

## IV. COORDINATION AND COMMENTS

### A. Focus Group Meetings

A twenty-eight member Focus Group was formed in Spring 2006 to provide an opportunity for the public to supply input and comment on a variety of issues including the project purpose and need, existing and future traffic projections, alternates under consideration, interchange improvements, pedestrian, bicycle, and transit enhancements, potential environmental impacts, and environmental mitigation strategies. The selection of the Focus Group members began with the identification of specific types of stakeholders (i.e. local commuters, special interest groups, community leaders, and local governments) within the Section 200 study area. The Authority also contacted local government agencies and associations and asked them for stakeholders that may be interested in participating in the Focus Group. After all of the information was compiled, a list of stakeholders was created. Every stakeholder on the list was contacted and asked if they wanted to participate in the Focus Group. The Section 200 Focus Group is comprised of community and civic groups, business interests, emergency services, I-95 users, and local government officials. Table IV-1 lists all of the stakeholders that accepted the invitation to be on the Section 200 Focus Group.

**Table IV-1. Focus Group Member List**

<b>Representative</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Ragina Averella	AAA Mid-Atlantic
Phyllis Grover	Aberdeen Dept. of Planning & Community Development
John V. Mettee, III	Army Alliance
Joan Hatfield	Baltimore County Chamber of Commerce
Keith Scott	Baltimore County Chamber of Commerce, Government
Sharon Klots	Baltimore County Dept. of Economic Development
Emery J. Hine	Baltimore County Dept. of Public Works
Gene Bandy	Baltimore Metropolitan Council
Jeff Mayhew	Baltimore Office of Planning
Judy Langenfelder	Commuter
Pat Barth	District A Advisory Committee
Morita Bruce	Friends of Harford
Jeff Springer	Governor's Bicycle/Pedestrian Committee
Neil Carmody	Gunpowder Valley Conservancy
Janet Gleisner	Harford County Dept of Planning & Zoning
Jeff Stratmeyer	Harford County Dept. of Public Works
Tom Schaech	Harford County Volunteer Fire & EMS Association
Sgt. Joe VanSeeters	Harford County Sheriff's Office
Gloria Moon	Joppa/Joppatowne Community Council
Ron Sollod	Joppa/Magnolia Fire Station
Captain Shawn Little	Kingsville Volunteer Fire Company
Jim Lambdin	Lambdin Development Company

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<b>Representative</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Judy Rose	Little Gunpowder Improvement Association
Vern Bingham	Maryland House Welcome Center
Anne Ferro	Maryland Motor Truck Association
Lt. Brian Reider	Maryland State Police
Aaron Moszer	Ripken Stadium/Aberdeen Iron Birds
Chris Henn	Riverside Community Association

A total of six Focus Group Meetings have been held to date.

The first Focus Group Meeting was held on 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 alternates for the project were discussed. The project team answered questions presented by the Focus Group, and Focus Group members were encouraged to introduce the Section 200 Project to their companies/organizations and note points of concern to be discussed at future Focus Group Meetings.

Using the three concepts recommended for further study in the I-95 Master Plan, the project team began planning studies to develop alternates for each of the two Build Concepts.

The second Focus Group Meeting was held on May 24, 2006. At this meeting the project team presented the initial designs for both the General Purpose Lanes and Express Toll Lanes Alternates.. Details for the alternates considered are provided in Chapter II: *Alternates Considered*. Also discussed at the meeting were BRAC impacts and traffic modeling for the region.

The third Focus Group Meeting was held on April 26, 2007. At this meeting the project team presented the refined Build Alternates. These Alternates were refined based on further planning and information gathered at the second Focus Group Meeting and a June 22, 2006 Public Workshop. Mainline alternates were reviewed and discussed, as well as:

- A two-phased plan of improvements for I-95/MD 24/MD 924
- Park & Ride study results for MD 43, MD 152, MD 24, MD 543, and MD 22
- Police/EMS/Maintenance Access
- Range of environmental impacts

A fourth Focus Group Meeting was held on May 17, 2007. This meeting was focused on the MD 152, MD 24, MD 543, and MD 22 interchange options for both Build Alternates. The group reviewed and discussed each option and provided their comments to the project team.

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The fifth Focus Group Meeting was held on September 20, 2007. At this meeting the project team presented Park & Ride options, emergency service access, maintenance facilities, stormwater management, noise analysis and environmental mitigation.

The sixth Focus Group Meeting was held on 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 that will be presented at the upcoming Public Hearing in December 2007.

Minutes for all Focus Group Meetings can be found in **Appendix D: Public Involvement Correspondence**.

