WEST DOVER Connector

DelDOT
Delaware Department of Transportation

Memorandum of Meeting
Working Group

Meeting Date: November 2, 2005
Time: 7:00 PM
Location: W. Reily Brown Elementary School

Community Working Group Members in Attendance:

Robert "Dick" Bewick	Resident, Woodbrook
James Brown	Resident, Town of Wyoming
Gerald Buckworth	34th District Representative
Steve Cain	President, Crossgates/Mayfair Homeowner's Association
Zachery Carter	Director, Dover Parks and Recreation
Tony De Prima	City Manager, City of Dover
Jane Edwards	Kesselring Property (East of New Burton Road)
Colin Faulkner	Kent County Emergency Services
Patricia Gauani	President, Rodney Village Civic Association
Steve Kitchen (for Darren Harmon)	Kraft Foods
Ken Hogan	Dover City Councilman – 1st District
James Hutchison	Commerce Bank
Frank King	President, Wyoming Mills Homeowner's Association
Rob McCleary	DelDOT Representative
Milton Melendez	Department of Agriculture
Jack Papen	Farmer, Major Property Owner
Randi Pawlowski	Dover First Seventh-Day Adventist Church
Michael Petit de Mange	Director of Planning Services, Kent County
Eugene Ruane	Dover City Councilman - 2nd District
Robert Sadusky, Sr.	Dover City Councilman – 2nd District
Janice Sibbald	Crossgates/Mayfair Resident
Stephen Speed	Mayor, City of Dover
Ali Stark	Resident, Holly Drive
Donna Stone	32nd District Representative
Donald Sylvester	Resident, Rodney Village
Doris Kesselring Taylor	Kesselring Property (West of New Burton Road)
Jeff Davis (for Craig Wearden)	Asst. Principal, W. Reilly Brown Elementary School
John Whitby	Kent County Motor Sales Company
Juanita Wieczoreck	Executive Director, Dover/Kent County MPO

Others in Attendance (Public):

Joe Abbate	John Clark Road Resident
Ben Andersen	Willis Road Resident
Don Dryden	Sherwood Court Resident
Bill Edwards	Kennett Square, PA Resident
Lisa Gardner	City of Dover Electric
Shirley Gauani	Charles Polk Road Resident
Angelo Giudici, Jr.	Charles Polk Road Resident
Jay Hauch	Frankford Resident
Ken Hoffmann	Blue Beach Drive Resident
Ward Kelly	Woodsedge Road Resident

Mike Matone	Charles Polk Road Resident
Drew Volturo	Delaware State News
Theresa Winchell	Charles Polk Road Resident
Ben Anderson	Dover Post

Others in Attendance (Project Team):

Andrew Bing	Kramer & Associates
Chris Fronheiser	DMJM Harris
John Gaines	DelDOT Project Manager
Mike Girman	DMJM Harris Project Manager
Robert Kramer	Kramer & Associates
Gary Laing	DelDOT
Marge Quinn	DMJM Harris
Leslie Roche	DMJM Harris
Mike Simmons	DelDOT, Assistant Director of Transportation Solutions

The purpose of the meeting was to present DelDOT's decision as to the alternatives to be retained for detailed study, to explain the work and products of the detailed study phase, and to identify the next steps of the project.

Introduction

Bob Kramer welcomed the Working Group. He stated his expectation that the Working Group members had received the packet of information identifying DelDOT's decision as to the alternatives to be retained for detailed study. He introduced Rob McCleary to introduce John Gaines, DelDOT's new Project Manager.

Rob McCleary thanked the Working Group members for attending the meeting. He stated his expectation that the Working Group members had received the letter from Carol Ann Wicks introducing DelDOT's new Project Manager for the West Dover Connector study, John Gaines. Rob explained that in his new position, John is responsible for Kent County road projects. Rob explained that the previous West Dover Connector Project Manager, Jay Kelley, had moved to a new position within DelDOT. Rob stated that DelDOT and the West Dover Connector project are fortunate to have John Gaines as the new Project Manager. In his new role, John has supervisory authority over the consultant project team: DMJM Harris, Kramer & Associates and the several subcontractors. Prior to coming to DelDOT, John was employed at Century Engineering. Rob encouraged Working Group members to seek out John as he is knowledgeable and approachable.

