

**Gorham East-West Corridor Feasibility Study
Steering Committee Meeting
January 6, 2010
Maine Turnpike Authority**

Steering Committee attending: David Cole, Gorham; Tex Haeuser, South Portland; Jim Gailey, South Portland; Eric Dudley, Westbrook; John Duncan, PACTS; Dan Bacon, Scarborough; Tom Hall, Scarborough, Conrad Welzel, Maine Turnpike Authority; Sara Devlin, Maine Turnpike Authority, Gerry Audibert, MaineDOT.

Study Team: Paul Godfrey, HNTB; Ray Faucher, HNTB; Carol Morris, Morris Communications

Absent: Burleigh Loveitt, Gorham; Paul Neihoff, PACTS

The meeting began at 1:03 pm.

Paul started the meeting by providing an overview of the agenda.

- Overview of 2nd Land Use Workshop
- Results of 2035 Low Density Analysis
- Transportation Strategies Brainstorming
- 2010 Steering Committee Meeting Schedule
- What's Next/Schedule Update

Land Use Workshop

The second land use workshop is scheduled for tomorrow night, and will include a presentation on the 2035 Low Density analysis to provide the group with an overview of what major problems would be in 2035. This will be the last of the two workshops.

Two patterns remain – one is Urban-to-Rural and the other is Suburban Community Centered Corridor. If we find that these new development patterns improve the problems we see in the Low Density analysis, we can consider incorporating land use solutions into the plan.

Tom Hall: You say we have two left. How many did we have to start with?

Carol Morris 1/27/10 9:21 AM

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Carol: We started with four that Evan had developed at the first land use workshop. The workshop participants made recommendations on those, and we ended up with four new ones. Two of this set of four we believed could be incorporated as best practices. One of these takes a Greenbelt approach, meaning that new development would be located around existing green and open space that communities want to keep intact. The second involved the desire to keep a balance between jobs and housing not just on a town-by-town basis, but also on a subregional basis. Both those patterns could be used as a part of whichever of the alternative approaches are chosen.

Paul: We have resources to test just one alternative. But we may find that we will do some additional fine-tuning based on what works and what doesn't. Tomorrow we will primarily discuss the remaining two alternative patterns. These work with the three categories of communities: Urban, inner suburbs and outer suburbs. The remaining communities in the model area have not yet been categorized.

Our goal is to move housing and jobs around in a different way from what is happening now.

The goal for tomorrow night is to make sure people understand the purpose of testing this. We will determine what range of housing and job allocation people are comfortable with.

Then, a planners' meeting will take place later in the month to more finely allocate to all the towns.

Tom: Will the planners' meeting take place before or after the test?

Paul: It will take place before the test takes place.

2035 Low Density Analysis

Paul: This is a lot of information, so please make sure to ask questions.

Based on the analysis:

- 22 out of 47 intersections will be at Level of Service (LOS) E or F – up from 7 intersections currently at E or F.
- The number of miles of roadway that are at an undesirable level of service increases four-fold.
- There are 61 high crash locations in the study area. In 2035, there will be essentially no relief if nothing is done. In the 1980s, I recall

Carol Morris 1/27/10 9:21 AM
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that the number of high crash locations was in the 20s. The caveat is, that over the course of time, some of these would be addressed by MaineDOT. As we get further along, we will coordinate with PACTS and MaineDOT on this. But this is a good litmus test.

- Vehicle Hours Traveled (VHT) measures how long people spend in their cars. It is growing at a rate twice as fast as Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT), or how many miles traveled. This means people are either sitting in traffic, or driving longer to get around congestion. This is a big problem and as part of the study, we have to see what we can do to mitigate it.

- Of the 47 intersections that will be at LOS E or F, we have a map that shows current 2009 Level of Service in the peak hour and also what the anticipated level is in 2035. Problems show in Gorham downtown, the Scarborough overlap, Payne Rd., Broadturn Road, William Clark Drive. We are seeing the benefit of the recently built bypass compromised by growth.

