

VI. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

To gather input from and inform citizens within the project area, MDTA held and participated in a variety of public involvement activities.

A. Public Workshop

MDTA held a Public Workshop on June 22, 2006 at the Old Post Road Elementary School in Abingdon. The purpose of the workshop was to acquaint the public with the need for the project and present the status of the Section 200 Project as of that date. At the workshop, the preliminary alternatives were introduced. These alternatives included the No-Build Alternative, the General Purpose Lanes Alternative, and the Express Toll Lanes Alternative. A preliminary assessment of environmental impacts associated with each of these Alternatives was also presented. Over 100 people attended the workshop.

Prior to the workshop, a newsletter was mailed to individuals on the project mailing list and to property owners within one-quarter mile of either side of Section 200, and one-half mile from the center of interchanges. Approximately 16,000 newsletters were mailed. The newsletter was also available for distribution at the workshop. The newsletter included background information on the project, as well as an explanation of materials that would be available for viewing at the workshop.

In addition to the newsletter, the public was informed of the workshop through display ads in local newspapers. These included: the *Northeast Booster*, *Aegis*, *APG News*, *Daily Record*, and *Afro-American*. The public was invited to fill out comment forms at the workshop and to sign up for the project's mailing list. Thirty-four comments were received. The public input generated as a result of the public workshop was reviewed by the project team and, where appropriate, incorporated into the development of the Alternatives Retained for Detailed Study (ARDS).

A second project newsletter was sent out in January 2007 to approximately 30,000 residents within 0.25 mile on either side of I-95 and a one mile radius at the I-95 interchanges within the Study Area. This newsletter provided a recap of the June 2006 workshop and presented information on environmental and noise studies, as well as an overview of the alternatives being studied.

B. Focus Groups

A twenty-eight member Focus Group was formed in Spring 2006 to provide an opportunity for the public to provide input and comment on a variety of issues including the project purpose and need; existing and future traffic projections; alternatives under consideration and interchange improvements; pedestrian, bicycle, and transit enhancements; and potential environmental impacts, and environmental mitigation strategies. The Section 200 Focus Group is comprised of

community and civic groups, business interests, emergency services, I-95 users, and local government officials.

A total of six Focus Group Meetings were held during development and refinement of Alternatives.

- April 5, 2006 - At this meeting, background information on the I-95 Master Plan was presented, the Section 200 Project Planning Study was introduced, and conceptual alternatives for the project were discussed.
- May 24, 2006 - At this meeting, the project team presented the initial designs for both the General Purpose Lanes and Express Toll Lanes Alternatives. Also discussed at the meeting were BRAC impacts and traffic modeling for the region.
- April 26, 2007 - At this meeting, the project team presented the refined Build Alternatives. These alternatives were refined based on further planning and information gathered at the second Focus Group Meeting and the June 22, 2006 Public Workshop. Mainline alternatives were reviewed and discussed, as well as:
 - A two-phased plan of improvements for I-95/MD 24/MD 924
 - Park and Ride study results for MD 43, MD 152, MD 24, MD 543, and MD 22
 - Police/EMS/Maintenance Access
 - Range of environmental impacts
- May 17, 2007 – This meeting focused on the MD 152, MD 24, MD 543, and MD 22 interchange options for both Build Alternatives. The group reviewed and discussed each option and provided their comments to the project team.
- September 20, 2007 – At this meeting, the project team presented Park and Ride options, emergency service access, maintenance facilities, stormwater management, noise analysis and environmental mitigation.
- October 24, 2007 – At this meeting, the project team presented the results of the additional detailed engineering and environmental studies, and the Focus Group members reviewed and provided input on the materials to be presented at the December 13, 2007 Public Hearing.

C. I-95 Open Houses

Over 250 people attended two I-95 Open Houses on June 26 and 28, 2007. The open houses were held at Old Post Road Elementary School and at the Community College of Baltimore County Essex. Information was provided on all of MDTA projects along the I-95 corridor. These included the I-95 Express Toll Lanes, I-95/MD 24/MD 924 Improvements, Hatem Bridge (US 40) Re-decking, I-95 Section 200 Planning Study including the Park and Ride improvements, and the renovations to I-95 Travel Plazas.

