

MEMORANDUM

To: Attendees

From: Melissa Williams
MdTA Project Manager

Date: October 27, 2003

RE: *Focus Group Meeting*
Section 100: I-95, I-895(N) Split to North of MD 43
White Marsh Public Library, White Marsh, MD

On September 11, 2003, the Maryland Transportation Authority (Authority) conducted a Focus Group Meeting for the Section 100 project planning study. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the Focus Group to the Authority, provide members an overview of the Section 100 project, review the project schedule and address/receive questions and comments from the public. Those in attendance included:

Attendees:

- Mr. Rich Bolton - McCormick, Taylor & Associates
- Ms. Lynn Burca - King's Court Townhouse Association
- Mr. Bruce Campbell - Nottingham Properties
- Mr. Cornelius Carmody - Gunpowder Valley Conservancy
- Mr. George Ches - Hazelwood Park East Civic Association
- Mrs. Susan Ches - Hazelwood Park East Civic Association
- Ms. Mary Deitz - Maryland State Highway Administration – Regional Planning
- Mr. Keith Duerling - Maryland Transportation Authority
- Mr. Ken Goon - Rummel, Klepper & Kahl / Maryland Transit Administration
- Mr. Emory Hines - Baltimore County Department of Public Works
- Ms. Melissa Kosenak - Maryland Transportation Authority
- Mr. Jack Moeller - Johnson, Mirmiran & Thompson
- Ms. Roxane Mukai - Maryland Transportation Authority
- Ms. Andra Parker - McCormick, Taylor & Associates
- Mr. David Pinning - Baltimore County Office of Planning
- Mr. John Quinn - Baltimore County (representing Hon. Joseph Bartenfelder)
- Mr. Dennis Seibel - King's Court Condominium Association
- Mr. Tom Seymour - South Perry Hall Improvement Association
- Mr. Preston Snedegar - South Perry Hall Improvement Association
- Ms. Wanneta R. Thompson - Garden Village Community Association
- Mr. Charlie Utermohle - McCormick, Taylor & Associates
- Mr. Sam Wilkes - McCormick, Taylor & Associates
- Mr. Matt Wolniak - Johnson, Mirmiran & Thompson
- Mr. Al Zorn - Perry Hall Improvement Association

Ms. Kosenak, the Authority Project Manager for Section 100, began the meeting with brief introductions. She then described the goals of the meeting and the role of the Focus Group. The Focus Group will meet with the Project Team approximately once a month between September and November and work cooperatively with them to meet the goals and objectives of the project. Focus Group members are encouraged to discuss Section 100 project information with their respective groups / organizations, to relay public comments back to the Focus Group, to ensure that proposed improvements to I-95 are sensitive to local community and business concerns. Opportunities for public involvement include the Focus Group meetings, advertised Public Meetings and the Section 100 Project Website.

BACKGROUND

Ms. Kosenak provided a brief overview of the Maryland Transportation Authority. The Authority is the State agency that owns, operates, maintains, funds and provides law enforcement for Maryland's seven toll facilities, including the Governor Harry W. Nice Memorial Bridge (US 301), the William Preston Lane, Jr. Memorial (Bay) Bridge (US 50/301), the Francis Scott Key Memorial Bridge (I-695), the Baltimore Harbor Tunnel Thruway (I-895), the Fort McHenry Tunnel (I-95), the Thomas J. Hatem Memorial Bridge (US 40) and the John F. Kennedy Memorial Highway (I-95).

I-95 MASTER PLAN

Ms. Kosenak then discussed the recently completed I-95 Master Plan. The Master Plan was a cooperative effort that looked at improvements to the John F. Kennedy Memorial Highway (JFK) to meet both existing and future transportation needs for I-95 from the I-895(N) split to the Delaware State Line. The Authority in coordination with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) reviewed the transportation needs and environmental inventory in an effort to identify independent projects. These independent projects include: Section 100 (from the I-895/I-95 to north of MD 43); Section 200 (from north of MD 43 to north of MD 22); Section 300 (from north of MD 22 to north of MD 222) and Section 400 (from north of MD 222 to the Delaware State Line). The Maryland Transportation Authority adopted the I-95 Master Plan in April of 2003. Planning for the first independent project, Section 100, began soon thereafter.

