



Governor Harry W. Nice Memorial Bridge Improvement Project Focus Group Meeting #2



**Naval Support Facility Dahlgren, Dahlgren, Va.
Thursday, May 10, 2007
6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.**

Meeting Summary and Action Items

Meeting Attendees:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Organization</u>
John Reardon	Charles County Government
Edward Marshall	Cobb Neck Citizens Alliance
Sgt. Wayne Boarman	MdTA Police
Earl Robb	Va. Dept. of Transportation
Nick Nies	Va. Dept. of Transportation
Hula Edmonds	Mirant MidAtlantic LLC
Linda Crandell	Colonial Beach Town Council
Captain Judy Smith	NSA South Potomac
Gary Wagner	NSA South Potomac
Jerry Volman	Bryans Road Corp
Joe Schumacher	Rep. Jo Ann Davis' Office
Glen Smith	MdTA
Simela Triandos	MdTA
Kelly McCleary	MdTA
Shawn Burnett	WTB
Brian Bernstein	McCormick Taylor
Kerri Sacchet	McCormick Taylor

Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Glen Smith, Project Manager of the Nice Bridge Improvement Project, welcomed everyone to the second Focus Group meeting. He described that the purpose of the meeting would be to review and discuss the preliminary alternates for improvements to the Nice Bridge as well as review and discuss the materials to be presented at the May 31st and June 7th Alternates Public Workshops. It was clarified that this project was not associated with the National Capital Planning Commission's Draft Freight Railroad Realignment Feasibility Study of relocating hazmat rail freight lines to this crossing of the Potomac.

Present Preliminary Alternates

Mr. Shawn Burnett, consultant for the Nice Bridge Improvement Project, presented the preliminary alternates for the study that included:

- *Alternate 1 (No-Build)* – The No-Build Alternate is always included as part of a project planning study and provides a baseline. The No-Build Alternate would not add any capacity or geometric improvements to the bridge, but would include scheduled maintenance and safety improvements.
- *Alternate 2* – This alternate consists of the construction of a new two-lane parallel structure to the south of the existing bridge. The existing structure would be retained and renovated to carry southbound traffic.
- *Alternate 3* – This alternate is similar to Alternate 2 with the exception that the existing structure would be replaced with a new structure for southbound traffic.

- *Alternate 4* – Alternate 4 consists of the construction of a new two-lane structure to the north of the existing bridge. The existing structure would be retained and renovated to carry northbound traffic.
- *Alternate 5* – This alternate is similar to Alternate 4 with the exception that the existing structure would be replaced with a new structure for northbound traffic.
- *Alternate 6* – Alternate 6 consists of the construction of a new four-lane structure to the south of the existing structure. The existing bridge would be taken out of service.
- *Alternate 7* - Alternate 7 consists of the construction of a new four-lane structure to the north of the existing structure. The existing bridge would be taken out of service.

In addition, Open-Road Tolling was discussed. Open-road tolling is an open road expressway that automatically deducts toll fees without stopping or decreasing speeds through the toll collector.

Group Discussion on Alternates

Several Focus Group members had questions and comments regarding the preliminary alternates of the Nice Bridge Improvement Project. The group discussed these and study team members provided answers. Topics included:

- The grade that a replacement bridge would have and how far the footprint would extend on each side. *Mr. Burnett explained that for the Virginia side, the bridge structure would tie in at-grade within the limits of the existing bridge, but for the Maryland side, a three percent grade would be applied and it would touch down closer to where the toll booth is located.*
- Whether or not there is a list of requirements for what each of the preliminary concepts are trying to achieve. *Mr. Burnett noted that the project Purpose and Need document describes why improvements at the bridge are being studied and what these preliminary alternate concepts aim to achieve.*
- If there are right-of-way (ROW) requirements, especially for Alternates 2 & 3. *Mr. Burnett noted that there is potential to keep the construction within the existing Authority owned ROW.*
- If tunneling had been proposed as a potential alternate. *Mr. Burnett explained that tunneling had been discussed previously, but that concerns for tunneling included the soil bed of the Potomac River. A Focus Group member noted that tunneling for the touchdown in Virginia would not be feasible for oversize vehicles. Further, it was noted that having a tunnel would not allow any hazardous materials to be transported across the Potomac.*
- If there could be a short culvert as the touchdown on the Virginia side to avoid the Naval Support Facility at Dahlgren (i.e., short tunnel). *Mr. Burnett noted that the idea had not been considered before, but that one concern would be that having a tunnel as the touchdown on the Virginia side could hinder providing access to the local roads in Virginia, such as Roseland Road.*
- How cost is factored into decision-making. *It was noted that, at this point in the study, cost is not considered, but rather, the study is focusing on the size and location of the preliminary alternates. Cost would become a factor later in the project planning process.*
- How construction would affect traffic flow. *Mr. Burnett explained that with any of the alternates, traffic would be maintained on the existing bridge. One option could be to build the new structure, if a Build Alternate was ultimately selected, and put two-way traffic on the new structure while the existing structure is renovated or replaced (should that be the case).*