### **B. Public Workshop and Citizen Correspondence**

The Authority held a Public Workshop on June 22, 2006 at the Old Post Road Elementary School in Abingdon. The purpose of this 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 alternates were introduced. These alternates included the No-Build Alternate, General Purpose Lanes Alternate, and Express Toll Lanes Alternate. A preliminary assessment of environmental impacts associated with each of these alternates 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 ¼ mile on either side of Section 200 and ½ 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 3 column x 10" 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. See **Appendix D: Public Involvement Correspondence** for a summary of the comments received from workshops, e-mails, phone calls, and letters.

The public input generated as a result of the efforts discussed above were reviewed by the project team and, where appropriate, incorporated into development of the Alternates Retained for Detailed Study (ARDS).

A second project newsletter was sent out in January 2007 to approximately 30,000 residents within ¼ mile along the corridor and a 1 mile radius at the interchanges. 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 alternates being studied.

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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 the MdTA projects along the I-95 corridor. These included the I-95 Express Toll Lanes, I-95/MD 24/MD 924 Improvements, MD 152 Park and Ride Improvements, Hatem Bridge (US 40) Re-decking, I-95 Section 200 Planning Study, and the renovations to I-95 Travel Plazas. A Project Updates newsletter (See **Appendix D: Public Involvement Correspondence** for copies of all the newsletters) was sent to a defined mailing area (22,500 residents) along the Section 100 and Section 200 corridors. In addition, 3 column x 10” display ads 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
- GEINS Grocery
- MARC/AMTRAK station in Edgewood
- Harford County Library
- Express Deli Mart
- Royal Farms in White Marsh
- Exxon Station, Joppatown
- ETL Project Office
- WAWA Rt. 132, 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)

### **C. Interagency Meetings and Agency Correspondence**

The study team has continually coordinated with local, State, and Federal resource and regulatory agencies since the beginning stages of the project. The purpose of this coordination has been to obtain agency input, including recommendations and concerns.

The Section 200 Project was first presented to resource and regulatory agencies at the November 15, 2005 Agency Scoping Meeting. At this meeting, detailed project information was presented, including conceptual alternates, environmental inventories, avoidance and minimization strategies, and enhancement and mitigation strategies.

The Section 200 Project was presented to resource and regulatory agencies at the April 19, 2006 Interagency Review Meeting held at SHA Headquarters. At this meeting MdTA staff presented the Alternates being considered for the Section 200 Project including the No Build, General Purpose Lanes, and Express Toll Lanes Alternates.

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Finally, an update on the status of the technical reports and the current environmental issues that have been identified to date was presented.

The Section 200 Project was presented to resource and regulatory agencies at the October 25, 2006 Interagency Review Meeting, held at the SHA headquarters. At this meeting, a brief introduction to the project was presented and the agencies were asked to provide comments on the *Section 200 Purpose and Need Statement* that was prepared for the project.

Based on comments received following both the Agency Scoping Meeting and Interagency Review Meeting, the *Purpose and Need Statement* was revised and resubmitted to the agencies. Cooperating agencies included the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Final concurrence on the *Section 200 Purpose and Need Statement* was received on February 2, 2007.

On October 25, 2006, both federal and non-federal agencies were formally asked to participate in the Section 200 Project as participating or cooperating agencies. Please refer to Appendix D for copies of all of the invitations that were sent to the agencies.

On September 19, 2007, the Section 200 Alternates Retained for Detailed Study (ARDS) was presented at the Interagency Review Meeting. At this meeting, an explanation of the ARDS and how they were determined was presented.

Additional coordination with local officials and resource agencies has been undertaken to obtain data on parklands, emergency services, potential low-income and minority populations, wild and scenic rivers, and rare, threatened, and endangered species. The study team will continue to coordinate with local, State, and Federal resource and regulatory agencies throughout the remaining planning stages of this project. Copies of that correspondence are provided in *Appendix D*.

#### **D. Project Website**

In an effort to obtain public feedback throughout the entire project planning process for Section 200, the Authority has created a Section 200 website to present information about the project study 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 the Section 200 Planning Team
- Land use and economic development within and adjacent to the study area

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- The preliminary concepts carried forward from the I-95 Master Plan and alternates under consideration
  - The Section 200 project planning schedule
  - A link to Section 100 for updates on the adjacent improvements
  - Other transportation projects within or adjacent to the project area.

The Section 200 website provides Authority 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 website can be found at the following web address: <http://www.mdt.state.md.us>.

### **E. Additional Public Education Materials**

Two brochures were produced to help educate residents on sensitive issues for communities. A “Resident’s Guide to Roadway Noise Impacts” explains the state and federal process that is followed in determining who may be eligible to receive a noise barrier and what is reasonable and feasible. The other brochure, “Acquiring Right of Way for Transportation Projects – A Property Owner’s Guide”, explains the right-of-way acquisition process, including how it works and how compensation is determined. These brochures were handed out at the workshop and open houses, and mailed to residents as requested. See *Appendix E* for copies of the two brochures.