A brief overview of Section 100 was presented, including a discussion of the study boundaries and the project purpose and need. Section 100 begins at the I-895(N) split and ends north of MD 43 in the vicinity of New Forge Road. This section has the most immediate need for improvements.

MASTER PLAN TRAFFIC

Mr. Wolniak presented an overview of traffic in regard to the I-95 Master Plan and Section 100. During a weekday peak hour count sampled in April 2001, approximately 12% to 16% of passenger vehicles on the JFK had an auto occupancy of two or more occupants north of MD 43 (White Marsh Boulevard). This percentage increased to 27% during the mid-day hours. A concurrent sample taken at the JFK toll plaza indicated that 32% to 37% of the peak period weekday passenger vehicles carried two or more occupants. During a sample count on a weekend afternoon in May 2001, 66% of the vehicles on the JFK at the toll plaza had two or more occupants.

Currently, truck volumes of approximately 500 vehicles per hour remain steady throughout much of the day accounting for approximately 10% to 15% of the total weekday traffic along the JFK but only 5% of peak period, peak direction traffic in the urban, southern section. Trucks constitute approximately 5% to 6% of the total weekend traffic.

Weekday

Analyses indicate that in 2020, during weekday peak periods, the JFK south of MD 24 would be operating at or above its theoretical capacity. During the AM peak hour, the southbound JFK would operate at LOS F between I-895(N) and MD 152, and LOS E between MD 152 and MD 543. During the PM peak hour, the northbound JFK would operate at LOS F between I-895(N) and MD 543 and LOS E between MD 543 and MD 22.

Weekend

North of MD 543, 2020 weekend peak period traffic volumes along the JFK will continue to exceed 2020 weekday peak period traffic volumes. South of MD 543, weekend volumes are expected to increase significantly with peak period weekend volumes approaching 75% to 90% of peak period weekday volumes. Currently, weekend peak period traffic volumes are approximately 65% of weekday peak period traffic volumes.

By 2020, during the weekend peak period, the JFK is expected to operate at LOS F between MD 24 and MD 272 and at LOS E south of MD 24 and between MD 272 and the Delaware state line.

MASTER PLAN TRANSIT

Mr. Goon presented an overview of transit throughout the I-95 corridor. The JFK is part of an established multi-modal corridor. Amtrak, Maryland Rail Commuter (MARC) and commercial bus services carry one out of every seven passenger trips across the Susquehanna River. Additional bus transit on the JFK is provided by the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) and the local jurisdictions. Highway improvements such as transit or shared transit preferences and enhanced park-and-ride station access may improve transit use.

MASTER PLAN FREIGHT

Freight rail service in the study area is provided by three major rail lines: Amtrak's North East Corridor (NEC), CSX Transportation's (CSXT) Philadelphia Subdivision, and Norfolk-Southern's (NS) Port Road Line. Amtrak's service is limited to high priority/low bulk and weight packages. CSXT and NS operate 60 to 70 freight trains per day within the study area. In the vicinity of the JFK, forty-six of every 100 tons of freight carried across the Susquehanna River are carried by rail.

MASTER PLAN SCHEDULE

Ms. Kosenak then presented the design year timetable for each Section of the I-95 Master Plan. Project planning for Section 100 will take 2-3 years to complete. Three Master Plan Concepts were presented as possible Alternates for Section 100. Master Plan Concept C-1: The No-Build Alternate is the scenario if no major improvements are made to the JFK, only routine maintenance and safety improvements. Master Plan Concept C-5: Managed Lanes Alternate includes the use of managed lanes in combination with general purpose and collector-distributor (CD) lanes. Master Plan Concept

C-6: General-Purpose Lanes includes general-purpose lanes as well as CD lanes. The estimated costs and schedule for each section of the I-95 Master Plan were reviewed. Section 100 improvements are needed today; the anticipated cost is \$750 million.