- Roadway levels of service. This map shows the situation today: Blue is good, green not so good, orange and red are undesirable. We can see that the Overlap location is not good, as well as the turnpike southbound between Exits 42 and 44 during evening (pm) commute. Main Street in Gorham, west of New Portland Road in 2035 gets worse. The overlap area of undesirable LOS in Scarborough gets bigger. Bigger stretches of the turnpike Southbound is now at Levels of Service E and F. Large sections of I-295 as well, even though we showed it widened. We can also look at local roads in this measure but for now we are looking at state roads.

Tex Haeuser: The legend shows that (LOS) E is orange and F is red. Both are undesirable. You should make all undesirable red – LOS E and F.

There was general agreement that this would make the map easier to read. Study Team will look at incorporating this change for future mapping.

Paul – We see changes in degree of High Crash Locations – these are growing issues. We see most will have a negative change in 2035.

Tom: Can you predict where new High Crash Locations (HCLs) will be?

Paul: Yes, that is technically something that can be done, however, this Study is not currently scoped to include this effort. Gerry, does the number of HCL's generally grow every year?

Carol Morris 1/27/10 9:21 AM

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Gerry Audibert: In the 90s, they were shrinking. Not sure what has happened in the last decade here. The cutoff is eight crashes in three years.

Paul: Here we have a summary of VMT/VHT, showing an increase on all roads, with a larger increase on Residential Roads (Residential Roads are defined here as roads having less than 2,000 vehicles per day and less than 200 vehicles per hour). This shows that people are driving more on these roads. In VHT, we see that people are spending more time in their cars as well.

Results Summary

- Percentage increase in traffic volumes on Residential Roads means traffic is growing greater than on other roads
- Miles of Residential Roads that are carrying more than 200 vehicles per day increased from 32% to 47%
- Travel delays increased along key corridors.
- Transit ridership has increased 26%. However, this is based on an assumed increase in service and extension of services
- Walkability and bikeability are increased, but not enough to make a real difference in transportation choice.

Paul: PM Peak Hour Volume Change: Over 25 years, roads in the Study Area that are showing the biggest increase in volume are the bigger roads, growing over 500 vehicles in the peak hour. Many of the state roads are growing between 150-500 vehicles in the PM peak hour. The bypass in Gorham did not grow that much because there are too many chokepoints before it – people cannot get through. They are finding different ways to get to their destinations. And that is why the volumes on the residential roads are growing so fast.

Paul: Residential Roads at Peak Hour Volume: Today, the red line shows residential roads with more than 200 vehicles per hour – looking at 2035, we see where those increase. There is not too much change.

Paul: Summary of Corridor Travel Delays: Here, there is not as much increase in delay as we expected, but still a lot of double digit increases in travel time.

John Duncan: I think these are quite compelling.

Eric Dudley: I agree. Ten more minutes on a 20-minute trip is a lot.

Carol Morris 1/27/10 9:21 AM
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Steering Committee requested that we add distance to the table summarizing corridor delays. Study Team will incorporate.

Paul: Transit and Multi-modal: This shows an increase, but we need to find what to do to make this increase meaningful. We are not where we need to be to in terms of trip choice. Same with biking.

Paul: Maps of walking and biking: The comparison between 2009 and 2035 shows that the world gets a little bit better in terms of walking and biking accessibility but we are not getting the kind of densities we need to really provide choice for people. Again, we still have a long way to go.

Eric: Why in North Gorham do we have a higher percentage of trips that are walkable?

David Cole: What makes a two-mile trip walkable in 2009 vs. 2035?

Paul: There is no difference.

Paul: Eric, I see your point. We need to look at it to see what drives it.

Eric: It just seems counter-intuitive.

2035 summary

- We also look at Emergency Management Service (EMS) critical distance – how far a home is from EMS. We see that the number of homes within the critical distance increases but overall community percentage within the critical distance decreases slightly. There is a decrease in the regional study area, the four core communities fared pretty well, with most keeping the same percentage.
- Another measure is Job and Retail Accessibility, and we see that increasing within the four core communities
- Due to the number of expected new houses, 9,200 additional residential acres are consumed from 2009 to 2035 – approximately the land mass of Westbrook or Scarborough.
- 370 additional acres are consumed by commercial growth

Tex: In the previous acres consumed slide, can we map this so we show loss of open space?

