I-87 Multimodal Corridor Study

Study Advisory Group Meeting

Tuesday, June 22, 2004

MEETING SUMMARY

ATTENDEES:
PLEASE SEE ATTACHED

MEETING FORMAT:

The format of the meeting was a presentation by the project team followed by questions and comments from the Study Advisory Group (SAG). The presentation is available on the Study website (http://www.dot.state.ny.us/i87study/) and is attached here.

OVERVIEW OF PRESENTATION

Timothy Gilchrist, Director of NYSDOT's Office of Policy and Strategy, welcomed the SAG. Mr. Gilchrist explained how and why NYSDOT's approach to the study has evolved over the course of the study, its focus shifting away from traditional rebuilding of existing infrastructure and toward maximizing use of these facilities.

Mr. Gilchrist presented an overview of Governor Pataki's priorities for the new NYSDOT, as part of its Transformation as a whole and how this relates to the I-87 study specifically. Examples of the benefits of Transformation include unification of the truck overweight permit system and creation of seamless traveler information and comprehensive transportation payment systems. The sharing of information and data collection activities across transportation agencies is another key.

The Transformation is focused on five key principals by which DOT and other agencies can better serve the transportation customer:

1. Mobility;
2. Safety;
3. Economic sustainability;
4. Environment; and
5. Security,

Mr. Gilchrist then introduced Bill Crowell of Parsons and Tom Karis of Clough Harbour and Associates, the consultant team's project managers. Dr. Crowell presented an overview of the project's status. The study team is in the process of finalizing a corridor-wide Strategic Plan and developing and prioritizing concepts for the final report. The strategic plan will integrate the four “Smart Corridor” concepts (Smart Freight, Smart/Safe Traveler, Smart Highway and Smart Public Transportation) and identify projects and initiatives in these “Smart” areas. Dr. Crowell and Mr. Karis explained the various recommended initiatives under each “Smart Corridor” concept. The presentation concluded with a summary of next steps and schedule to complete the study, and open discussion among all attendees.
SAG COMMENTS and QUESTIONS

- Regarding the Smart Traveler kiosks, there should be kiosks for both northbound and southbound travelers. The kiosks should be multi-lingual, presenting information in at least English, French, and Spanish. The kiosks should also tie into the existing Canadian traveler information system.
  - The initial kiosk program is a small-scale demonstration that can later be modified and expanded if successful. The suggestion to add a kiosk for southbound travelers (from Canada) at Exit 34 would be easy to incorporate into the concept, as kiosk costs are small relative to the overall project costs. It was already assumed that kiosks would be multi-lingual.

- Why was there not a discussion in the report or presentation on connecting the Ports of Montreal and New York/New Jersey via waterborne means, i.e., the Hudson River, canals, and Lake Champlain.
  - The existing canal connecting the St. Lawrence with Lake Champlain is for recreational boating only. Other portions of the Champlain canal system cannot cost-effectively handle commercial barges, and the system is closed during winter months. Both costs and time constraints make this option prohibitive. The final link in the shipping movement, from barge to final destination, would be nearly equal to the current cost of the entire trip via truck.

- Were there considerations given to adding an additional platform at Albany-Rensselaer Station for increased passenger service?
  - This option was considered in our initial long-list but after a cost/ridership analysis this project could not be justified. While overall the project had merit, its cost effectiveness appeared to be limited at this time.

- A major issue in this corridor is the 64 miles in the High Peaks area where cell phone service does not exist. Are there plans in this study to address this issue?
  - The Study has identified this as a critical item, as it would not only help travelers but would make other planned projects (i.e., ITS initiatives along the Northway) feasible. Currently, there is existing fiber optics cable in the Northway corridor. A proposed wireless communications system, designed and fully approved by all parties involved, has yet to be deployed.

- The issues and opportunities with Plattsburgh International Airport need to be fully explored and also corrected within the report to present an accurate representation of the airport.
  - These issues will be reviewed, and revised pages of the report will be posted on the project website.
There needs to be better coordination of signage throughout region between the various ongoing projects and initiatives, such as the Scenic Byways program and Lakes-to-Locks program.

- One of the goals of the proposed signage program is to standardize tourist and recreation signage throughout the Adirondack region, with several of the Phase 2 projects looking to address this very issue.

How will the northbound queue detection project be handled and implemented?

- There will be variable message signs in a variety of locations past Exit 42. The queue detectors will identify back-ups and provide travelers with information about queues and their likely duration in a timely manner, making alternative trip decisions possible (e.g., stop for lunch).

Business travel characteristics will be changing. There will be a major increase in the use of regional airports, with business travelers utilizing smaller, six to eight person jets. Overall this report has paid little attention to aviation, and most of the focus has been on larger airports.

- The Study evaluated the likely increase in demand at general aviation airports, and included a wide range of improvements to address this trend. This issue will be analyzed further in the Corridor Strategic Plan as well.

Will there be more detail regarding the Safe and Secure Transportation demonstration in the next Technical Memorandum?

- Yes

There is a need to consider development in the corridor and quality of life. How will this study be linked to local and regional plans of development? Will there be information developed for local plans?

- This study does not override local transportation and development plans. NYSDOT has worked closely with local and regional groups to ensure that their concerns and existing plans are reflected and in concert with any projects that will be proposed as part of this study. All of the proposed projects in this study will still have to proceed through the existing project development process.

There should be consideration given for a north/west interstate road in the area of Exit 20 and Route 24.

- There are currently no plans for such a north/west corridor study in this project.

Will you be identifying additional corridors for further study?

- NYSDOT expects to use this study as a template for future corridor studies. The identification of these corridors would most likely occur in the update to the statewide transportation plan process, which is being undertaken now.