MEETING SUMMARY

The meeting opened with introductions and an overview of the I-87 Multimodal Corridor Study and an update of its status by the project team. It was also explained that the purpose of the workshop was to receive input and guidance from participants on ways to improve access to recreational resources in the corridor, emphasizing that the meeting would be an informal roundtable discussion rather than a formal presentation by the project team. The results of this workshop and the other five sessions scheduled for the same three-week period will feed into the final corridor study report that will be prepared during Phase 2 of the project.

The following sections summarize key points of the group’s discussion and highlight issues to be explored more fully during Phase 2. An agenda for the meeting and sign-in sheets are included as Attachments A and B.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Recreational Economics, Opportunities and Facilities

- Signage was identified as a major issue along the Northway.

  • **Signage to better direct area visitors is the most important problem** – better information is needed along the highway and after travelers join the secondary road system. Many tourists are unfamiliar with the area and are do not know what businesses and services are available at the interchanges between Lake George and Plattsburgh, or how far and in what direction they would need to travel if they were to leave the Northway to find gas, food, or lodging. The State of Vermont uses guidance signage to identify gas, lodging, restaurants, shopping destinations, and tourist attractions long not only their Interstate/National Highway System routes but also along State and local road systems.

  • **In light of Adirondack Park Authority (APA) limitations on signage along roadways within the Park, groups should look to make signage more focused on districts rather than store-specific advertising.**

  • **Information kiosks at key exits could be very beneficial, although the idea has been proposed for years and never implemented (information now provided informally by roadside vendors). Kiosks would be more beneficial if information was printed in both English and French.**
• It was suggested that at least one minimal, unstaffed tourist information resource center be provided at each exit between Lake George and Plattsburgh. Also, a visitors’ center between exits 17 and 18 should be utilized to maximum benefit and work with local businesses.

• Many of the attendees agreed that there is a need for a follow-up meeting with the appropriate agencies on the signage issues as one of the recommendations to emerge from the I-87 Study. The meeting would involve State agencies such as NYSDOT, the Department of Environmental Conservation, APA, and the I Love NY tourism office, as well as representatives from the counties and appropriate private sector representatives.

• Which recreational/metro markets are most sensitive to and limited by transportation?
  o Although capacity constraints along this section of I-87 are not an issue, agricultural tourism and historical tourism are affected on side routes, particularly in Washington County where there is a critical lack of east-west access throughout the county and specifically to access the Northway. Fort Anne is probably the destination most limited by transportation.

• Traffic is most concentrated at the Great Escape amusement park; what are some alternative ways to get travelers there?
  o Exits 19 and 20 could be used to provide alternate routes to Great Escape, but there are complications with both interchanges. The layout of exit 20 causes cars to sometimes back up onto the Northway in the travel lane during periods of congestion. Traffic headed to or from Route 149 competes with traffic destined to or from the Great Escape; this is particularly prevalent in the outlet shopping district on Route 9.
  o Another suggestion was separate off-ramps to Route 9 South and Route 9 North before and after the Great Escape.

• How much does recreational traffic increase on weekends?
  o During the summer, congestion is weather dependent more than day-dependent. There is congestion every day during the summer (i.e., Great Escape during the mornings). There is also year-round local traffic heading to destinations such as the hospital and retail establishments. These two combined result in congestion at several interchanges.

• What are the recreational opportunities and traffic situation at Lake Champlain?
  o There are recreational opportunities on both side of the lakes, as well as along the rivers and canals. The Lakes to Locks Initiative is constantly growing, promoting canal access, fishing derbies, boating traffic, and lake trips. The
The biggest issue is the Crown Point bridge, which acts as a gateway between Vermont and New York into the Adirondack Park. There is no pedestrian access, there are few streetlights, access is cumbersome, and it is a main artery for trucks, commuters, and tourism going east/west.

- What are the recreational opportunities and traffic situation at Lake Placid?
  
  - Lake Placid is the one full four-season resort in New York. It has a global profile, distinctive facilities, and a unique community. The main issue is access. Commercial aviation service to the major regional airports (Albany, Burlington, and Montreal) is inconvenient for conventioneers, as it requires two to three hours driving time from the airports to Lake Placid. The expansion of Plattsburgh Municipal Airport, located within an hour of Lake Placid, into an international facility will begin this year. Expanded commercial air service is also needed.

- What are the recreational opportunities and traffic situation at Lake George?
  
  - The popularity of Lake George continues to grow and draw more visitors from outside the region. Events such as Americade at Lake George and the Ironman triathlon at Lake Placid draw large numbers of participants and spectators to the region.

