



Memorandum of Meeting

Date: February 6, 2007

Time: 5:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Location: Millsboro Fire Hall, Millsboro, DE

Topic: **Millsboro-South Area Working Group Meeting No. 14**

Attendees: See Page 6

Introduction

Bob Kramer called the meeting to order at 5:45 p.m. Mr. Kramer thanked the working group for their continued attendance. He emphasized that attendance of all working group members is especially important over the next few months so the group can efficiently and effectively recommend a preferred alternative.

Mr. Kramer then introduced Monroe Hite, III to review the purpose of the meeting. Mr. Hite said that the project team has been very busy for the eight months since the working group last met, and that the first portion of the meeting would be dedicated to updating the attendees regarding that progress. He noted that the remainder of the meeting would focus on discussion of new alternatives (“east-to-east” alternatives) connecting the eastern bypass alternatives in Georgetown and Millsboro, an idea that was first discussed during the May 2006 Georgetown working group meeting. He emphasized that DeIDOT is committed to recommending a preferred alternative in the Georgetown-South area by the end of 2007. Mr. Hite described the notebook materials distributed to the working group members, including tonight’s presentation, minutes from the previous meeting, and updated alternative maps.

Key Issues

Mr. Hite then reviewed the project team’s progress in addressing the five key issues discussed at the May working group meeting: wetlands, cultural resources, RTEs (rare, threatened and endangered species), traffic, and socio-economic impacts. A sixth key issue, natural areas, was added due to DNREC’s fall 2006 publication of new State Resource Area and Natural Area maps. His presentation regarding each key issue is summarized as follows:

- **Wetlands.** The natural resource agencies (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and DNREC) have analyzed the retained alternatives during several field visits and office meetings to review critical issues. By the end of February, the agencies will have a full understanding of the wetland issues, including a general assessment of habitat quality, associated with each alternative.



- **Cultural Resources.** The Delaware State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has worked closely with the project team on the eligibility of hundreds of architectural properties for the National Register of Historic Places. The project team and SHPO are making steady progress in the evaluation and review of all of those properties, with final determination of National Register eligibility likely to be resolved this summer.
- **RTEs.** The project team coordinated with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and DNREC regarding Federal species of concern, which include Swamp Pink (a flower) and Bald Eagle in the US 113 study area. Extensive studies were conducted to determine potential impacts to Swamp Pink, a Federally-listed species. No direct impacts were found in the Millsboro-South area. Although Bald Eagles are present in the Millsboro-South area, no known nests will be directly impacted by any of the alternatives.
- **Traffic.** During 2006, DelDOT completely updated its travel demand model based on a number of factors: population and employment, external volumes, calibration using 2005 traffic volumes, a new mode choice model, and a new toll model for I-95, SR 1, and the proposed US 301. Upon completion of the model updates, traffic forecasts specific to the US 113 project were begun and are nearly complete. Traffic-dependent impacts (noise, air quality, economic, etc.) will be determined when the traffic forecasts are complete.
- **Socio-Economic Impacts.** This category includes impacts to both businesses and properties. Property impacts have been updated and business impacts are being recalculated using the revised traffic forecasts. Impacts to agriculture are being determined as well.

Mr. Hite gave an update on the proposed Ferry Cove development, which is located on the south of SR 24 just east of Mountaire, along the Indian River. All of the Millsboro-South east bypass alternatives impact the site. DelDOT is working with the Sussex County Planning and Zoning Commission in their review of the plan to ensure a highway corridor is preserved, either long-term if an east bypass alternative is selected or short-term if another alternative moves forward.

- **Natural Areas.** DNREC approved new State Resource Area and Natural Area maps in fall 2006. These data were provided to the project team by DNREC immediately upon approval and have been incorporated into the mapping. Impacts to State Resource Areas and Natural Areas are being incorporated into the impact matrix.

East-to-East Alternative

Mr. Hite reminded the working group members that the US 113 study is broken into three areas in terms of environmental documents:

- The **Milford** area extends from south of Frederica to south of Lincoln. The project team is preparing an environmental impact statement (EIS), the most involved class of environmental document, for this area due to its size and complexity.
- The **Ellendale** area extends from south of Lincoln to north of Georgetown. The preferred alternative in this area, an upgrade of existing US 113 to limited access, has already been



determined. Because there are few resource impacts in this area, the project team is preparing a categorical exclusion (CE), a simpler environmental document.

