The seventh meeting of the New York State Department of Transportation’s (NYSDOT) Kosciuszko Bridge Project’s Stakeholders Advisory Committee (SAC) was held on Thursday, April 24, 2003 at Jennings Hall, Brooklyn. (See Attachment A for Attendance List.) The meeting was scheduled to discuss Level 1 screening criteria for the Long List of Alternatives.

Anita Wright, Helen Neuhaus & Associates Inc. (HNA), opened the meeting by conveying Helen Neuhaus’s apology for her absence—Ms. Neuhaus was called out of town for a family emergency—and by welcoming back Mary Gottlieb, Meeker Avenue/Apollo Street Association, who missed several meetings due to an accident. Ms. Wright asked for comments on the Minutes of the March 27, 2003 SAC meeting. While there were no comments, and the Minutes were adopted by consensus, it was later noted that Vincent Arcuri was incorrectly identified in the Minutes as representing Brooklyn Community Board #1. Ms. Wright stated that the Minutes would be amended to show Mr. Arcuri’s Queens Community Board #5 affiliation.

Ms. Wright then facilitated a brief discussion of the follow-up items from the March 27th meeting. They included:

1. The Working Goals and Objectives were revised to incorporate changes and additions suggested by Dick Beers, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and distributed to the SAC along with the Minutes of the March 27th meeting.

2. Several SAC members who were unable to attend the March 27th meeting attended a special “make-up” briefing on April 9th. The purpose of the briefing, which was held at NYSDOT’s Region 11 Office, was to ensure that as many SAC members as possible were familiar with the project’s Long List of Alternatives before tonight’s discussion of screening criteria.

3. Noting that the next SAC meeting will be held on Thursday, May 15th, Ms. Wright asked for input regarding meeting sites. In response to a question from Joe Ruzalski, United Forties Civic Association, regarding Sunnyside Community Center, Ms. Wright indicated that accessibility seemed to be a problem at that site. It was then suggested that the NYSDOT Region 11 office is a convenient location. Anthony Nunziato, Queens resident, expressed his opinion that Queens SAC members find Jennings Hall very easy to reach. After a brief discussion, it was agreed that future meetings will be held at Jennings Hall, if possible, or at NYSDOT as a back-up site.

4. Following the March 27th meeting, Mr. Acuri submitted comments regarding the Long List of Alternatives. Copies of his comments were available at the sign-in table. (See Attachment B.)
A few months ago, at the SAC’s recommendation, letters were sent to Committee members who had missed all of the meetings to that point in order to determine their interest in continuing to serve. Noting that there are still a few individuals who have not attended any meetings, or who attended only one of the early meetings, Ms. Wright suggested that a reminder letter be sent asking them to confirm their interest in participating and urging them to attend meetings, as the project is now in a critical phase and their input is needed. Irene Klementowicz, Concerned Citizens of Greenpoint, asked if she could send another representative if she is unable to attend. Ms. Wright stated that SAC members are encouraged to designate alternates, who will receive all SAC materials including Minutes and meeting notices.

Lastly, Ms. Wright suggested that, given the intensity of the work over the next few months, meetings be lengthened by one hour (to run from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.). She asked the SAC for its opinion. During the discussion that followed, Mr. Nunziato stated that the meetings should not begin until a sufficient number of SAC members are present. Others remarked that a 6:00 p.m. start time is difficult for those who work full-time. It was decided that the meetings will start at 6:30 p.m. sharp and run until 9 p.m., if necessary.

Alternatives Analysis
Steve Bennett, Parsons, briefly reviewed the categories of alternatives that comprise the Long List (which were discussed in detail at the March 27th SAC meeting). They are:
? No Build: the baseline against which all other alternatives are evaluated
? Rehabilitation: alternatives that repair the bridge, but leave the structure as it is now
? Rehabilitation with Auxiliary Lanes: alternatives that include either widening the bridge or building a parallel structure in order to improve traffic flow, while addressing some of the safety issues
? New Bridge
? New Tunnel

Mr. Bennett stated that the Long List includes every “remotely reasonable” idea suggested by the project team and members of the public. Alvin Goodman, Brooklyn Borough President’s Office, asked when cost estimates will be considered. Mr. Bennett answered that because cost analysis is too complicated to do for a large number of alternatives, it will not be performed until the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) phase. In response to a question from Barbara Mihelic, Noble Street Block Association, Mr. Bennett indicated that the “Short List” will be determined by Level 2 screening, which is expected to conclude this fall.