At this point, members of the Focus Group were provided the opportunity to ask questions and to comment concerning the Authority as well as the I-95 Master Plan.

- Q: Mr. Pinning asked if the I-95 Master Plan would coincide with the Delaware Master Plan.
- A: Ms. Kosenak explained that the Authority is coordinating with the Delaware Department of Transportation and the Wilmington Planning Council to assure the continuity of I-95 between the states.
- Q: Mr. Seymour inquired where the money for the project would be coming from.
- A: Ms. Kosenak stated that the funds for improvements to the JFK Section 100 are included in the Authority's overall capital program.
- Q: Mr. Carmody asked how frequent exits would be along the managed lanes and how the managed lane concept would improve traffic.
- A: Ms. Kosenak replied that the number of entrances and exits along the managed lanes would be controlled to facilitate traffic flow. Vehicles traveling on I-95 would not be required to use the managed lanes. If access was not available via the managed lanes, access at the existing interchanges would still be available via general-purpose lanes.
- Q: Mr. Seymour asked if the extension of MD 43 will be taken into consideration during Section 100 project planning.
- A: Mr. Wolniak stated that the traffic forecast and analysis that would be used to design concepts for Section 100 assumes that the extension of MD 43 would be completed.
- Q: Ms. Thompson inquired what the role of focus group members would be.
- A: Ms. Kosenak asked the Focus Group members to share project information with their groups/ organizations and bring back to the Focus Group any input or questions their members may have. It was noted that each member received two copies of the PowerPoint presentation – one in color and one in black and white. The black and white versions were distributed for photocopying purposes.
- Q: Mr. Carmody noted that there were no trucks pictured in the managed lanes photograph and questioned the purpose of this.
- A: Ms. Kosenak explained that various management strategies were considered for the managed lanes concepts including truck use. The lack of trucks shown in the picture was purely coincidental.
- Q: Mr. Seymour questioned why improvements currently underway in the tunnels couldn't be done during night hours to reduce the impact of the tunnel closure on traffic.

A: Mr. Duerling responded that the extended hours of work reduce the total length of time it will take to complete the repairs. The Authority has been observing the traffic situation, and has made reductions to the hours that the contractor can work. The traffic impacts of the project will continue to be monitored.

SECTION 100

At this point, the meeting question and answer period was closed and the presentation was turned over to Mr. Utermohle. He began with the Section 100 project schedule. The Authority will hold a Public Workshop on November 18th at the Perry Hall Middle School. Final project planning activities are planned for the spring of 2005 and construction is planned to begin in the fall of 2006. The limits of the study area were outlined, interchanges and existing communities noted and future development discussed.

SECTION 100 TRAFFIC

Section 100 is the most congested section of I-95 in Maryland north of Baltimore City. It currently operates at a Level of Service (LOS) F during the morning and evening rush hour. By 2025, it is expected to operate at LOS E and F during weekend peak periods. Increased congestion levels will extend the existing peak hour into a period of several hours duration and increase the level of diversion to alternate routes, such as the community oriented US 1, US 40 and MD 7. It was noted that while the accident rate is currently lower than the statewide average rate for comparable urban interstates in Maryland on Section 100, the number of accidents is increasing, especially in the vicinity of the I-895 and MD 43 interchanges, where large amounts of merging, diverging and weaving movements occur. Left hand entrances and exits were also noted as having a higher potential for accidents. If the anticipated congestion levels are not addressed, an increase in the number and severity of accidents would likely occur.

SECTION 100 TRANSIT

Mr. Goon discussed various transit options that are planned for the Section 100 study area. Improvements to Section 100 should provide transit patrons with faster and more reliable bus service. He also noted that a potential extension of the Baltimore Regional Rail System may include a future transit station with access to I-95 within the study area.

