



Section 200 Focus Group Meeting #3 Minutes

MEETING DATE: April 26, 2007
 TIME: 6:30 pm
 PLACE: HEAT Center, Aberdeen

Attendees:

NAME	TELEPHONE	EMAIL	AFFILIATION
Ragina Averella	410-616-1900	raverella@aaa.midatlantic.com	AAA Mid-Atlantic
Gil Jones (for Phyllis Grover)	410-272-1600	pgrover@aberdeem-md.org	Aberdeen Dept. of Planning & Community Development
John Mettee III	410 -838-7900	jvm@fredward.com	Army Alliance
Keith Scott (for Joan Hatfield)	410-825-0022	jhatfield@baltcountyycc.com	Baltimore County Chamber of Commerce
Gene Bandy	410-732-9573	gbandy@balto metro.org	Baltimore Metropolitan Council
Judy Langenfelder	410-215-8962	jtlfabric@yahoo.com	Commuter
Pat Barth	410-679-5478	barthponyfarm@aol.com	District A Advisory Committee
Morita Bruce	410-877-7146	moritabruce@comcast.net	Friends of Harford
Janet Gleisner	410-638-3230	jggleisner@co.ha.md.us	Harford Cty. Dept. of Planning and Zoning
Tom Schaech	410-638-4700	tgschaech@co.ha.md.us	Harford Cty. Volunteer Fire & EMS Association
Sgt. Joe Van Seeters	410-692-7872	vanseetersj@harfordsheriff.org	Harford Cty. Sheriff's Office
Ron Sollod	410-679-0589	Ronspi44@aol.com	Joppa/Magnolia Fire Station
Judy Rose	410-676-9318	Joppajudy@msn.com	Little Gunpowder Improvement Association
D. Sgt. George Gooding (for Lt. Reider)	410-537-1150	breider@mdsp.org	Maryland State Police
Melissa Williams	410-537-5651	Mwilliams9@mdta.state.md.us	Maryland Transportation Authority
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Teri Moss	410-537-1021	tmoss@mdta.state.md.us	Maryland Transportation Authority
Kelly McCleary	410-537-1016	kmccleary@mdta.state.md.us	Maryland Transportation Authority
Steven Swarr	410-329-3100	SSwarr@jmt.com	Johnson, Mirmiran & Thompson
Brian Riffel	443-224-1621	briffel@wrallp.com	Whitman Requardt & Associates
Mark Roberts	443-224-1573	mroberts@wrallp.com	Whitman Requardt & Associates
Mike Rothenheber	410-329-3100	MRothenheber@jmt.com	Johnson, Mirmiran & Thompson
Linda Moreland	302-366-0227	moreland@remline.com	Remline Corp



Welcome and Introductions

Melissa Williams opened the meeting at with introductions and a review of the study limits and project schedule.

I-95 Improvements Open House

Ms. Williams spoke to the group about the upcoming I-95 Improvements Open Houses that will be held on June 26 and 28. One will be held in Baltimore County (location to be determined) and one in Harford County at the Old Post Road Elementary School. At the Open Houses, the Maryland Transportation Authority (MdTA) will update the public on the planning, design and construction projects that they are working on along the I-95 corridor in Baltimore and Harford Counties. These include:

- I-95 Express Toll Lanes (ETLs) Construction
- I-95/MD 24/MD 924 Improvements Construction
- Section 200 Project Planning Study Detailed Alternates
- Maryland and Chesapeake House Travel Plaza Improvements
- Hatem Bridge Redecking.

Questions/Concerns:

- Regarding the ETLs, Judy Langenfelder asked if the current rate will be posted so people will know how much they will be paying to use them. Ms. Williams said that they will be posted and rates will be reviewed about every 3 months. It has not been determined that the ETLs will extend any further than MD 43.
- Judy Rose mentioned that the website says that the MdTA is definitely doing ETLs for Section 200. Ms. Williams said that ETLs are one of the alternates currently being considered for Section 200.