Carol Morris 1/27/10 9:21 AM
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Paul: Yes, we can do that. Note – we have since reviewed this request and found that while we can determine the amount of acres consumed by TAZ, mapping the actual location of the development within the TAZ cannot be precise.

Tex: We need to see the map in terms of open space so we can see what would actually disappear.

Conrad: We heard that people really liked the green space aspects of this region, so this is a good point.

David: We need to know what is driving the EMS index. It is potentially unsafe since Gorham has a relatively low number of homes within the critical area.

Paul: We will do some work on that.

Job accessibility

Paul: There is good job accessibility in the South Portland area, with some in Scarborough and some in Westbrook. Other than that, it's not great. And it's not much better in 2035. This is a good opportunity to see how we could change that.

Retail Services Accessibility

This is similar to Job Accessibility. It also doesn't change much in 2035. Is this good or bad? That is up to you.

John: Where does this measure come from?

Paul: This came from the Gateway 1 Study.

Carol: It is important because it reduces the time and distance people have to travel to go to stores, buy groceries, etc. If retail services are accessible, there are fewer cars on the road.

Sara Devlin: Does it include medical services?

Paul: No.

Eric: Usually, doctors' offices are close to retail services. I think this is an important measure. That is what we deal with pedestrian

Carol Morris 1/27/10 9:21 AM
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improvement. People want to get from their home to the grocery store easily. It's very important.

Paul: The number of vehicle trips has grown every year – and it has grown mostly in the number of discretionary trips. If we were able to put a green retail blob in Gorham, what would that do to traffic issues?

Eric: If we can get that data, it would be great.

Sara: Is this the Iowa study?

Paul: Yes, I have heard about that. I will follow up to see what I can find.

Residential acres consumed

Paul: Over the next 25 years, we will consume 2,210 new acres in residential growth in Gorham alone. Over the core communities, 9,184 acres. This is a big number. Is it what you want to happen? In commercial acres consumed, we're looking at 368 acres.

Tex: It seems odd that Scarborough is less than South Portland.

Paul: Yes, we will check with Evan on this tomorrow.

Methods of Evaluation (MOEs)

Paul: This chart shows how the MOEs compare with Low Density, now and in 2035. Safety, mobility and EMS responses worsen, as do VHT, VMT, Level of Service and Delays.

John: New jobs and new homes by town "improve significantly" here. Is this what we want? Is improves the right word? Is more better? Do we say yes, we want to grow by 15,000 people?

David: Under the current structure in Maine, I (Gorham) want all the businesses in my town and I want all the people to live in Scarborough. Residential property is a money loser. And I make money from businesses. We do want the whole area to get jobs because that helps everyone.

Tom: Maybe there is a way to change the words. Now, there is a judgment involved. New homes and jobs increase - can you change from "improving" to "increasing"?

Carol Morris 1/27/10 9:21 AM
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Paul: My understanding is that communities do want both residential and job growth.

David: I am not going to get enough tax dollars from residential homes to pay for the services I provide. I do get that from industrial development.

Gerry: What if you are a service center without a lot of population?

David: Large service centers get hurt because they now attract not just commercial property, but non-profits. If you took 80% of their tax-exempt property and made it taxable, you would see a big difference.

Tom: Of the tax base in service centers, I would say 25% are tax-exempt.

Tex: I agree, we should go to "increase", not "improve".

Tom: Or use an "up" or "down" arrow.

Dan: Are these just for the four core communities?

Paul: Yes, the Measures of Effectiveness (MOEs) measure outcomes in the four core communities.

Tex: Why is there not a "worsen significantly" too?

Eric: What does the safety MOE mean?

Paul: It's related to high crash locations.

Eric: Can we make that something more specific?

Tex: Can we add an open space MOE?

Tom: Do we want to keep adding MOEs?

Paul: If we have the data, it is easy to add MOEs. If we have to go after data we don't have, that is a problem. But this is about more than just fixing roads and we want to get that across.

Carol Morris 1/27/10 9:21 AM

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Tom: I like this slide. It's a good graphic – summarizes a lot of what the cost of progress is all about.

Paul: To go to your earlier question, we can add more.

Tom: We need to have definitions so people know what they are and understand where they came from.

