



Governor Harry W. Nice Memorial Bridge Improvement Project Focus Group Meeting #4



**Potomac Elementary School, Dahlgren, VA.
Tuesday, February 10, 2009
6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.**

Meeting Summary and Action Items

Meeting Attendees:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Organization</u>
Lt. Wayne Boarman	MdTA Police
Megan Blum	MdTA
Shawn Burnett	WTB
Kerri Corderman	McCormick Taylor
Charli Crandell	Colonial Beach Town Council
Ed Faulkner	Clifton on the Potomac
Jean Graham	Roseland Road Community
Jason Groth	Charles County
Jim & Jane Hudnall	Oxon Hill Bike Club
Gary Jackson	MdTA
Ed & Susie Marshall	Cobb Neck Citizens Alliance
Regina Mundi	One Stop Travel Plaza
Nick Nies	Va. Dept. of Transportation
Beth Potter	Tri-County Council of So. MD.
Walter Roscello	Oxon Hill Bike Club
Joe Schumacher	Rep. Wittman's Office
Dale Sisson	King George County
Glen Smith	MdTA
Heather Straughan	King George County
Richard Stubb	Rosborough Communications
Jerry Volman	Bryans Road Corp
Gary Wagner	NSA South Potomac
CDR Michael Weaver	NSF Dahlgren

Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Glen Smith, Project Manager of the Nice Bridge Improvement Project with the Maryland Transportation Authority (Authority), welcomed the group to the project's fourth Focus Group meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to provide a summary of the proposed Alternates Retained for Detailed Study (ARDS), the findings from the environmental documentation process, the project schedule and information on the upcoming Public Hearings. Mr. Smith explained that new legislation was passed in Maryland, Senate Bill 492, which authorizes the use of certain vehicular crossings under the jurisdiction of the Authority by pedestrians and bicycles when authorized by the Chairman of the Authority. He said that bicycle facilities had therefore been incorporated into the alternates for the Nice Bridge project, as requested by members of the community. He noted that details on the bicycle facilities would be provided during the presentation.

Mr. Smith introduced the members of the project team and then asked attendees to introduce themselves.

Review of Alternates Retained for Detailed Study (ARDS) and Alternate Options

Mr. Shawn Burnett with the Wilson T. Ballard Company presented the seven ARDS and their corresponding six bicycle options that are evaluated in the Draft Environmental Assessment (EA).

Mr. Burnett referred to the hand-out that featured graphics of each of the ARDS and options. He went through each alternate and described the size of the typical section including the roadway and shoulder widths. Mr. Burnett then described how bicycle facility provisions were incorporated into each of the build alternates. He presented display boards to the group and described the proposed circulation of the bikeways as they entered the Maryland and Virginia shores on the build alternates that retained the existing bridge.

Mr. Burnett asked the group if there were any questions or comments.

Questions/comments received on the ARDS/ Options

- With Alternate 1 – how long would the existing bridge last?
Bridge maintenance will be conducted to keep the bridge in service.
- When was the bridge built?
Bridge was built in 1940.
- The bridge is a substantial structure.
- Is there a way to expand deck for more road space?
Would have to look at issues with widening the deck – was designed for 1940s loading standards of traffic. Newer loading standards require assessment of substructure elements.
- Will an actual bike trail be built or will people keep riding along the side of US 301?
The shoulder in Maryland is wide enough for cyclists; there are no formal trails designated along 301 at this time.
- Don't discount bike provisions just due to cost.
- Where do the bikes go after they cross the bridge? Is someone going to build a bike trail, or would they continue down US 301?
- There are only short distances along US 301 both in Virginia and Maryland that would need to have bike compatible shoulders to connect to existing and proposed bike trail systems. On the Virginia side – there is a preferred bike trail approximately a ½ mile down from Owens Road.
- Will there be a toll for bikes since there is a toll for cars?
That decision will be made as the project team continues to investigate the impacts of Maryland Senate Bill 492.
- Public paths under the bridges would be a safety/security concern for the Authority.
- Will pedestrians be allowed on the bridge as well?
The project team is looking at a barrier separated 10 foot section that could be joint use for pedestrians and bicyclists. Pedestrian safety is a concern. Pedestrian infrastructure is also needed on both sides approaching the bridge.
- Have you looked at placing the bikeway under the bridge roadway?
This presents concerns of providing sufficient vertical clearance for River vessels.
- Have you looked at providing provisions on one-side versus two-sides for the bikes?
Yes, but this requires circulation paths on either shore for cyclists to travel on the appropriate side of US 301.
- On all the new bridge options, you're reducing the grades – how much further will that put down the road on the MD side?
The touch down to existing grade is just east of the existing toll plaza.
- What is the primary project cost driver?
Bridge structure area including the overall width of the bridge (a two-lane versus a four-lane structure).
- You could also use the bike path for maintenance.