  - The trolley-style shuttle service in the Village of Lake George has been very effective in providing an efficient means of transportation in the Village and reducing the number of vehicles on Canada Street.

- What expansion or new facility plans are in the works?
  
  - A new 200-room hotel and convention at the Great Escape center is in the planning process, as is a new water park. Several new big box retail establishments, such as Target, Dicks Sporting Goods, and several restaurants, are planned at Exit 19. Exit 18 will see two new industrial parks, new promotion of the Civic Center (an area which already complicates traffic), increased retail in Glens Falls, and new widening improvements. The interchange ramps in this area also need work, as they are generally too short. As part of the Corinth Road reconstruction project, a new connector road would provide access to the planned industrial parks.

- What are the patterns for future residential development?
  
  - New residential developments are numerous in Southern Washington County, a trend which will increase with the Luther Forest development. The demand also now exists for development near the West Mountain ski area, on approximately 2,500 acres of land with 2,800 units permitted, which is likely to occur in the next five years. There is also some residential growth in Glens Falls, Queensbury, and Westmont around exit 18.
• What are the likely shifts in the recreational market in the next ten to fifteen years?
  
  o The major shift will be in winter recreation, mainly around Gore Mountain, where a major push has been going in recent years to raise that facility’s profile. The goal is to make this area a destination ski area with hotels rather simply a day-trip area.

• What plans are underway for Fort Ticonderoga?
  
  o Construction of a $17 million education center is underway at Fort Ticonderoga and will be completed within 2 to 5 years. It will draw an international audience as well as serve as a drive-to family destination, and will also be a major historical research center. Traffic spill-over is likely in Washington County and southern Essex County.
Transportation Limitations and Opportunities

**Highway**

- The problem of overlap of tourist and non-tourist traffic and related congestion is a key problem in peak months.

- How does the region accommodate travelers without cars?
  
  - Generally, it is felt that alternative modes transportation around tourist destinations must be improved, but the critical mass to make transit viable does not yet exist in most areas. Some areas, however, do currently have successful circulation-type transit service. For instance, a publicly-owned trolley system in Lake George is used frequently by locals and tourist. The trolley system in Cooperstown is another example of a system which brings tourists downtown from peripheral parking lots to reduce traffic congestion and parking demand. There is a shuttle from Lake Placid running to Whiteface, and one from the Lake George Region up to Gore Mountain, but once one reaches these destinations, a car is generally necessary for tourist activities.

**Air**

- Will traffic to Lake Placid, and Plattsburgh International Airport, be more charter or commercial?
  
  - Both types of traffic are likely to enter the airport, as it will also serve the northern part of the Adirondack region. Lake Placid needs good access to both regular service and charter operators. Smaller convention business will bring more charter flights, as larger conventions will utilize commercial flights.

**Rail**

- To what extent is rail a recreational market?
  
  - A pilot program called Scenic Rail is now in effect to Gore, although it's unlikely to play much of a role in bringing visitors to the area. If Amtrak were extended a little further north, it might bring traffic back the other way.

- What type of rail technology would best suit the area?
  
  - Smaller European-style trains with two cars could augment the Adirondack rail service, with fewer stops in between Albany and Montreal. The current passenger train, with its numerous stops, is frequently pulling over for freight trains, increasing travel time even more. Delays at the border could also be reduced by treating customs stops more like the airlines do, with custom checks performed at the origin and destination instead of at the border.
**Bus**

- Are buses a viable option for transportation to recreational venues?
  - Buses are used, but more so by local residents, college students, and prison visitors rather than tourists. Some routes are decent in travel time, but others are just as long as the train or longer. The expansion of Plattsburgh Airport may increase demand for bus trips between the airport and ski resorts.
  - Charter motor coach services (i.e., foliage tours) are an important source of tourism and are continuing to grow in popularity.

**Water**

- What are transportation options via waterways and canal systems?
  - Canal systems are used mainly to get from point to point, rather than for recreation. After the dredging of the Hudson River is complete (which should take between six and seven years), it may be more useful as a recreational resource.
  - Much of the recreational traffic on these waterways is Canadian. These recreational boaters use their own discretion to stop at a limited number of privately-owned marinas to pay a "tax" and register in the U.S. The system is at the discretion of the individual boaters and has limited enforcement capabilities.
  - More opportunities that take advantage of existing and future ferry service between Vermont and New York State are needed.

**ATTACHMENTS**

A. Workshop agenda
B. Sign-in sheets