John Gaines introduced himself and stated that he looks forward to working with the Working Group on this project. John presented the agenda for the evening which included a review of the alternatives retained for detailed study, a discussion of the detailed study phase and a presentation of the project's next steps.

DelDOT presents alternatives retained for Detailed Study

Rob McCleary referred the Working Group to the package of information that was mailed to them prior to this meeting. He explained how DelDOT made their decision on which alternatives to retain for detailed study. Rob explained that, as the Working Group has heard before, DelDOT makes the final decision. The Working Group was convened to provide guidance and advice using its combined local knowledge. Referring to Slide 5, Rob explained that the deliberations of the Working

Group had resulted in recommendations that 4, 5A, 5B, 5C, 11 and 12B merited further study. The project team, through its analysis of the engineering and environmental data, and input from the resource agencies, Working Group and the public, had recommended that 3, 4, 5C, 7C, 7D, 12A, 12B, and 14B merited further study. Rob explained that the project team recommended a greater number of alternatives than the Working Group to ensure that the study considered all issues.

Ultimately, DelDOT met internally and discussed each of the alternatives. DelDOT believes that its decision to retain Alternatives 4, 5C, 7C, 7D and No-Build represents the full range of alternatives. He explained that the Preliminary Alternatives break down into essentially three route options: via Wyoming Avenue, via Webbs Lane or via Charles Polk Road. The common element in the alternatives is the origin at Saulsbury Road and North Street. Moreover, the footprint of the many alternatives is similar, particularly in terms of the travel demand model results.

Rob explained the issues considered by DelDOT by alternative:

- Alternative 3 and all options using Wyoming Avenue were determined to have large impacts on the built environment: circulation patterns, access, right-of-way impacts and a potential historic district boundary. Very little transportation benefit was seen in this alternative, particularly as extending this alternative to Route 13 would be difficult. For these reasons, DelDOT did not consider the Wyoming Avenue alternatives to merit further study.

- Each of the Alternative 5's is essentially the same alternative with slightly different alignments through the Kesselring Farm east of New Burton Road. The same issues would be involved. For this reason, only 5C was retained for detailed study.

- Each of the Alternative 7's was a concern to the Working Group. The resource agencies favor the 7's because they would use existing roads and widen the existing structure over Puncheon Run rather than create a new crossing. An on-alignment alternative is required to be included in the study. For these reasons, 7C and 7D were retained for detailed study.

- Alternative 11, the TSM alternative, was determined not to meet the project Purpose and Need as a stand-alone alternative. The improvements in Alternative 11 could still happen as spin-off projects, but not as a stand-alone alternative.

- Each of the Alternative 12's was rejected from further study due to the uncertainty of dealing with the railroad. DelDOT cannot advance the 12's without a guarantee that the railroad will agree to relocating their tracks. The 7's would operate similarly from a traffic perspective and are viewed as more feasible.

- Alternative 14B would widen existing roads, but would have substantial built environment impacts. Alternative 7D would perform similarly with fewer total impacts. For this reason, 14B was not retained for detailed study.

- The No-Build Alternative will be carried forward as a requirement and as a possible alternative. As during the screening phase, the No-Build Alternative will continue to be used as a baseline comparison.

Rob indicated that during the detailed study phase, the alternatives would be more closely studied and refined.

Mayor Speed asked whether Alternative 12 would also be studied by implication since it would operate in the same way as Alternative 7? He also asked whether Alternative 12 might be reconsidered at a later time if the uncertainties with the railroad can be resolved? Rob McCleary responded that, yes, reconsideration of Alternative 12 could occur. Mike Girman responded that, yes, the traffic performance and environmental impacts of 7 and 12 are largely similar. Chris Fronheiser explained that Alternative 7 would not involve relocating the railroad.

Mayor Speed asked that the project team re-word the manner in which the input from the Working Group is being represented. Whereas DelDOT's recent package of information to the Working Group indicates the Group made specific recommendations as to what merits detailed study, the Working Group has not done so. All alternatives have not been completely vetted by the Group to reduce the alternatives to a set of recommendations. He asked the project team to recognize the difference between the Group voting to eliminate alternatives and the Group recommending to retain alternatives.