- Will staging areas be included on each side of the structure for oversized and disabled vehicles? *It was noted that staging areas would be part of the design of the specific alternate and that the Authority would work with Virginia officials regarding an area on the Virginia side.*
- It was noted that any impacts to property north of US 301 in VA would also require coordination with the Navy since that land was dedicated to the County for Park use and any change in use would need Navy approval. *The statement was noted and the team believes a copy of the land transfer was provided by the Navy.*

Present Alternates Public Workshop Materials

Mr. Burnett presented the Purpose and Need boards that would be displayed at the two upcoming Alternates Public Workshops. This included boards on traffic and accident data. Ms. Kerri Sacchet presented the Public Involvement board and provided information to the group on how the May 31st and June 7th public workshops had been announced to the public. Ms. Sacchet noted that a public notice was published in nine newspapers including regional and local papers in Maryland and Virginia. Postcards were mailed to residents and businesses in the study area including those who requested to be on the Nice Bridge Project Mailing List. In addition, an announcement was posted on the project web page at www.mdtransportationauthority.com, listing the dates, times and locations of the workshops.

Mr. Brian Bernstein presented the Natural Environmental inventory display board. He explained that the board's purpose was to show the natural environmental resources that had been identified to date by the Study Team. Mr. Bernstein noted that certain resources, such as bald eagle nest locations and archeological sites, are not displayed on the mapping as the location of these resources is sensitive information.

Other boards presented to the Focus Group included the "What is NEPA?" board, Interagency Coordination, Project Timeline and a board with general information on the Authority.

Group Discussion on Alternates Public Workshop Materials

A few questions and comments were discussed regarding the display boards, including:

- Are there any other sites being considered at this time for locations for the alternates? *It was noted that the alternates presented were the preliminary alternates being considered, but that any other concepts are open for discussion.*
- Traffic/travel forecasting – Is the project predicting extra bridge travel from the Waldorf area? *The traffic analyzed in the study at this point considers the No-Build condition (no additional capacity at the bridge). This study and the SHA US 301 Waldorf study are coordinating traffic analyzes for build conditions.*
- EZ-Pass lane is so short and has a difficult approach. *It was noted the MdTA has a project that will address this issue. The project is scheduled to begin construction this year.*
- Natural environmental resources – the Critical Area should be taken into consideration for the project. *It was noted that the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area is being taken into consideration and coordination with the Critical Area Commission is being conducted.*
- Timeline – When will the construction actually begin? *It was noted, that if funding becomes available for engineering, right-of-way, and construction, construction could begin in 5 to 7 years.*

- Hazardous Waste Materials – toxic waste railroad situation – need to be aware. *It was noted that explosive materials are not permitted to be transported through a tunnel.*

Project Updates/ Next Steps

Mr. Smith noted that the next steps for the project would include holding the May 31st and June 7th Alternates Public Workshops. The comments received at the workshops from the public would then be reviewed and assessed by the Study Team. The Study Team would then use the assessment of the comments from the public as part of the decision-making process in identifying the Alternates Retained for Detailed Study (ARDS). The ARDS process involves narrowing down the list of alternates and determining which will be carried forward in the project planning study.

Mr. Smith noted that the summary from Focus Group meeting #2 would be distributed to the Focus Group participants.

Future Focus Group Meetings

Mr. Smith noted that the next Focus Group meeting would likely take place after the ARDS process and during the time when the environmental document is being prepared in winter 2008.