SECTION 100 LAND USE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Utermohle presented information regarding the land use and economic development within the I-95 corridor. I-95 is a major transportation facility that influences both inter and intra-regional road transportation. It provides access to local and regional inter-modal terminals including the Port of Baltimore. The Section 100 study area is located on the urban side of Baltimore County's Urban Rural Demarcation Line (URDL) and is designated by Baltimore County within the Priority Funding Area (PFA). Major on-going development within the PFA / Study Area includes the White Marsh Town Center, the Middle River Employment Center and the Honeygo Development.

SECTION 100 ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Various environmental issues will be considered throughout the planning and design of Section 100 alternates. Natural wetlands and terrestrial habitat will be identified and their quality, function and

values will be assessed. Potential hazardous waste issues will be identified through review of Maryland Department of Environment (MDE) files and verified through field reconnaissance. Once existing conditions have been defined, avoidance measures will be investigated.

Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) and the National Register of Historic Places files will be reviewed for recorded cultural resources. The condition and sensitivity of archeological resources will be determined and a plan developed for initial field surveys. Historic properties will be investigated to determine their National Register eligibility. Where appropriate, avoidance and minimization measures will be examined. Noise sensitive sites will be documented, existing noise levels monitored and potential impacts determined. Where standards are exceeded, abatement strategies will be investigated. The impact of the project on local air quality will also be assessed.

Mr. Utermohle announced the dates, times and location of the next two Focus Group meetings and the Public Workshop. The meeting was then opened up to questions and comments from the Focus Group.

Q: Mr. Zorn asked if there was anyone present to represent the State and County involvement in the project.

A: Mr. Utermohle recognized representatives from the Authority, State Highway Administration (SHA), Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) as well as Baltimore County, and reiterated the State and County's continued interaction regarding Section 100.

Q: Mr. Zorn noted that residents within the study area have noticed in past years that as improvements are made to I-95, more motorists decide to utilize it. He asked if traffic would worsen with the improvements and if the local arteries would be affected negatively.

A: Ms. Kosenak explained that the goal of the project is not to *eliminate* traffic on I-95, but rather to *manage* it. Managing traffic on I-95 may relieve congestion on the local routes if motorists desiring to use I-95 did not divert to the local alternate routes of US 40, MD 7 and US 1.

Q: Mr. Zorn inquired about funds available for the maintenance of the JFK.

A: Ms. Kosenak explained that toll revenues are the source of Authority funds

Q: Mrs. Ches asked if there was going to be an increase in toll rates in order to fund the Section 100 project.

A: Ms. Kosenak stated that any potential toll increase would aid in funding Authority projects statewide, with a portion being allocated to the JFK improvements. However, toll increases are not being made for the sole purpose of generating funds for Section 100.

Q: Mr. Campbell inquired what the impacts of widening I-95 would be on property owners adjacent to the right-of-way (ROW).

A: Mr. Moeller explained that some areas will require additional ROW acquisition, especially near the interchanges. Mr. Utermohle explained that the new roadway may not be centered on the existing centerline. It may shift slightly to either side to minimize impacts. Mr.

Moeller noted that other minimization efforts such as retaining walls and mitigation efforts could reduce the impact on properties adjacent to I-95.

Q: Mr. Snedegar asked if the additional flow of traffic would increase the already elevated noise levels on properties adjacent to the JFK, and if the addition of noise walls would be considered in this scenario.

A: Mr. Moeller explained that a noise study would be done as part of the study process to determine if or when noise walls might be appropriate. Mr. Snedegar pointed his house out to the group on the Environmental Inventory display map and it was noted that a noise receptor (study site) was located on or near Mr. Snedegar's property.

Q: Mr. Seymour asked what bridges along the JFK would be affected by the Section 100 improvements.

A: Mr. Moeller pointed out the bridges at Ridge Road and Cowenton Road, as well as many other older bridges within the study area that may need to be rebuilt because the location of existing of piers and abutments could be in conflict with the proposed improvements.