Rob McCleary reminded the Working Group that at the last Working Group meeting, the Group did make a number of recommendations, though he agreed that a complete list had not been developed. Rob stated that next project step is a public workshop. The project team will address future wording regarding Working Group activities by saying that the Group recommended alternatives to be dropped rather than recommended alternatives to be retained.

Juanita Wieczoreck asked whether DelDOT spoke with the railroad about Alternative 12? Mike Girman responded yes. The railroad was willing to have DelDOT study Alternative 12, but they did not see a benefit for them as it would add track curves and require more maintenance. The railroad would not make a commitment to the idea of relocating the tracks.

Juanita asked whether DelDOT's financial situation has affected the West Dover Connector study process and the decision on retained alternatives? Rob McCleary responded that, no, the financial situation has had no effect on the process. He acknowledge that some changes to cosmetic elements, such as no longer providing dinner to the Working Group and using black and white handouts were determined to make economic sense, however these decisions in no way change the process being followed. DelDOT is committed to advancing the West Dover Connector project, provided that a preferred alternative can be identified and funding for design and construction can be secured. Bob Kramer noted that the budget is in place to get to a preferred alternative in this study; there is no funding committed currently for final design, right-of-way acquisition or construction.

Randi Pawlowski asked whether it is known how much of the Seventh Day Adventist Church property would have to be taken to implement Alternatives 7C or 7D? Rob McCleary responded that the information is not known now but will be determined during detailed study. The detailed study phase will also be a time for examining ways to avoid or minimize impacts; community coordination will be part of that process. Mike Girman reminded the Working Group that the screening phase examined impacts of uniform bandwidths for proposed roads. The detailed study phase will refine those bandwidths.

Randi Pawlowski asked whether it is known that whole or partial property impacts will occur at the church? Mike Girman responded that the information is not known now but would be developed as part of the detailed study phase, with the involvement of the church.

Steve Cain asked whether the U.S. Army Corps has raised any concerns about flooding along the Puncheon Run. Rob McCleary responded that, no the Corps had not raised concerns. However, the project team has made the Corps aware of the issue.

Steve Cain stated that a complete hydrological study of the Puncheon Run down to Route 13 is needed. Rob McCleary responded that such a study would be beyond the scope of any one project. He suggested that it could be a DNREC study with contributions from the West Dover Connector and other projects. Rob stated that the West Dover Connector project would be required to identify and address its own potential impacts on the Puncheon Run and Isaac Branch to make sure that the project does not add to existing flooding problems. He explained that the West Dover Connector project is unlikely to fix past problems, however it will not add to the problems. The Puncheon Run flooding problem involves a first peak of runoff from the downstream Crossgates/Mayfair communities, and then a second runoff peak from the upstream fields. The West Dover Connector cannot fix the first peak problem because the affected area is downstream and fully developed.

Steve Cain asked whether a watershed study is a requirement of the West Dover Connector project? Rob McCleary responded that such a study is not. The project would be obligated to address the impacts of the project. He explained that if an opportunity exists to provide a level of stormwater management beyond its obligation in order to address some additional runoff issues (i.e., to over manage), consideration will be given to doing that.

Gene Ruane stated that the Kesselring property west of the railroad is in the planning stages as is Eden Hill Farm. He sees an opportunity for the Working Group to go on record by sending a letter signed by the Working Group supporting a complete watershed study by the City, County, state and developers. He believes the second peak is the flooding problem along Puncheon Run.

Steve Cain introduced a motion that the action suggested by Gene Ruane be taken by the Working Group; Janice Sibbald seconded the motion.

Bob Kramer stated that Gene's idea is a good one, but cautioned that it is beyond the purpose of this Working Group and the West Dover Connector project.

Mike Simmons stated that the flooding problems along Puncheon Run are largely a result of prior development before stormwater management requirements existed. Now, all projects have to manage runoff. He explained that drainage studies for any type of project have to prove that the project will have a net release of stormwater that is less than the condition before the project. In theory, this means that a drainage study for West Dover Connector can assume that other projects yet to be built in the area will have a net release of water that is less than the existing condition. The West Dover Connector project will do that.