A barrier separated bikeway would actually be a concern for maintenance in terms of access and an additional maintenance item.

- Are there any thoughts as to the structure of the bridge?
Any new structure will be fixed. A moveable span bridge is not being considered. Will be designing structure later in the process.
- Will there be a reduced grade on the new bridge?
Will go from 3.5 percent to 3 percent.
- Is there any thought regarding access for residents along Roseland Road?
We heard concern at the Alternates Public Workshops about improving US 301 access to Roseland Road with the bridge improvements. All build alternates will provide an access road using Barnesfield Road to alleviate access concerns.
- How will motorists on Roseland Road turn to go towards the bridge?
Residents would use Barnesfield Road to then make a left onto US 301 towards the bridge.
- The Barnesfield access road is a driveway and not built for traffic – will need to be upgraded to handle additional/regular traffic.
- What is the height of the bridge?
It is 135 feet over the navigational channel in the Potomac.
- With the height constraint of the bridge, one idea could be to narrow the bike path to six feet and make it a multi-use bike/ped facility – may reduce the cost;
According to AASHTO standards a shared use path would need to be at least eight feet wide.
- Concern about location of northbound and southbound inspection stations.
- Wouldn't the campus facilities need to be relocated due to reducing the slope on the bridge?
They would only need to be relocated for a replacement of the existing structure or new structure north of the existing bridge.

Overview of Findings from the Environmental Assessment

Ms. Megan Blum, Environmental Manager with the Authority, presented information to the group on the Draft Environmental Assessment including potential impacts to the environmental resources from the proposed ARDS. Ms. Blum reviewed the potential impacts from the ARDS to each of the resources including impacts to forest, streams, Maryland Critical Areas, moderate impacts to soils and floodplains, and other impacts to community resources including parks and historic sites. Ms. Blum described how a compensatory mitigation plan would be developed for the Nice Bridge Improvement Project per new regulation from the Army Corps of Engineers and the Environmental Protection Agency. She noted that the mitigation plan will be the first of its kind in Maryland and therefore, the team would be allowing for additional time in the project schedule to prepare it.

Ms. Blum also explained additional field studies had recently been conducted for the site of the potential northbound inspection station. Wetlands were identified on the property and the summary of impacts in the EA would be recalculated to include the newly identified wetlands.

Ms. Blum indicated copies of the Draft EA would be available for public review at libraries in both Charles County and King George County. A copy would also be made available at the Welcome Center in Maryland near Newburg.

Questions/comments received on the Environmental Assessment & Summary of Potential Impacts

- Do you anticipate a FONSI?

Yes, a FONSI is anticipated based on the environmental assessment, unless there is an unforeseen concern voiced by public.

- The Northbound weigh station, is that going to be built in the wetlands?
Based on the current concept, yes, it would be, but a permit and mitigation for the impacts to wetlands would be required from the Army Corps of Engineers.
- Looking at these impacts, they all seem pretty minimal.
- For the Environmental Resource Impacts described on slide #22 – it's suggested that the team include some maps identifying the location of the resources and what the impacts are (at the public hearings).

Information on Public Hearings

Ms. Kerri Corderman presented information on the public hearings. She noted the hearings are anticipated to be held in fall 2009. Ms. Corderman explained the format of the hearings would involve an Open House portion where attendees could review displays followed by a formal presentation by the project team. After the team presentation, the public would have the opportunity to provide either public or private testimony. Ms. Corderman explained the public would be notified in a variety of ways regarding the public hearings including a flier, brochure, and advertisements in local and regional newspapers. She encouraged Focus Group members to inform their communities and organizations to make sure as many people as possible are aware of the hearings.

Ms. Corderman also reviewed the list of recent agency and public outreach meetings conducted by the Nice Bridge project team.

Project Schedule & Questions/ Feedback

Mr. Smith provided the next steps in the project schedule. Mr. Smith thanked attendees for their participation and opened the floor to general questions and comments.

Questions/comments

- What happens to the old bridge (if taken out of service)?
We will determine that with the Maryland Historical Trust and US Coast Guard. There are steps to go through because the existing bridge is eligible for the National Register due to its age and interstate/intrastate commerce significance. It could involve documenting the bridge in terms of photographs and other memorabilia if the bridge eventually needed to be demolished.
- Could you use it as a bike path?
The concern with this is who would maintain the bridge if it is taken out of service and not serving a transportation purpose.
- Is funding provided by MdTA?
Yes, currently funding is supported entirely by the Authority.
- Concerns were raised regarding impacts of a Commercial Vehicle Inspection Station would have to the Truck Stop.
- Will noise from the bridge be heard at my house along Roseland Road (will it increase)?
*Depending on how the wind blows, I can hear the noise from the bridge.
The noise will most likely continue to be the same. Our noise analysis did not show that the Roseland Road residences were in Noise Sensitive Areas.*