

Memorandum of Meeting

Date: April 26, 2006

Date of Meeting: March 30, 2006

Time of Meeting: 5:30 p.m.

Location: Georgetown CHEER Center

Topic: Georgetown Area Working Group Meeting #12

Working Group Attendees:

Name	Representing
Howard Abbott, Jr.	Georgetown Resident
Donna Atkinson	Georgetown Area Property Owner
David Baird	Town Manager
Eric Buehl	Center for the Inland Bays
Carol R. Campbell-Hansen	Sussex County Board of Realtors
Mitch Cooper	Delaware State Police
Mark Davis	Delaware Dept. of Agriculture
David Diehl	Bayhealth Medical Center
Lit Dryden	Greater Georgetown Chamber of Commerce
Martin Donovan	Delaware National Bank
David Edgell	Office of State Planning Coordination
Matthew Gibbs	Georgetown Resident
Harold Johnson	Sussex County Farm Bureau
Terry Johnson	Delaware Technical & Community College
Keith Moore	Purdue Farms
Merrill Moore	Georgetown Area Resident
Karen O'Neill	Southern Delaware Tourism
David Pedersen	Georgetown Planning Commission
Guy Phillips	Sussex County Farm Bureau
Mike Simmons	DelDOT, Project Development (South Region)
Russell Warrington	Sussex County Planning and Zoning

Mr. Robert Kramer called the meeting to order at 5:45 p.m. and expressed his pleasure at the great turn-out of Working Group members. He stated that there were a number of items to go over this evening including a discussion on Livable Delaware and its place

within the impacts matrix, a presentation on traffic and an update of the cultural and natural resource data gathering effort.

Bob then introduced Monroe Hite, III, DelDOT's Project Manager. Mr. Hite wished everyone a good evening and proceeded to introduce Russell "Rusty" Warrington who would be replacing Shane Abbott as Sussex County's representative on the Working Group. Monroe reviewed the materials in the hand-out package including the Power Point presentation and the revised Georgetown Eastern Bypass map. He then discussed the purpose of the meeting which was to discuss Livable Delaware and its application to the impacts matrix, provide an update on the traffic analysis and a review of the cultural and natural resources data updates.

Monroe then provided an update on the status of the short-term improvements at the 18/404/113 intersection. He stated that at the DelDOT Project Development Committee meeting that morning, funding for the improvements had been added into a current Pave & Rehab contract. He further stated that in order to minimize the disruption of traffic, the improvements would be completed in two phases beginning with the Spring of 2006 and completing during the Fall of 2006. Monroe reminded everyone that the improvements included median island modifications on US 113, restriping and signal modifications to allow the eastbound and westbound 18/404 left turn traffic to US 113 to turn simultaneously.

Lit Dryden asked if the improvements were to be done through the summer. Monroe reiterated that the improvements would be phased in the spring and fall (not during the summer) to minimize traffic impacts.

Monroe then introduced Scott Thompson-Graves to present an update on the traffic study.

Note: Significant details associated with the presentation were provided to the Working Group members in their handout package. Rather than duplicate the presentation, these minutes will emphasize additional details that were added and questions from the Working Group members regarding the information provided.

Lit Dryden asked what makes you think that traffic will stay where it is if there are backups over a 9-hour period? Scott stated that while some traffic will continue to use this route, there are motorists who would prefer to seek alternate routes than be caught in a lengthy back up. He added that the traffic model also shows diversions to other routes in the situation Lit brought up.

On slide 21 in the PP presentation, David Pedersen asked what was the upper limit of the number of cars that the Georgetown Circle could handle before it backed up? Scott stated that he did not have that number off the top of his head but that he would get back to David and the Working Group with the answer.

On slide 22 in the PP presentation, David Baird asked based on your analysis, when will the intersection at US113 and South Bedford Street fail. Scott indicated that he would report back to the Working Group members with that information. David also asked if the plan to reconstruct Park Avenue opposite Arrow Safety Road was included in the model as a future project. Scott indicated that it was not in the model.

Bob Kramer interjected that in response to David's question, projects in DelDOT's 6 year Capitol Transportation Program should be included in the model. Scott stated that he could not guarantee that was the case but would check and get back to the Working Group. Bob further noted that the last few slides (24 through 27) underscore the message in the project video. If nothing gets done, all days of the week become a problem over time, not just the weekends in the summer, like today.

Karen O'Neill asked if that was true up and down the entire corridor? Scott stated that would be true for the entire corridor.

David Baird asked if the traffic analysis will look at upgrading intersections? Scott stated that the analysis will look at intersections up through LOS D at which point the alternatives, on-alignment and bypasses, would be looked at to improve LOS on the existing system. David Baird indicated that he was only interested in intersections, how long before they fail and what can be done to help them as they approach failure.

Jeff Riegner referred to the discussion earlier in the meeting when Monroe referenced the implementation of short term improvements at the 18/404/113 intersection. Jeff stated that those improvements would cut the delay for the left turn movements in half. However, as indicated in Scott's presentation, that intersection operates at LOS F in the summer and cutting the delay in half changes the LOS from bad F to good F. Jeff stated that the Project Team would do additional research and get back to David with some ideas.