Bob Kramer suggested that Gene Ruane's watershed study idea should be directed to appropriate parties, not solely to DelDOT. Gene Ruane agreed, stating he recognizes it's not just a DelDOT problem. What needs to happen is coordinated planning to share local knowledge. Gene would like to take advantage of the opportunity of having the key people in the Working Group convened to address the issue as its own initiative.

Jim Hutchison stated his belief that the Working Group needs to stay focused on the West Dover Connector project. However, he agreed that a letter to the appropriate parties is a good idea. Steve Cain agreed.

Bob Sadusky stated his sense that the problem may be insufficient capacity downstream that is causing water to back up and flood.

Bob Kramer proposed that the Working Group develop a brief letter to the city, county, state and federal agencies, and the MPO. The letter should identify the Working Group; identify the broader issue of flooding along Puncheon Run; state the sense of the Working Group regarding the issue; state that the issue is larger than the West Dover Connector project; state that addressing the problem requires a coordinated effort; and ask that all responsible parties consider a coordinated study and response. Bob asked for a Working Group vote to authorize such a letter. The Working Group vote was unanimous.

Bob Kramer introduced and welcomed Tony DePrima to the Working Group. Tony is the Dover City Manager; he replaces Jim Galvin on the Working Group.

Rob McCleary reiterated that the West Dover Connector project has the budget to get to a preferred alternative. The preferred alternative may be built as one project or in pieces by DelDOT and/or by others. The project schedule provides for a year of detailed study and evaluation before a preferred alternative is selected. Beyond that point, the final design phase would require 18 months to 2 years to complete. Construction would happen after final design, perhaps in 2010. During the coming year, coordination will continue with the Working Group and the public.

Gene Ruane asked how much money is allocated to the detailed study phase? Rob McCleary responded that the project has $660,000 to get to a preferred alternative.

Detailed Study Phase

Mike Girman stated that the detailed study phase would examine and refine the four retained alternatives and the No-Build Alternative. The detailed study phase will include more engineering, traffic and environmental analysis.

Bob Kramer stated that the detailed study phase is not final design.

Marge Quinn explained that the traffic screening performed date and reported at Working Group meetings for all the concepts was generated from DelDOT's travel demand model. The information from the model was summary information such as the change in traffic volumes on area roadways and the general travel patterns that would be expected to occur under a specific concept. This is in contrast to the detailed study phase which will determine performance of all 25 study area intersections (turning movement volumes and levels of service, for example) in order to understand existing intersection performance for each alternative under existing intersection configurations. The analysis will also identify the types of improvements needed at each intersection under each alternative to achieve safe and efficient intersection operations. The project team will be able to demonstrate how traffic will flow through intersections and on study roadways using computerized traffic models and visualization tools.

Tony DePrima asked whether both Kesselring Farms would be considered in the trip generation part of the analysis? Marge Quinn responded that the Farm west of the railroad will be included in the trip generation analysis because a land use plan has been identified for that land, but that the Farm east of the railroad will not be included in the additional trip generation analysis as there is no land use plan in place. Marge explained that DelDOT's travel demand model includes demographic forecasts (population, employment, etc.) for 2030 for all traffic analysis zones. The demographic forecasts contained in the model for the zone that encompasses the Farm to the east of the railroad

will be used, but no additional trip generation analysis will be done because there is no land development plan in place for that Farm.

Bob Kramer stated that the Kesselring Farm west of the railroad is actively going through the development process. The family has an agreement with a developer and a concept plan. The developer has met with DelDOT and the project team to understand each alternative. The Kesselring Farm east of the railroad is not in a development process. No concept for development has been proposed. The family would like to preserve as much open space as possible. At this time, making an assumption about development-related traffic volumes for this property is not appropriate.

Gene Ruane asked what project information DelDOT is providing to developers. Bob Kramer responded that DelDOT's statement is that no preferred alternative has been selected; several alternatives are being considered.

Gene Ruane asked whether park interconnectivity will be addressed during detailed study? Mike Girman responded that during detailed study, the project team will examine how parks can be interconnected with connections made to the communities. Interconnectivity is a project goal. Marge Quinn stated that park interconnectivity was one of the screening variables already used to screen concepts and it will continue to be one of the elements examined in detailed study and included in the refined scoring and data sheets that will be an outcome of the detailed study phase.