Mr. Bennett then distributed the draft Level 1 screening criteria (see Attachment C), which will be used to evaluate the alternatives on the Long List, along with a land use map and aerial photographs that show residential and commercial properties in the study area. He stated that the criteria, which are based on input from the project team and the community, are not detailed but are designed to eliminate alternatives that clearly do not meet the project’s goals and objectives. After noting that the criteria cover transportation, social, economic and environmental issues, Mr. Bennett reviewed the handout with SAC members.
Criterion 1: Provide 24-hour operation of the BQE and the long-term use of Newtown Creek as a navigable waterway.

Mr. Bennett explained that any alternative that does not meet this criterion is considered “fatally flawed” and will be dropped from consideration immediately. For example, the United States Coast Guard would not issue a permit for any alternative that prevents navigation on Newtown Creek. Therefore, there is no point in continuing to evaluate this alternative.

Ms. Mihelic asked if a Newtown Creek water traffic study has been conducted. Mr. Bennett stated that the New York City Department of Transportation surveyed water traffic as part of its study to determine if movable bridges could be converted to fixed bridges. Another study is being conducted as part of the Kosciuszko Bridge project in order to obtain a bridge clearance permit from the Coast Guard. The study will include a survey of existing river traffic, along with the identification of businesses that rely on the waterway for shipping. It will also examine whether the bridge can be lowered without affecting current and future traffic on the creek. Mr. Bennett remarked that preliminary conversations with the Coast Guard indicate that the bridge could be lowered from 125 feet to 90 feet without impeding navigation. Mr. Nunziato asked what the highest point of the roadway leading up to the bridge is currently and questioned whether a 90-foot bridge would eliminate the slope altogether. Mr. Bennett answered that the incline would be approximately half as steep as it is now. He added that the only stretch of roadway that would be changed is between the ramps in Brooklyn and Queens; the approach roads would remain at the same elevation.

Mr. Nunziato asked if a lower bridge would provide sufficient clearance for battleships, should the need arise. In response, Pat Monte, Vollmer Associates, observed that the United States Army Corps of Engineers will be involved in any decision that affects the creek. Mr. Bennett stated that information is available regarding the number and types of boats currently using the creek, but that further study is needed to determine their height and draft. Mr. Nunziato questioned why the Queens-Midtown Tunnel viaduct was not lowered during its recent rehabilitation. Mr. Bennett speculated that lowering the roadway over the creek would have required complete replacement of the viaduct. Peter King, NYSDOT, noted that while the viaduct “deck” needed replacement, the supporting structure was in good condition. Harold Fink, NYSDOT, added that this is not the case with the Kosciuszko Bridge, which requires work on both the deck and the supporting structure. Mr. Nunziato requested that the project team confirm this information with the Coast Guard.

In response to questions from Ms. Klementowicz, Mr. Bennett stated that information would be available in approximately one month regarding the number of businesses using barges on the creek (thought to be about five) and that the creek would have to be dredged to allow for battleships. He added that the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation is conducting a study regarding the remediation of Newtown Creek, which might involve dredging.

Criterion 2: Improve traffic operations and safety in the project corridor.

Mr. Bennett explained that the purpose of the measures in Criteria 2, 3 and 4 is to have measurable, repeatable standards against which to evaluate each alternative. This means that anyone who screens the alternatives using these measures should come up with more or less the...
same results. The alternatives will be ranked using a Consumer Reports-style system of circles. Criterion #2 includes three measures related to traffic operations and safety.

Ira Greenberg, Assemblywoman Catherine Nolan’s Office, requested clarification regarding the difference between Measures 2-1 and 2-3, asking if NYSDOT is seeking to add shoulders or auxiliary lanes. Mr. Bennett explained that NYSDOT is studying the traffic flow and safety aspects of all alternatives. He specifically noted that although adding shoulders and auxiliary lanes would result in traffic flow and safety improvements, such additions would result in a larger bridge, which may in turn have a greater impact on the community. All of these factors need to be considered. Mr. King added that the goal at this point is to be objective and examine each alternative from an engineering, design and operational perspective.