Paul: Yes. As data is made available, we will also look to see if there are additional items that should be measured.

Tom: To go back to David's comment, at the end of the day this has to be financially viable.

Paul: Some cost assessments are easy to do, some are not. Can we financially measure EMS? I have tried to quantify cost on this, but it is very difficult. Putting a cost to what it would take to implement a different land use pattern is hard.

David: When I think of doing a construction project, we know we need some way to fund it. Sometimes people want to wave a magic wand. If this study makes recommendations that are politically unfeasible, we will put it on the shelf. We need to make this study result useful, something that we can do something with. If not, we have spent a lot of time doing nothing.

Tom: But we are trying to solve the problem here, and if we can demonstrate that we can do it, we can build the political will. That is what we are trying to do here.

Paul: And maybe we can spend less as part of what we do.

Tom: Is it possible that we can recommend several transportation solutions as part of this study"

Paul: Yes, that is likely.

Paul: We want to compare the various costs of transit and land use, new roads and land use change. We will mix and match everything to see what works the best. We will attach costs as we can.

David: The difference is what will be viable. If we make change compulsory, it is politically undoable. But, if the study says you want to get to this point, and recommends interim steps, then public opinion

Carol Morris 1/27/10 9:21 AM
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can change. In this room, we spend a lot of time asking what CAN we do. Not what we want to do. We can't build utopia.

Tex: The MTA has a revenue model that is the only one that works for building new transportation capacity. Using the toll mode, something can be done to improve economic development, and also add some Smart Growth features. That is what keeps me coming to these meetings.

Dan: Related to Level of Service, where are the overall traffic numbers?

Paul: Level of service has been generated from the peak hour link volumes.

Dan: Is it possible to see the raw numbers?

Paul: Yes.

Several people: They can't – there is no room to grow.

Transportation Strategies

Paul: Your handout shows the kind of transportation strategies we could implement. Today I would like to focus on these three:

- Improve Existing Infrastructure
- New Capacity
- Transit/Multi-modal

We have signalized intersections that are failing – could we improve at Gorham downtown? Can we improve at William Clark Drive?

David: With enough money, we can improve downtown Gorham by changing the signals and the intersection. I am not sure what new technology is available.

Paul: Looking at William Clark Drive, there are lots of signals here. Can we improve? What is the cost, and to what degree does it solve the problem.

David: Signals enhance safety at the expense of travel time.

Carol Morris 1/27/10 9:21 AM

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Jim Gailey: In some places we cannot signalize because it does not meet the DOT warrants.

Paul: But it perhaps would in 2035. So we would assemble a package for what the appropriate solution – signal, roundabout - whatever improves safety and mobility.

Ray Faucher: We look to see if there are any corridors that need to be looked at in terms of LOS and HCL.

Eric: We have a project already in process on William Clark Drive.

Tom: In Scarborough, Running Hill Road is a mess. Something needs to be done and I'm not sure what the answer is.

Paul: I know you have plans for that - we need to incorporate that and other communities' plans to assess what will work overall.

Conrad: There are four or five hot spots I see here. Either there is a lot of traffic at intersections or traveling through, or there is a reason why everyone is trying to get to that particular location, or it is a combo of both. It would be helpful to know the reality of those hot spots. Downtown Gorham is a combination. As we try to break down the reasons behind the hot spots, we will have a better idea.

Paul: Rte. 1 South, Rtes. 22 and 25 and 302 and 114. These are our principal corridors. We want to know what would work. Is a frontage road feasible? In downtown Gorham, probably not. William Clark Drive, maybe.

Tom: Volumes on Holmes and Broadturn Roads are already a problem. There will be new hot spots.

Conrad: Why are they a problem?

Tom: People passing through.

Conrad. That creates a different solution.

Paul: We will create a laundry list of what the possible solutions are and we will bounce them to you. Here is the list of things we'd like to apply. You will tell us what we have missed.

Carol Morris 1/27/10 9:21 AM

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Ray Faucher: For an intersection solution you can have a good menu of items you can use. New capacity becomes more challenging. We are looking to get more feedback on what can be more appropriate.

Paul: Yes, I wanted to have a discussion of new capacity. That is next on the list. This is a huge bottleneck for the region. (Routes 114 and 22). Can we do a localized bypass here? Is this something we should look at?