Chris Fronheiser explained that the engineering tasks during detailed study will include replacing the yellow bandwidths used during the screening phase with conceptual horizontal and vertical alignments for each alternative; determining exactly where the alignments and bridges would go; establishing the typical section of roadways: footprint, number of lanes, sidewalks, shoulders, and bicycle/pedestrian allowances; looking at a boulevard-like roadway section; preparing renderings to show what bridges and elevated sections would look like; determining right-of-way impacts; and developing cost estimates.

Steve Cain asked why the connection to New Burton Road in Alternative 7C appears to be toward the north rather than toward the south? Are smoother alignments envisioned? Chris Fronheiser responded that in our screening analysis the project team assumed a 40 MPH design speed to conceptually design the ramp curve and orientation. In detailed study, the project team will determine what this intersection would actually look like using an iterative conceptual design process. Mike Girman stated that the manner in which the intersection is configured will be examined and may result in several alternative conceptual designs that we would present to the Working Group for input.

Leslie Roche explained that whereas during the screening phase the project team gave the Working Group a sense for impacts based on the yellow bandwidths, we will be recalculating impacts based on the engineering geometry developed during detailed study. During detailed study we will look at the same issues as during the screening phase, but will also add historical and archeological resources; these studies are currently underway. We will be working closely as a project team to refine the alternatives to avoid or minimize impacts to the greatest extent possible. Leslie advised the Working Group to expect to see people doing field work in the study area, primarily associated with collecting historical and archaeological resources data. A product of the detailed study phase will be refined environmental data and scoring sheets.

Mike Girman explained that both partial impacts and displacements would be identified during detailed study. He reminded the Working Group that a partial impact is purchasing land from a part of a property. A displacement would be the purchase of an entire parcel and relocation of the resident or business.

Bob Kramer explained that the detailed study process would continue the open process of sharing project information and Working Group input with the public and with the resource agencies. Likewise the project team will continue to share feedback we receive from those entities with the Working Group.

Tony DePrima asked whether the project is following the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process? Mike Girman responded that, the project is following the NEPA process; it is integral to how the project is being undertaken.

Bob Kramer summarized the detailed study phase by saying that the project team would be generating a large amount of information in the coming months. The Working Group should not expect to meet every month. It is likely that there will not be a meeting for a number of months as the project team is just starting detailed study and a lot of work needs to be done. Updates will be sent by mail as needed; Working Group members are encouraged to review them as they arrive and contact John Gaines if there are questions. The project team would be happy to meet with Working Group members or community groups during detailed study. The next meeting of the entire Working Group will occur when the project team has enough information to warrant a meeting. Working Group meeting notices will state whether the Group will be asked to make a decision at the meeting. It is likely that the project team will schedule information briefing meetings and not just decision making meetings.

Next Steps and Adjournment

Donna Stone asked that every Working Group member receive the letter suggesting the watershed study. She also asked that material distributed to the Working Group by mail be 3-hole punched for insertion into the project binders.

Bob Kramer stated that the project team would advise the Working Group when the Public Workshop would occur and urged members to attend for at least an hour. The project team indicated that a date sometime in January 2006 is most likely for the next Public Workshop.

Ali Stark asked if another, more comfortable location could be found for the next meeting of the Working Group? Bob Kramer responded that members should contact John Gaines if they have meeting location suggestions. The change in venue is a means to reduce project costs. Mike Petit de Mange offered the possibility of using the new county facility.

Bob Kramer closed the meeting by thanking everyone for attending.

The meeting adjourned early: 8:40PM.

Action Items

Several issues or action items were raised at the Working Group meeting. Responses will be provided.

1. During the engineering portion of the presentation on the detailed study phase, the project team mistakenly reported the cross section of Saulsbury Road north of North Street as a 4 lane section in the existing condition. However, the actual current condition is 2 lanes.

2. The project team will address future wording regarding Working Group activities by saying that the Group recommended alternatives to be dropped rather than recommended alternatives to be retained.

3. Kramer & Associates will develop the letter from the Working Group suggesting a watershed study of Puncheon Run.