- The **Georgetown-South** area extends from north of Georgetown to the Maryland state line at Selbyville. Again, due to complexity and size, the project team is preparing an EIS for this area. This area is so large that the project team established two working groups (Millsboro-South and Georgetown) to obtain more focused input. The Georgetown-South environmental document will contain one preferred alternative recommendation, based in part on input from the Millsboro-South and Georgetown working groups.

Mr. Hite introduced the East-to-East alternative, which is a connection between the Georgetown and Millsboro east bypasses suggested for consideration at the May 2006 Georgetown working group meeting. The idea has merit because it has fewer natural resource and community impacts and is shorter than a combination of the Georgetown and Millsboro east bypasses. The project team is introducing this concept to the working group tonight (and to the Georgetown working group on Thursday, February 8) to obtain input and determine whether it should be added to the Alternatives Retained for Detailed Study (ARDS). Mr. Hite then introduced Joe Wutka to provide detailed information on East-to-East.

Mr. Wutka reminded the attendees that the 2001 Feasibility Study, which formed the basis for the US 113 North/South Study, included a continuous eastern bypass of both Georgetown and Millsboro. This connection was not included in the preliminary range of alternatives introduced in 2002 because DelDOT wanted to retain as much of existing US 113 as possible. As the alternatives were pushed further east due to potential resource impacts and community and development concerns, they became close enough to warrant reviewing the benefits of an east-to-east connection. Mr. Wutka outlined a summary of working group and public input received to date in both the Millsboro-South and Georgetown areas (detailed in the presentation) and described the locations of two potential East-to-East alternatives on the map.

With respect to resource impacts, Mr. Wutka emphasized that one key benefit of East-to-East is the avoidance of Cow Bridge Branch in the Stockley area, which is recognized as a very high quality stream and wetland complex. He also went through the preliminary impact matrix, which illustrates a comparison between the separate Georgetown and Millsboro east bypasses and the two East-to-East alternatives, limited only to the area between US 9 and SR 24.

Mr. Kramer asked whether the statements made in the presentation regarding working group and agency input are accurate.

- Preston Dyer asked about SR 30 concerns. Mr. Wutka indicated that the agencies are concerned that an East-to-East interchange on SR 30 will spur development in a Livable Delaware Level 4 area (not designated for growth). Mr. Dyer asked whether the fact that the highway is limited access will help preclude that growth, to which Mr. Wutka replied that the interchange, where access to SR 30 would be provided, is the primary issue. Mr. Hite added that the issue was brought up by the agencies, and so is just an issue to be considered if the East-to-East alternatives move forward. Mr. Wutka said the situation is analogous to SR 1 at Blackbird in southern New Castle County, where provision was made for a future interchange that has not yet been built due to concerns that it would encourage unwanted development.
- Josh Thompson said he is concerned that the Millsboro-South working group is characterized as preferring an east bypass; he personally prefers the Purple alternative, which passes west of



Millsboro. Mr. Hite responded that in spring 2005, when the Millsboro-South working group recommended which preliminary alternatives should be retained for detailed study, there was a great deal of support for not retaining any west bypasses, instead focusing solely on the east. After substantial discussion, the working group reluctantly agreed to retain two west bypass alternatives for detailed study. Mr. Kramer emphasized that if East-to-East is retained, it will be compared end-to-end with all of the other alternatives.

- Bill Pfaff said that members who joined the working group after spring 2005 may not know of (or agree with) previous working group discussions. Mr. Hite offered to brief those newer members regarding previous working group activities.
- Mr. Pfaff asked whether there is any state-owned land along the East-to-East alternatives that could ease the impact and cost of acquisitions. Mr. Wutka replied that there is none, as the alternatives stay well east of the state-owned Stockley Center.

Mr. Kramer then asked whether the working group agreed with the project team's recommendation that the East-to-East alternatives be retained for detailed study. He also invited further comments on those alternatives. Mr. Hite emphasized that adding East-to-East should not adversely impact the scheduled recommendation of a preferred alternative in November 2007.