I-95/MD 24/MD 924 Improvements

Ms. Williams provided an update to the group on the I-95/MD 24/MD 924 Improvements project. This project was initiated by the State Highway Administration (SHA) several years ago. The main congestion issues occur in the morning and evening rush hours. There are serious safety problems with vehicles stopping along northbound I-95 trying to get off the exit to MD 24 in the PM peak. This project will be constructed in two phases. Phase 1 will grade separate MD 924 over MD 24, which should significantly help to keep traffic moving as it exits I-95. Phase 1 construction will be completed in 2009. Phase 2 is planned to take place as part of the Section 200 construction at MD 24.



Questions/Concerns:

- Ms. Rose asked if the light at MD 24 would be eliminated. Mike Rothenheber explained that there will be a light, but traffic coming off of I-95 will flow better because there will be a physical separation between those that want to access MD 24 and those that want MD 924. Traffic should be split between the two roads.
- Morita Bruce mentioned that most of the traffic will go up MD 24 not MD 924. Mr. Rothenheber explained that the grade separation is only Phase I and once that is finished, growth and other issues will be addressed.
- Tom Schaech expressed concerns from a responders point of view regarding the traffic signal at the 77A off ramp going northbound on MD 24 to MD 924. He explained that even with the grade separation, the traffic will back up at that location and shift the congestion from MD 24 to Singer Road. He asked if SHA was going to be doing anything at the MD 24/Singer Road intersection. Ms. Williams explained that even if the no build option is chosen for Section 200, the MdTA has made a commitment to come back and complete Phase 2.

Traffic Studies

Mike Rothenheber provided traffic updates which include BRAC. The numbers that were provided previously in the study were from 2000 and 2025. The new numbers are for 2005 and 2030. The updates show slightly higher traffic volumes than the previous numbers, however the 2005 levels of service (LOS) remained the same as 2000. In 2030, there will be LOS F during both the AM and PM to the south of MD 543 and also during the weekends.

The accident rate for Section 200 is higher than similar state highways with approximately 50% of reported accidents identified as congestion related. The highest number of accidents occur near the I-95/MD 24 interchange. Congestion related accidents are expected to increase if congestion is not addressed.

Questions/Comments

- Several members of the group questioned the numbers that were supplied in the regional model for BRAC. Ms. Williams promised to provide the numbers at the next focus group meeting or have them mailed out in advance

She explained that everyone in the state is working hard trying to address BRAC. MdTA has provided signage on I-95 directing delivery and visitor traffic to use the MD 543 entrance to APG. MdTA is also using the new Baltimore Metropolitan Council (BMC) traffic model to validate the old modeling to make sure the predictions lines up. The key areas that need to be addressed are MD 543, MD 22, and MD 24.

- Mr. Schaech asked if MD 715 was being addressed. Ms. Williams explained that while this is really SHA's area, MdTA quickly took a look at different options for that area. The preliminary assessment showed it does not need to be a separate I-95 interchange. The



interchange at 22 should be able to handle the volumes. The proximity of the two interchanges will present more of a problem.

- Ms. Bruce expressed concern about the possible under estimation of BRAC generated traffic. Only 4,400 cars (additional commuters) were mentioned in the APG environmental impact statement. Ms. Williams agreed and indicated that we are using the new BMC model, which is a more updated projection for BRAC traffic. Ms. Williams went on to say that the study is evaluating the park and ride lots along I-95 from MD 43 to MD 22. Currently there is a park and ride at every interchange. The study is also looking at new park and rides at MD 152 and MD 24 that will be transit accessible.
- Ms. Rose stated that a lot of money could be saved if MdTA provided access directly from I-95 to the third post gate into APG. Ms. Williams said that MdTA is working with SHA, MTA and other agencies regarding BRAC issues.

Park & Ride Study

Mike Rothenheber related what the team has found out in the park and ride study. As part of the study, the team looked at the long range plans for the area (including BRAC), traffic studies, proposed development, trend analysis, existing conditions, and accommodations for transit and travel demand. These factors were used to determine what improvements would be needed at the park and ride facilities from MD 43 to MD 22.

MD 43 – The park and ride is currently not at full capacity. The Express Toll Lanes (ETLs) that are planned as part of the Section 100 improvements will enable buses to drive from MD 43 directly into the I-95 ETL lanes. This should greatly improve transit reliability, and possibly increase ridership. Carpoolers will also have the opportunity to use the ETL lanes.