Criterion 3: Avoid impacts to adjacent property and community facilities.
Mr. Bennett reviewed the four measures included in Criterion #3, which cover both short-term (construction period) and long-term impacts. In response to Mr. Ruzalski’s observation that there are three houses immediately adjacent to the Maspeth side of the bridge, Mr. Bennett acknowledged that a few of the alternatives will affect one or two of those homes. Ms. Gottlieb noted that although the area surrounding the ramp on the Brooklyn side is residential, this is not reflected on the land use map. In response to Ms. Gottlieb’s question regarding the configuration of new auxiliary lanes, Mr. Bennett explained that these lanes would run between the ramps and would serve for exit and entrance purposes only. Ms. Gottlieb expressed her concern that new lanes would include a small section of Meeker Avenue at the end of the ramp. She noted that the road in that location is brick, which is aesthetically pleasing and muffles sound from the highway. Mr. Bennett assured her that there are no plans to widen that portion of roadway. He added that noise issues will be studied in the DEIS. In response to a question from Ms. Gottlieb, Luis Calderon, NYSDOT, reiterated that the auxiliary lanes would run between the ramps only. Mr. Bennett noted that while NYSDOT’s 1995 traffic study recommended widening the eastbound entrance ramp at Vandervoort Avenue to two lanes, it determined that widening the westbound exit ramp at Apollo Street would not improve traffic operations. He added that all ramps will be studied during the DEIS phase.

A brief discussion followed regarding outreach to residents in the immediate area of the bridge. Answering a question from MaryAnna Zero, Maspeth Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Ruzalski indicated that the homes on the Queens side of the bridge are mostly owner-occupied and that he has notified the residents about the bridge project. In response to a question from Ms. Mihelic, it was noted that the United Forties Civic Association was invited to serve on the SAC in order to represent that community. Ms. Klementowicz remarked that other neighborhood residents should be consulted early in the Alternatives Analysis process. Ms. Wright stated that a public meeting is being planned for this fall.

After reviewing Measure 3-2, which addresses permanent and construction period impacts to businesses, Mr. Bennett indicated that the three rankings in this measure are not specific because there are many unknown factors about construction at the ends of the ramps. He noted that there are five businesses directly under the bridge that will be affected by any alternative. Christine Holowacz, Greenpoint Property Owners, expressed her opinion that Measure 3-2 should be more specific and that there should be a separate measure for the acquisition of commercial property,
similar to the measure for the acquisition of residential property. Following up on her comment, Mr. Greenberg asked for the definition of “minimum”, “moderate” and “maximum” as used in Measure 3-2. Mr. Bennett replied that the project team is in the process of determining all of the potential impacts to businesses and will clarify Measure 3-2 by next month’s meeting. After a brief discussion regarding the varying degrees of impact versus acquisition, consensus was reached on adding a new measure relating to the acquisition of commercial property.

Mr. Bennett proceeded to Measure 3-3, which seeks to avoid permanent adverse impacts to sensitive community areas such as residences, Sgt. Dougherty Park or Calvary Cemetery. In response to Ms. Klementowicz’s concerns about residences near the bridge, Mr. Bennett acknowledged that some of the alternatives would have an impact on residences. However, he noted that if the project avoids residences altogether, there may be a disproportionate impact on businesses. All options have to be weighed so that, in the end, the alternative selected is thoroughly documented and defensible. In response to a question from Ms. Klementowicz, Mr. Bennett indicated that the number of employees and the types of businesses adjacent to the bridge are being investigated. Ms. Mihelic asked about the feasibility of screening the alternatives without information about the businesses. Mr. Bennett answered that the number of potentially affected employees would be available at next month’s meeting.

Mr. Goodman remarked that, in his experience, the methodology being used is very effective in eliminating the worst alternatives. Echoing Mr. Goodman’s comment, Mr. Bennett stated that the idea of Level 1 screening is not to select the best idea, but to eliminate the worst. In addition, Level 1 screening should leave a range of alternatives and should make sense to anyone who examines the resulting list.

There were no comments regarding Measure 3-4, which seeks to avoid temporary impacts to sensitive community areas.

**Criterion 4: Reduce diversion of traffic from the highway onto local streets, both during construction and long-term.**

Mr. Bennett stated that this criterion considers both traffic operation and impact on the community. Referring to Measure 4-1, which addresses the temporary diversion of traffic onto local streets, Ms. Mihelic asked for the team’s definition of “temporary”. Mr. Bennett answered that construction will take approximately three to five years, depending on the alternative chosen. In response to a question relating to construction activities, Mr. Bennett noted that while New York City policy generally requires that the existing number of lanes remain open during construction, an exception is made when the work is done at night. Mr. Fink stated that NYSDOT’s intent is to keep traffic flowing on all six lanes “24/7”.

There were no comments relating to Measure 4-2, which address the long-term diversion of traffic onto local streets.