Lit Dryden asked if Scott was familiar with the improvements on Route 9/Race St. in front of the school. Monroe indicated that Scott was new to the project and would not be aware of every project going on in the Georgetown area.

A lengthy discussion ensued regarding the traffic model, its accuracy, the accuracy of the information being inputted into the model, the purpose and need for the roadway, as well as other items.

David Baird asked if the assumptions going into the model reflect the increased cost of gasoline? Monroe stated that the parameters that go into the development of the model were discussed a year ago but the price of gasoline is a factor.

Lit Dryden asked how accurate are traffic projections given all factors? Scott stated that models are getting more sophisticated and that projections are getting better. Lit added that 100 to 140 seconds of delay through a light (LOS F) needs to make sense. Why would you do that? Bob Kramer stated that the question the Working Group members

should be asking is based on historical information/experience is the model accurate in predicting what is actually occurring today and, therefore, accurate enough to be used for planning purposes? While you may not think so, the model is the best tool that we have for predicting future traffic conditions.

Monroe reminded the Working Group that traffic was only one piece of the puzzle. Need for the project is driven by traffic, the solution to the need is not driven by traffic.

Karen O'Neill stated that the price of gasoline is not affecting visitors to the State of Delaware and that the state is actually benefiting from the higher cost as people make shorter trips and spend their summer vacations in Delaware rather than traveling longer distances to their vacation spot.

David Pedersen asked if a limited access road down the peninsula was the premise for this study? Jeff Riegner stated that Route 1 from I-95 in New Castle County to the Dover Air Force Base is a limited access facility. DelDOT has a plan to convert Route 1 from the Air Base to Lewes to a limited access highway. The State of Maryland is converting their portion of US 113 to limited access. US 113 in Sussex County will be a bottle neck over time if a plan is not put in place to eventually provide a limited access facility in the 113 corridor. David reiterated then the goal is limited access North/South. Bob Kramer stated that the Feasibility Study addressed that question. Jeff reminded the Working Group that you don't need to build the solution now. You need to plan, choose the solution and protect that solution so that it can be implemented in the future.

David Baird asked what is the purpose of the road, because it appears to only provide indirect benefit to the towns? Jeff Riegner stated that even if no growth in background traffic occurred, growth in the towns will force improvements. The purpose is to accommodate overall (big picture) growth.

The discussion on the traffic update concluded and Monroe introduced Jeff Riegner to lead the Livable Delaware discussion.

On slide 30, Donna Atkinson asked how does a limited access highway promote development? Jeff indicated that development will start around interchanges and move farther away from the highway over time.

David Baird asked if there were limits that could be placed on development at those locations? Jeff indicated that local (municipal and county) constraints could be implemented depending upon the jurisdiction in which an interchange is located.

Howard Abbott asked wouldn't you look at land use now before recommending an interchange? Jeff indicated that you would look at both the current situation as well as what the situation might look like in the future (existing and planned land use).

David Baird indicated that the consensus that Jeff was talking about (relationship of alternatives to Livable Delaware, slide 30) was derived from looking at Livable Delaware alone.

Monroe introduced David Edgell, with the Office of State Planning Coordination. David indicated that David Baird's statement taken alone was not quite correct. David indicated that under the state strategies, the focus on growth is in areas where it is supportable. When Georgetown grows, how do these alternatives impact the urban form? While transportation improvements in a Level 1 area are needed and anticipated, transportation improvements in the form of a limited access highway are incompatible.

As Jeff was discussing the eastern Bypass alternative, he mentioned that the proposed interchange at Wilson and Savannah Roads, located in a Level 4 growth area could be considered incompatible with the goals of Livable Delaware by placing an interchange in an area where growth is not to be encouraged.

Keith Moore stated that Perdue feels that the interchange is critical to the movement of their trucks to and from the market place.

Guy Phillips stated that nobody from Dover should be telling us we can't develop even if the area around the interchange location is white (Level 4).

The discussion moved to the Western Bypass alternatives.

David Pedersen asked what is an optimum distance for a bypass, relative to the road it is bypassing, for handling traffic. Is it 10 feet away or 1000 feet away? Jeff stated that there is a substantial difference between closer-in versus farther out from a modeling standpoint. Farther out is probably optimum.

David Baird asked if that was how you could justify an Eastern Bypass? Jeff indicated that the Route 9 to US 113 traffic is significant on the Eastern Bypass.

Howard Abbott asked what the red dotted line was on slide 37? Jeff stated that the red dotted line was relocated Park Avenue.

David Baird asked what the model showed for the Eastern Bypass alternative for eastbound Route 18 traffic? Does it turn left at US 113 and then get on the Eastern Bypass or does it go through town like today? Jeff indicated that it went through town.

David Baird indicated that pieces of individual bypasses (the portion of the Eastern Bypass from 113 to Rt. 9), as discussed earlier in the process, may be the solution to the east/west issue in Georgetown if those pieces could be combined with the ultimate choice. Jeff indicated that connections to relocated Park Avenue were provided with each of the Western Bypass alternatives to provide an east/west option for those alternatives.