- Roger Marino asked whether the working group was being asked to endorse East-to-East as the preferred alternative for the Millsboro area. Mr. Hite clarified that the working group was simply being asked whether East-to-East should be studied just as the other ARDS are being studied.
- Mark Davis said that East-to-East has sufficient benefits that it should be studied and discussed in a public forum.
- Bob Stuart asked how traffic from west of Georgetown would access the East-to-East alternatives. Mr. Wutka said that the project team is looking at connections from SR 18/404 just west of Georgetown to the north end of the Georgetown Orange alternative, which would tie into the East-to-East alternatives. Jeff Riegner said that east-west traffic could also be served by upgrading Alt. SR 24 from the Seacoast Speedway to East-to-East. Mr. Stuart thought that was a good idea and should be presented to the public. In response to Mr. Pfaff's question, Mr. Wutka clarified that the north end of the Georgetown Orange alternative is in the vicinity of the US 113/Wilson Road intersection.
- Mr. Riegner explained why the East-to-East connection makes sense, while a corresponding West-to-West connection does not. A connection between the west bypasses of Georgetown and Millsboro would be extremely close to existing US 113, offering no advantage in terms of length or cost. Such a new alignment would also have disadvantages in terms of resource impacts. Mr. Davis added that it would not serve east-west traffic.
- Mr. Davis asked whether the quality of impacted wetlands, not just their acreage, should be considered. Mr. Riegner said that it would, but the agencies have not yet had an opportunity to view and assess all wetlands in the Georgetown-South study area. These field views, weather permitting, will take place later in February.



- Mr. Thompson expressed concern about how the East-to-East alternatives may impact the headwaters of Cow Bridge Branch. Mr. Riegner said that the agencies have assessed both the headwaters and the main stem of the branch just above Millsboro Pond, indicating that the main stream is of particularly high quality. This was reinforced by DNREC, who designated the main branch behind Stockley as a State Resource Area. Impacts to the headwaters are an important issue and will be conveyed as such to the public.
- Fran Bruce agreed with Mr. Thompson's earlier suggestion that "opposition" is too strong a word to convey the working group's position on the west bypass alternatives, as it implies that all current working group members hold that position. Mr. Kramer agreed to work on alternate wording that allows for both current opinions and those expressed during the 2005 ARDS discussions.
- Mr. Dyer recommended that the project team emphasize the desire of US 113 corridor traffic to go to and from the east. Furthermore, he suggested that an East-to-East alternative, if eventually selected, could form a boundary for the growth of towns along US 113. Mr. Kramer agreed, but indicated that the project team and working group must be careful to present East-to-East as equal alongside the other Alternatives Retained for Detailed Study, not as a potential preferred alternative. The project team will illustrate to the public, in a general sense, how East-to-East could serve east-west traffic.

To summarize the discussion, Mr. Kramer indicated that the project team will do the following:

- Reword its description of the working group's opinions so a consensus position of all working group members is not implied.
- Emphasize the need to address east-west traffic and show some options to do so, either as part of the US 113 project or separately.
- Convey that the working group recommends retaining the East-to-East alternatives for detailed study and that they will be considered on an equal basis with the other ARDS.

He asked that the attendees provide any additional comments within two weeks so they can be incorporated into the public workshop materials.

Schedule

Mr. Hite outlined the schedule provided to the working group members in the presentation. He reiterated DelDOT's commitment to recommend a preferred alternative in the Georgetown-South area by the end of 2007. He stressed upcoming public workshops on Monday, March 12 at the Millsboro East Elementary School and on Thursday, March 15 at the CHEER Center in Georgetown. The same information will be provided at each workshop. In response to Mr. Marino's question, Mr. Hite said that the early 2008 DEIS public hearings will likely be held at these same two locations because they have separate rooms for displays and public testimony.

Mr. Hite indicated that the next four working group meetings will be held at the Millsboro Fire Hall on Tuesday evenings: March 27, May 1, May 29, and June 26.



Conclusion

Mr. Kramer said that because considerable time is needed to prepare for the DEIS public hearings, the project team is looking for the working group's recommendation of a preferred alternative in June 2007. The key item discussed tonight was East-to-East, but starting with the March meeting, the team will focus on impacts of all alternatives so the process of recommending a preferred alternative can begin. Furthermore, he asked each attendee to participate in one of the March public workshops for at least an hour and to ask the working group members not in attendance to make that same commitment.

Mr. Kramer adjourned the meeting at 8:00 p.m.

Working group members in attendance:

Baker, Wayne
Brake, Joe
Bruce, Fran
Collins, Donald
Davis, Mark
Dyer, Preston
Houghton, Daryl

Kautz, Richard
Marino, Roger
Norwood, James T.
Pfaff, Bill
Simmons, Mike
Stuart, Robert
Thompson, Josh

Members of the public in attendance:

Anderson, Brian
Anderson, Leon
McBride, Kevin
Smith, R.
Radish, Bob