A Project Update newsletter was sent to a defined mailing area (22,500 residents) along the I-95 ETLs Project and Section 200 corridors. In addition, display ads announcing the open houses were placed in: the Northeast Booster, APG News, Times Herald, Aegis, Record, and Afro-American. Posters announcing the I-95 Open Houses were placed at the following locations:

- Chesapeake House
- Maryland House
- Harford County Community College
- Aberdeen HEAT Center
- Aberdeen Shopping Plaza
- Kleins Grocery
- MARC/AMTRAK station in Edgewood
- Harford County Library
- Express Deli Mart
- Royal Farms in White Marsh
- Exxon Station, Joppatown
- ETL Project Office
- WAWA on MD 132 in Aberdeen
- Harford County public libraries (Joppa Branch, Edgewood Branch, Abingdon Branch, Bel Air Branch, and Aberdeen Branch)
- Baltimore County public libraries (Essex Library and Perry Hall Library)

D. Public Hearing

MDTA held a joint Public Hearing with the USACE on December 13, 2007 at the Old Post Road Elementary School. The purpose of the Public Hearing was to allow all interested persons the opportunity to present their views regarding the proposed location and general design of the Section 200 project alternatives, as well as the associated social, economic and natural environmental effects. Approximately 170 people attended, with seven providing public testimony, 13 providing private testimony, which was recorded by a court reporter, and 38 submitting comments after the Public Hearing. The comments received after the hearing included comment cards, letters and emails sent to MDTA, and phone calls made to MDTA. The following are the main issues raised by all of the Public Hearing comments and an overview MDTA's response:

- The majority of the comments received was in opposition to the location of the new MD 152 Park & Ride and would like to see more emphasis on public transit. MDTA's responded by indicating that further studies would be conducted after the Public Hearing to determine the optimal location for the MD 152 park and ride. The study would address the future needs of the commuter and transit services in the study area. The results of the study were presented at the May 20, 2008 Public Update Meeting.
- Citizens were concerned with the location and cost of the noise walls. MDTA responded by indicating that extensive noise studies have been performed to determine whether or not a noise wall is feasible and reasonable for a given location. The noise wall locations and costs presented at the public hearing were determined to be feasible and reasonable for this study.
- Several of the comments were in favor of the bike/pedestrian options. The majority favored the Woodsdale Road Option as a better choice. MDTA indicated that the decision

for the preferred bicycle option will be based on detailed engineering analysis, environmental impacts analysis, and public input.

- Comments received were in support of the Express Toll Lanes Alternative.

Please refer to **Appendix G** for a more detailed chart of all the comments received. The comments received are located in **Appendix H**.

E. Public Outreach

In addition to the Alternatives Public Workshop, the I-95 Open Houses and the Public Hearing, MDTA participated in other public involvement activities. These included meetings with the Friends of Harford County on April 30, 2008 and a meeting with the Gunpowder Homeowners Association in June 2008. Additionally, a Public Update Meeting was held on May 20, 2008 for the Section 200, proposed park and rides. At this meeting seven sites were presented and compared including the preferred location for the new MD 152 park and ride facility and for the MD 24 park and ride facility. The meeting provided information about the process used to determine the optimal location for both MD 24 and MD 152 park and ride facilities. Approximately 92 people attended the workshop.

Website

In an effort to obtain public feedback and keep the public informed throughout the project planning process, MDTA created a Section 200 website to present information to the public and other interested parties. The Section 200 website provides:

- A brief history of I-95 (JFK)
- Background information
- The purpose and need of the study (including traffic and safety data)
- Environmental documents for public review
- Latest news on the progress of Section 200
- Land use and economic development within and adjacent to the Study Area
- The preliminary concepts carried forward from the I-95 Master Plan and alternatives under consideration
- The Section 200 project planning schedule
- A link to I-95 ETLs Project for updates on the adjacent improvements
- Other transportation projects within or adjacent to the project area.

The Section 200 website provides MDTA contact information, the ability to sign up for the mailing list, and an email address for people with questions, comments, and/or requests for information. The Section 200 website can be found at the following web address: <http://www.mdt.maryland.gov>.