Mark Davis asked if the Eastern Bypass is selected will the relocation of Park Avenue still be built? Jeff indicated that relocated Park Avenue would be built as soon as money can be found to construct it.

Karen O'Neill indicated that the Eastern Bypass seems to resemble the Eastern Bypass around Salisbury. Jeff indicated that Maryland did build an Eastern Bypass around Salisbury and has subsequently added the third quadrant in the northwest.

Donna Atkinson asked if only development was considered as desirable in developing the Livable Delaware growth boundaries. David Baird indicated that Georgetown's Comprehensive Plan was used to establish the boundaries. Donna indicated that developers own all the property along the US 113 corridor while the people along Parker Road purchased large lots (farmettes) and have no desire to see them develop, yet they are in the growth boundary. David indicated that that amount of detail was not considered in developing the plan. Jeff Riegner indicated that carrying capacity of the growth area may last more than 25 years. Donna indicated that the plan seems to give preference to developers over long term residents.

Howard Abbott asked if all Western Bypasses will provide relief. Jeff indicated they would. Howard indicated that they won't take traffic away from the circle where all east/west traffic funnels through.

Lit Dryden asked if the town boundary could be shown on the map (slide 29). David Baird verbally described the town boundary west of US 113.

Lit indicated that David's description meant that Donna's property was in the County. She indicated in the affirmative but added that the town has plans to expand out there.

The discussion moved to the update on wetland resources.

Guy Phillips asked if wetlands are still absolutely off limits? Jeff indicated that there is a process of avoidance, minimization and mitigation that must be worked through with the regulatory agency but that did not mean that wetlands were absolutely off limits. Guy Phillips continued by stating that for the future, we need to look farther west. He indicated that if US 113 wasn't built until today, you wouldn't be able to build 113. Monroe indicated that if you have 150 acres of wetland impact versus 30 acres, the Corps of Engineers was going to favor the alternative with 30 acres of impact.

David Baird asked if wetlands were shown to be smaller in area would that put other alternatives on the table? Jeff indicated that it wouldn't but it could give wiggle room to the current alternatives.

Harold Johnson asked if the determination of wetlands has changed? Jeff indicated that it hadn't and that the three parameter approach was still the accepted approach.

Howard Abbott asked if you dig a ditch in a farm field can you eliminate wetlands? Jeff stated that it could and indicated that that is what the Tax Ditch system has done in the state.

Bob Kramer summed up the discussion by indicating that what the Working Group members could expect is that the numbers (acres of wetlands) should be somewhat lower, that flexibility will exist with the existing alternatives but there will not be new areas for alignments opening up. David Baird asked if we were looking at trade-offs corridor wide versus for each area that the project is broken into? Jeff indicated that each area within the US113 corridor has independent utility so each area was being evaluated on its own merits.

Eric Buehl stated that he is in favor of the On-alignment alternatives in an effort to minimize impacts on natural resources including wetlands and forestlands.

Lit Dryden indicated that he was still not convinced of the traffic numbers and asked how we knew what people will do, in terms of the routes that they will choose to use? Jeff Riegner stated that the model makes adjustments based on the input from the Origin/Destination work that was obtained early in the study and used to calibrate the traffic model.

Keith Moore asked if anyone (DelDOT) looked at Route 30 to divert traffic as a solution to the needs in the US 113 corridor? Monroe indicated that DelDOT had not looked at the 30 corridor as a solution to the 113 corridor.

Karen O'Neill asked if that was something that would be looked at in the future? It was indicated that anything was possible in the future but in the short term there are no plans to look at SR 30.

At this time, the presentation was turned over to Grace Ziesing, JMA, to discuss the status of the Cultural Resource data gathering process.

Lit Dryden asked what Grace meant by mitigation? Grace indicated that mitigation, where a resource could not be avoided, could take several forms including detailed recordation, moving a resource, installation of air conditioning and modification of windows to reduce noise, etc.

Grace turned the meeting back to Bob Kramer to conclude. Bob reminded the Working Group members that they represent a constituency. The information they have allows them to have informed discussion/debate with regard to issues associated with the project.

Bob stated that the next meeting would be May 18th at the CHEER Center. Following that meeting, there will be Public Workshops in June (subsequent to the Working Group meeting, it was determined that the workshop will be held on June 5, 2006) to update the broader public on the status of the project.

Donna Atkinson asked what the time frame was for making the final decision? Bob stated that a final decision would occur early next year. David Baird stated that the original date for a decision was this year. The target keeps moving back. That puts the town in the difficult position of trying to hold up developments until a decision is made. Bob indicated that this is a complex process, one that needs a decision that can stick and not be subject to litigation or redoing. The challenge in this case is substantial. David continued that everything along US 113 is stymied. People are ready to make investments but can't when the target keeps moving.

David Pedersen asked what the process was for the Working Group regarding a final decision. Bob Kramer stated that the Working Group would be asked to indicate its preference with a super majority (75% of members present) needed from the group. Bob emphasized that the Working Group is advisory and the ultimate decision lies with the Department of Transportation.

The meeting concluded at 8:45 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Joe Wutka