Referring to drainage problems in the vicinity of the bridge, Teresa Toro, State Senator Martin Malave Dilan’s Office/Brooklyn Community Board #1, and Gerald Esposito, Brooklyn Community Board #1, asked if all of the alternatives address drainage concerns. If not, Mr. Esposito noted, drainage should be incorporated into the screening criteria so that the issue is
considered early in the process. Mr. Bennett indicated that the alternatives can not be differentiated at this level of detail at this time. However, drainage issues will be studied in the DEIS. In response to a question from Ms. Holowacz, Mr. Bennett stated that an Inter-Agency Advisory Committee (IAAC) is being formed and that the project team will bring the SAC’s drainage concerns to the attention of the New York City Department of Environmental Protection.

Mr. Bennett then described the scoring system for screening the alternatives (see page 5 of the Screening Criteria).

After commending the project team for its work, Mr. Nunziato noted that several of the buildings labeled “V” (for vacant) on the land use map are, in fact, occupied. He encouraged the team to involve Philip Galasso, Sagres Partners, LLC (potential buyer of the Phelps-Dodge property) in the SAC. Ms. Wright replied that Mr. Galasso has been contacted several times but has not responded. In response to Mr. Nunziato’s request for visuals of the construction staging areas, Mr. Fink answered that construction is too far in the future to plan the staging at this point. Ms. Wright stated that Mr. Nunziato’s request will be placed on the list of long-term follow-up items. In conclusion, Mr. Bennett announced that new, high quality aerial photographs were taken last week and will be ready for next month’s SAC meeting.

**Update on Related Community Projects**

There were no updates.

**New Business**

Ms. Wright stated that the purpose of the IAAC, which will meet for the first time in mid to late June, is to share information and coordinate activities between city, state, regional and federal agencies. The SAC will be represented on the Committee by NYSDOT and FHWA. Ms. Wright asked if the SAC would like to designate an additional person to serve on the IAAC. Robert Adams, NYSDOT, noted that the meetings will be held during the day three or four times a year. Ms. Holowacz and Mr. Nunziato expressed their support for the IAAC, with Ms. Holowacz suggesting that the IAAC include one person each from Brooklyn and Queens. It was agreed that she and Mr. Nunziato will identify a SAC representative from their respective boroughs. Mr. Esposito asked if the Community Boards and the Borough Presidents would be invited to participate. Mr. Bennett stated that the Borough Engineers of the Queens and Brooklyn Borough Presidents’ Offices are being invited. He added that the meetings will be open to the public. At Mr. Esposito’s request, it was agreed that the chairpersons of Brooklyn Community Board #1 and Queens Community Boards #2 and #5 will also be invited to serve.

**Other Business**

In response to Ms. Holowacz’s question regarding the status of the community advisor issue, Mr. Nunziato stated that the SAC’s community advisor subcommittee drafted a letter to its elected officials requesting funding to hire an advisor. He noted that Dolores Rizzotto, Queens Community Board #2, was charged with sending the letter but has been out of town. Mr. Fink added that the University Transportation Research Center (UTRC) offer is still on the table. Ms. Gottlieb expressed her view that NYSDOT had given conflicting information about the availability of funding for an independent advisor. Ms. Mihelic asked about the source of...
funding for the UTRC. Mr. Fink answered that it would come from a statewide funding source that is separate from the Kosciuszko Bridge project. Mr. Nunziato offered to follow-up on the subcommittee’s letter and report back to the SAC.

Public Session
There were no comments from members of the public.

The next SAC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 15th at 6:30 P.M. at Jennings Hall, 260 Powers Street, Brooklyn.

Follow-Up Items
1. Determine number of businesses along Newtown Creek that use barges to transport goods or materials. (Irene Klementowicz.) Responsibility: Parsons.

2. Provide additional information regarding the number of potentially impacted businesses and employees. Responsibility: Parsons

3. Provide visuals of construction staging areas for alternatives to be studied in the DEIS. (Anthony Nunziato.) Responsibility: Parsons.

4. Investigate why the height of the Queens-Midtown Tunnel viaduct was not lowered when the structure was rehabilitated. (Anthony Nunziato.) Responsibility: Parsons, NYSDOT.


6. Identify two SAC members (1 each from Queens and Brooklyn) to serve on the IAAC. Responsibility: Anthony Nunziato, Christine Holowacz.

7. Invite Community Boards #1 (Brooklyn), #2 (Queens) and #5 (Queens) to serve on the IAAC. (Gerald Esposito.) Responsibility: HNA, NYSDOT, Parsons.

8. Confirm Jennings Hall for May 15th SAC meeting, and request its use for all future SAC meetings. Responsibility: HNA.

9. Revise Minutes of March 27th SAC meeting to include Vincent Arcuri’s correct affiliation. Responsibility: HNA.


11. Send letters to SAC non-attendees to encourage their participation in upcoming meetings. Responsibility: HNA