway noise. Don stated that the proposal for sound mitigation was minimal and that he was hoping for more substantial mitigation. Tom Woodin added that the DEIS did not have much information about how noise is measured and how mitigation is modeled and predicted. Dale noted that in places where berms are not practical, such as the flyovers to Rte. 218, there will be noise that cannot be reduced. Dale also noted that the current noise policy has been rewritten to be easier to understand, and that it states that remediation must be practical and reasonable. Dale will provide the policy to Carol, who will share it with the task force. Don asked whether the berm approach would be helpful in dealing with sound attenuation near the Bradford House. Ed stated that the approach is in a cut and could benefit by a berm. Dale noted that adding a berm would expand the impact area and that some individuals may prefer to give up more property for more of a visual and noise barrier.

8. Carol noted that there was a question from Joe Cameron about vibration from the new road. Dale stated that no problems are expected.

9. Carol noted that there was a comment about the lack of coverage and information in the DEIS regarding the No build alternative. Dale stated that MaineDOT would repackage the No build information in the final EIS to make assessment clearer.

10. Carol noted that there was a question about conservation easements in Edgecomb, and that the Edgecomb task force members were going to check on it.

11. Carol noted that there was a question about loss of tax income as a component of economic impact. Arthur stated that the community hired a consulting firm and finished a revaluation this year. Dale stated that MaineDOT will look at Clark’s Point to see whether adjustments can be made. Arthur noted that interpretations of how the various routes will have an impact on a community are important to the process. He will draft a comment before Dec. 21 and will later develop a letter with more specifics.

Public Comments Mr. Van Orsdell noted that driving

conditions are worse tonight than he had ever experienced. He asked how many of the task force would like to see no bypass built anywhere (no hands). He asked how many of the task force would like to see a bypass built somewhere (all hands). He then stated that the government is not going to fund a bypass that the public opposes, as has been clear at the public meetings. He stated that the task force is failing in its task if it meekly accepts the "bargain basement" and thoughtless proposals put forth by MDOT. A water route or a 20-mile bypass north of the village would have public support. He stated that the task force cannot be ignored by MaineDOT, and they need to exercise their power to prevent a "train wreck" before the bypass proposal gets to Washington, D.C. He urged them to take their job seriously and send MaineDOT back to the drawing board. A resident of Westport Island congratulated the task force and MaineDOT on a "great job" examining every possible alternative and thanked them. A resident of the Boothbay peninsula stated that the biggest fear of the people in Boothbay is that the No-build alternative will be chosen. The meeting was adjourned at 8:15.