MD 152 – The current site poses safety issues because it is located in the ramp area. Short term improvements to the park and ride will begin this year. Section 200 planning team is considering the long range plans (including BRAC) for this and other Park and Ride facilities within the study area. This facility is near capacity now and long range improvements under Section 200 will increase parking spaces by a little over 100. There is also a desire for transit vehicles to be able to access a park and ride lot along MD 152. Right now MTA cannot safely use the existing facility.

MD 24 – There is a small facility south of I-95. This site will be maintained, with a new site also being developed north of MD 24. This is MTA's top priority for transit service in the I-95 corridor.

Questions/Comments:

- Ron Sollod asked if there was a particular spot MdTA was looking at for the new park and ride. Mr. Rothenheber said no, MdTA is looking now and screening for available land. At least 2-4 acres will be needed for each facility. The team is searching sites up to 1 mile of the interchange.



- Ms. Langenfelder questioned whether the park and ride would impact the MD 24/I-95/MD 924 interchange. Mr. Rothenheber said the project team is taking that into account and looking at how the traffic volumes will adjust.

MD 543 – The current park and ride is behind a hotel. It is extremely underutilized. MdTA would like to provide better signage so people will know that it is there.

MD 22 – This park and ride is also underutilized. It is anticipated that with the projected growth, it will be used more, but there is no need for expansion.

Questions/Comments:

- Ms. Langenfelder asked if there is an anticipated increase in vehicular traffic because people will be able to travel faster with the ETLs. Mr. Rothenheber explained that there may be more vehicles, but more will also be using transit and carpooling.
- Ms. Rose stated that the park and rides facilities need shelters for people to get out of the weather. They also need vehicles that can transport people to the MARC station. Mr. Rothenheber explained the proposed layout of new or improved park and ride facilities. Facilities will be transit accessible with the bus pull off and shelter close to the front of the facility to make it easy for buses to enter and exit.

Questions/Comments:

- Ms Rose asked if the team was doing anything about increasing truck parking. Mr. Rothenheber explained that MdTA is conducting a separate study to look at truck parking.
- Janet Gleisner stated that the state is doing a good job with transit from MD 24 to Baltimore. However, many people are looking for connections coming out of Delaware and Cecil County. She would like to see transit availability all along the I-95 corridor. Ms. Williams stated that as MdTA moves into the Section 300 and 400 Studies, transit accessibility to I-95 will be analyzed for these areas.

Police/EMS/Maintenance Access

Brian Riffel provided an update on providing access on and off of I-95 for police, EMS and maintenance. The existing median openings in Section 200 will be closed. The team is looking at where access can be provided at the interchanges and at overpass crossovers when there is more than 2-3 miles between interchanges. At the overpass crossovers, access will be limited to authorized vehicles only. For the ETL Alternative, the team is looking at places to provide barrier openings between ETLs and GPL. After this information is compiled, the team will talk with EMS and police to seek their input. Ms. Williams explained that a letter will be sent to all providers in the corridor to make sure input is received.

Mr. Riffel explained how the overpass crossover concept would work to provide an additional point of access to I-95 as well as a point for authorized vehicles to change direction from



northbound to southbound. Gates restricting access to authorized vehicles would be operated by a card or sirens.

Questions/Comments:

- Mr. Sollod asked if the crossover access would be for existing overpasses or would new ones be built. Mr. Riffel said they would be for existing overpasses. Mr. Sollod inquired whether there would be a traffic signal, so emergency vehicles could safely access the overpass roadway. Mr. Riffel replied that would be something that could be considered. The MdTA is constructing something similar at King Ave. and Chesaco Ave. in Section 100. Ms. Bruce stressed that the team needs to be aware that people are not used to stopping on those roads and it could be a safety issue.
- Ms. Rose asked if MdTA would need to buy additional property or if they currently own it. Mr. Riffel said that it would likely be a combination of both.

Environmental Update

Mike Rothenheber told the group that since the last focus group meeting the team has been collecting a lot of environmental information, including natural environmental; cultural and historic; social and economic; hazardous materials; and noise and air quality. All of these need to be taken into account when the alternatives are developed. The goal is to avoid impacts. If this is not possible, then minimize and mitigate.