Q: Mr. Quinn questioned if the improvements would really be improving more than simply a few miles of roadway. He noted that regardless of the improvements, certain points along the JFK will continue to be congested, such as the tunnels. What will happen at the ends of the Section 100 corridor when motorists all converge on the unimproved portion of roadway?

A: Mr. Utermohle pointed out that one thing the managed lanes option offers is the flexibility in restrictions, such as by time or vehicle type. This option allows greater management of traffic.

Q: Mr. Seymour noted that traffic is currently congested at the I-95 tunnel. He questioned what the congestion level will be if I-95 is widened and even more lanes are feeding the tunnel.

A: Mr. Duerling explained that the Section 100 project will balance the capacity of the roadway with the capacity of the tunnel.

Q: Mr. Campbell asked if average daily traffic (ADTs) for all concepts would be updated with the newer traffic model. He also inquired if the level of service (LOS) on I-95 would be improved from LOS F to LOS D.

A: Mr. Wolniak confirmed that ADTs for all concepts would be updated. He also stated the improvements to the JFK should decrease the number of hours that traffic is operating at LOS F. As the proposed alternates are developed, the anticipated LOS will be determined.

Q: Mr. Seymour questioned what ramps would be upgraded within the study area.

A: Mr. Wolniak noted that all interchanges would be updated. It was noted that additional engineering data would be presented to the Focus Group at the next meeting.

Q: Mr. Campbell asked what types of improvement strategies were eliminated during development of the Master Plan.

A: Ms. Kosenak noted that three of the Master Plan Concepts were eliminated from further consideration:

- Concept C-2: All Lanes Tolled – This concept was eliminated from further study. Tolling of all lanes is expected to increase peak hour traffic volumes on parallel routes (primarily US 40, US1 and MD 7) by 25% to 70% causing operational failures along the entire highway network.
- Concept C-3: HOV Lanes – This concept was eliminated from further study. The existing average auto occupancy rate for vehicles on the JFK exceeds the average rate (11%) for other freeways with existing HOV lanes. Today, vehicles with two or more occupants on the JFK comprise 12% to 16% of weekday peak-period traffic (north of MD 43) and 66% of weekend mid-day traffic (Susquehanna River).
- Concept C-4: Reversible Lanes – This concept was eliminated from study. It is anticipated that the reversible facility would work well during weekday peak periods (flow 65% in the peak direction). However, serious operational and maintenance concerns would arise in the southern portion of the corridor during weekend peak periods when peak directions of flow are not established (50% north/ 50% south). Reversing traffic flow direction may take up to one hour for each four-mile section of roadway and will reduce roadway capacity during flow reversal.

Mr. Zorn noted that Concept C-5 seemed similar to the New Jersey Turnpike design. The project team agreed that the physical concept is similar to the New Jersey turnpike. It was also noted that there was a similar roadway in Chicago.

FOCUS GROUP SURVEY

Member Survey Forms were then distributed to the Focus Group. The group was encouraged to document up to three issues / concerns that they think should be addressed in project planning. Everyone was asked to present the information they received about Section 100 to their groups / organizations and to mail their completed forms back to Ms. Kosenak so that the results could be presented at the next Focus Group meeting.

NEXT MEETINGS

Focus Group Meeting #2

Date: Tuesday, September 30, 2003

Time: 6:30PM-8:30PM

Location: Perry Hall Middle School

Focus Group Meeting #3

Date: Monday, October 27, 2003

Time: 6:30PM-8:30PM

Location: Perry Hall Middle School

Public Workshop

Date: Tuesday, November 18, 2003

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Focus Group Meeting #1 Minutes
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Time: 5:30PM-8:30PM
Location: Perry Hall Middle School

If you have any questions or comments concerning the minutes, please contact the Authority Project Manager, Melissa (Kosenak) Williams, by telephone at (410) 288-8400 extension 383 or by email at mwilliams9@mdtransportationauthority.com.