John: Will we bless this list?

Paul. Of course. I would love to have you tell me what you want. But we can also develop a list, have you approve and amend it.

David: How will a local bypass solve regional congestion? It will just push the problem down the road.

Paul: What if we were able to put together a package of localized bypasses – would it get you half the way there.

Ray: If combined with access management

Paul: The possibilities are infinite.

Ray: It needs to be politically viable as well as constructible.

David: Access management on town roads is immediate death. On new roads, you can do it.

Tex: The original purpose here is reflected in the title of the committee. We are looking to explore new capacity, new roads, looking at Right of Way (ROW) for multi-modal access to accommodate alternate roads extending from east to west.

Paul: If you had to be reasonably specific, where would it go?

Tex: – I look to transportation engineers to tell me where the best solution would be. But I think the ring road concept is interesting.

Jim: I agree with Tex. Create ROW that is multi-use, focus on transit, Create hubs and networks that entice people to take a quicker and easier way to get into the urban cores. I entered into this thinking the answer was to get people in and out more quickly. Now I see limited

Carol Morris 1/27/10 9:21 AM
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access new capacity as the answer. Here it is 2010 and we are seeing greater emphasis on transit – we need to be prepared.

John: You said give us some ideas – I have been thinking that I need to generate some lines on a map, but it is hard to do. You give it a shot and we can fine-tune it.

Dan: Tex's idea from the last meeting was limited access that would evolve into transit as well. Either a ring road or one that splits and serves two different corridors. Standish/Windham and Buxton/Hollis, those really are two corridors.

Tom: Conrad asked why these problems exist. Does a little local bypass solve the problem? We need to ask the questions.

Paul: We are looking at who uses them from where. Is it people driving though or is it more localized? That will go into our assessment.

Tom: There is lots of conversation about the economic development. Not sure a limited access road helps that. Or quality of life.

David: It could be built so it does. There would be three or four access points. A road that efficiently and quickly moves goods is a good economic component. A few points off and on to serve the economic area.

Tex. That was what I was thinking.

Paul: We will come back to you with a suggestion. I am concerned that I am hearing that we just need to get to the limited access idea and take care of the problem. The number of new facilities built is very small, we don't want to bank on something that is not viable.

Gerry: We need to keep the Sensible Transportation Policy Act (STPA) in mind – expanding capacity is the last option. Under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) we also have to identify all reasonable alternatives. This is based on current conditions projected forward. We also have to look at land use patterns.

Paul: Yes, we will look at them. We may find that it does not do enough.

Gerry: Do we look at land use first and see what the effect is?

Carol Morris 1/27/10 9:21 AM
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Paul: The intent is to do both and look at them individually, decide to what degree each works then put them together.

Eric: We need to explore opportunities for partnership with utilities. If we create a new corridor, can we get a partner to help with that. That would help to offset costs.

Tom: Have you asked us this question prematurely? We have spent a lot of time getting to a land use pattern – shouldn't we do that first, and then choose a transportation solution?

Paul: Yes, we could do land use first, and then move to transportation.

Tom: Shouldn't we decide on what preferred land use pattern first? We are so close.

Paul: There is no right or wrong way. We know that the Land Use decision falls to you folks. The likelihood of achieving a full land use change is challenging. But is this making it harder?

John: I like the idea, there is some logic to it.

Gerry: Yes, but you can start thinking about the transportation solutions. I agree that this is a good idea.

David: The key is to get to Tom's endpoint without holding up the study.

Paul: It is our intent that the impacts of this land use pattern be completed by the end of the month. By the end of February we will know what the implications are. At that point, we can internally generate some transportation packages and test from there.

Conrad: With no change in the timing?

Paul: Yes, but we will have to assess that to be sure.

Meeting Schedules

There was discussion as to a revised date for Steering Committee meetings in 2010. At length, the fourth Tuesday of the month, mornings from 9-11, was agreed upon. (NOTE: This has had to be

Carol Morris 1/27/10 9:21 AM
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changed due a scheduling issue: The new date is the fourth Thursday of the month, from 1-3.

The meeting ended at 3:10 pm.

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