Out of 121 wetland habitats that were identified, only 1-3 acres may be impacted. A total of 198 streams were identified. Impacts may include 22 stream crossings, 16 parallel streams, numerous drainage channels, and streams within the interchange areas. Several hundred acres of woodlands/forest were identified. Anticipated impacts may include approximately 50' along the forest edge along I-95 and areas within the interchanges.

Mainline Alternatives and Interchange Options

Brian Riffel brought the group up to date on the mainline alternatives that are being considered. He explained that the team has taken a look at traffic, environmental impacts, engineering, as well as community impacts and there are several reasons why the mainline alternatives have been modified.

The No-Build Alternative is how the roadways are today.

The General Purpose Lanes (GPL) Alternative will have 6 GPLs in each direction from New Forge Road to MD 24. At the last focus group meeting, the team shared that there would be 5 lanes from MD 152 to MD24. However, after further analysis of the traffic and lane utilization, it was determined that 6 lanes will be needed from MD 152 to MD 24 .



The Express Toll Lanes (ETL) option has also changed a little. At the last focus group meeting, the team shared that there would be four GPLs and 2 ETLs extending from New Forge Road to MD 543. After analyzing the LOS on the mainline, we found that we only needed 3 GPLs in that section. Therefore, the current ETLs Alternative includes 4 GPLs and 2 barrier separated ETLs from New Forge Road to MD 24. From MD 24 to 543, there are three GPLs and 2 ETLs, and north of MD 543 there are 4 GPLs.

Questions/Comments:

- Ms. Bruce expressed concerns about the ETL Alternatives. ETLs have twice as many shoulders as the GPLs. The road will be wider with more environmental impacts. It will also cost money to go that extra width. She mentioned that other places, such as LA, do not have a concrete barrier separating lanes and it is easier to divert traffic to HOV lanes or the other way around if there is an accident. With the way the ETLs are now designed, if there is an accident traffic will be stopped in both types of lanes. Plus, you have a barrier that EMS would have to work around. LA has little bumps that you go over. It will cost less space and be easier for EMS to access.
- Mr. Sollod mentioned that the shoulders aren't wide enough for emergency vehicles. If there is an accident in one lane of the ETLs both lanes will be shut down. EMS would have no way of getting to that person. Mr. Rothenheber agreed that there were some negatives with the way the ETLs will work. Section 100 reviewed all of the options and it was decided that barrier separation was appropriate for the ETLs along I-95. One of the key differences between LA and Section 200 is the weather. LA doesn't have snow so they don't need the shoulders for clearing the snow. A lot of thought went into this decision. There are two separate interstate systems with EMS access for ETLs and GPLs. There are full shoulder widths to allow for broken down vehicles and tow trucks. If there is a minor incident in GPLs there is no reason for vehicles in the ETLs to slow down, and vice versa. However, major accidents that require a helicopter to land on I-95 will shut down both the GPLs and the ETLs. Mr. Riffel mentioned that there is also a safety aspect with the design of other facilities. If there is a back up in the GPLs, people will try and hop into the ETLs where people are going faster which will create a safety issue.
- Mr. Sollod requested that the shoulders be made at least 14' wide. Right ETL shoulders will be 14' at most locations, and they may be reduced by utility poles to 12' only at few locations. Ms. Williams also stated that the ETLs have a 6' inside offset which is not intended to function as a shoulder and a 12'-14' outside shoulder which will be able to accommodate break downs, tow trucks, police and EMS.
- Ms. Rose asked if there will be cameras. Ms. Williams replied that yes, there will be cameras. In addition, there are Courtesy Patrol vehicles and we will increase the number of these to make sure the ETLs are clear since people are paying for exceptional service.



Anticipated Construction Activities

Mr. Riffel provided the group with the types of activities that will occur once construction begins. These included: pavement resurfacing, full depth pavement construction, new signing and marking, new storm drain systems, new stormwater management facilities, new bridge structures, new retaining wall structures, new interchange lighting, and utility relocations.

Interchange Options

It was decided that since it was getting late in the evening, that the project team would provide a summary and maps of the interchange options in the minutes. Another focus group meeting would be scheduled to go over the interchange options in detail after the group has time to review the minutes. Attached is a summary of the interchange options.

Meeting Wrap-Up

Linda Moreland will be contacting the group with a date for the next Focus Group meeting.