The purpose of the Public Advisory Committee (PAC) meeting was to introduce key members of the construction team, review the construction schedule and process, update the PAC on the status of the commemoration plan for the historic bridge, and discuss tentative plans for public information activities during construction. Jim Boni, New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) Lake Champlain Bridge Project Manager welcomed attendees. Following introductions for the benefit of new attendees, the project team presented the status of the above agenda items. A copy of the meeting presentation is available at www.nysdot.gov/regional-offices/region1/projects/lake-champlain-bridge/repository/PAC10_meeting_presentation_8-03-10.pdf

Public viewing of construction
A PAC member noted that people shouldn’t have to pay $6 to look at construction from the lighthouse. John Grady responded that there are good views on the New York side from the Toll House and Crown Point Historic Site. John Grady noted that the first public information session on bridge construction will be held next Thursday, August 12 in the afternoon next to the parking lot at Crown Point Historic Site. This meeting will not be widely advertised as parking is limited and NYSDOT staff wants to get a feel for how this type of forum will work. If it seems to be a good format, more information sessions will be held throughout the construction process. These information sessions are envisioned as informal, informative gatherings. PAC members debated the best time to hold the meeting. It was recommended mid-afternoon may be best, before the afternoon commute begins, which results in longer ferry lines.

Other public outreach opportunities
PAC members noted that the Addison County and Essex County town fairs were happening the following week. It was suggested it may be nice to have a table with information on the bridge at these events. Perhaps a large photo of the rendering of the new bridge could be used. It was not clear how participation in these fairs could occur on short notice. NYSDOT will look into the possibilities, but unfortunately it may not be possible to put something together on such short notice. Diane Lanpher also noted that six local artists would display art inspired by Lake Champlain Bridge at an art exhibit on August 7 in Vergennes.

Issues or questions raised during the presentation were as follows:

**Labor questions**
Diane Lanpher reported getting lots of calls about the issue of hiring local people to work on the bridge. She had a meeting with Flatiron and the State to learn about the Project
Labor Agreement. She understood that people wanting to work needed to contact one of the five union halls to get their name on the list. Diane had previously called all the halls (carpenters, laborers, operating engineers, brick layers) in both states to understand the process and to learn what people looking for work are told when they call. For the most part she found the union halls very accommodating, with one exception. Tom Scozzafava said he thought the issue of people thinking that no locals are being hired had been cleared up. The message people should hear is that if you have the skills you will be hired. John Grady noted that the maximum number of people working on the bridge will be closer to 50-60, not the thousands that people may have imagined. He noted that most of the people employed on this project will be living here, spending money locally.

Opening Day Ceremony for new bridge
There was considerable discussion about how an opening day ceremony would be organized, what would the program be and who would pay for it. Diane Lanpher said that some people have been talking about organizing a group to coordinate the ceremony and raise money for it. She understood that the Middlebury Orchestra would like to commission a new piece of music for full orchestra for the dedication of a new bridge. Mary Ivey responded that a ceremony may be better organized as a grass roots activity rather than by the PAC. Suggestions about an opening day event included:

- Include the original float of the Vermont State House that was used in the 1929 celebration. Eric Gilbertson has the contact information for this float.
- Try to follow the same format as the old bridge, with lots of floats.
- To raise money for the ceremony, raffle off tickets for the first ride over the bridge.
- There are considerable bikers and hikers that should be involved in some way, as the new bridge will be able to accommodate them much better than the old bridge.

Mary Ivey was asked if it was OK for local people to start planning for the ceremony. She responded yes and Ruth Fitzgerald said there would be need for some coordination so that the various parts of the celebration fit together. One PAC member noted “isn’t it great that we are talking about this!” [Opening a new bridge.]

PAC Roundtable Discussion
Following the presentation and discussion, PAC Vice Chair Diane Lanpher facilitated the roundtable discussion section of the agenda in which all attending PAC members had the opportunity to share feedback and observations related to the bridge project. A summary of feedback raised follows:

- The ferries should reverse their orientation so that people can view the construction more easily while crossing the lake.
- Transportation for agriculture businesses is slow but much better than the before there was a ferry.
- Robin Knapp’s photos show that most cars are single occupancy. If more people carpooled it would shorten lines for the ferry. Large employers should encourage
carpooling. It was noted that funding for transit services ran out in February once the ferry opened. It was also noted that people are very inclined to drive alone and that this would a very difficult factor to change.

- This time of year there are lots of RVs, and a 90-foot RV takes up a whole lane, causing a longer wait time at the ferry crossing. However, it was also noted that these RVs provide tax revenue, buy gas and groceries locally so it’s good they are here…..especially since there had been a lot of worry over the winter (before the ferry opened) that tourism would be very badly affected by the demolition of the 1929 bridge.

- The merge of Vermont Routes 17/125 near the ferry continues to be a problem. At times there have been fist fights. Cars use the Bridge Restaurant’s parking lot as a cut through and sometimes at an accelerated speed. This was noted to be both a signage and an enforcement issue.

- No one is observing the stop sign at the ferry on the Vermont side. Cars travel “like a flock of geese” and go right through the sign without stopping.

- It would be good to have bike racks on both sides of the new bridge so people who want to see the interpretive signs on the bridge would not have to lift bikes over the guard rail to view them. [Mary Ivey noted that there may be an issue in finding the right location for bike racks, especially on the New York side where there is little room.]

- The amount of re-bar rods that is going into the bridge is impressive.

- What is the policy on the Vermont side for people who want to look at the construction? We do not have the same viewing opportunities as New York and some people are crossing into constructions areas which are posted as no-entry. On-site-Engineer Jeff Brown said NYSDOT would look into delineating a better viewing area.

- Rumors about collecting a toll on the new bridge persist. People don’t seem to understand the Bridge Commission failed because it ran out of money. Diane Lanpher said she had fiscal analysts look into what amount the toll would have to be to finance and maintain the bridge. The analysts estimated the toll needed to finance the bridge would be between $15-17 per crossing. A comment was made that $1 in 1929 would be worth $60 in 2010.

- Bridge and ferry signage is good now.

- Will there be a second shift working after the campground closes? Jeff Brown responded that presently shifts are being arranged so that work is on-going during most daylight hours. The construction crews work 12 hour days, six days a week. The less noisy, handwork activities are done at night, with work lights on. Throughout construction there will be noise monitoring.

- We’ve heard reports that Flatiron was very good. They went to the community early on and built relationships. There is some talk of having a welcome luau for the workers. Geoff Marrachini of Flatiron responded that the welcome his company has received has been fantastic.

- There are talks going on between the Parks and Recreation Commissioners in each state for a bi-state parks agreement to create a campus plan for all the amenities on each side of the bridge. Historically there has not been comfortable
John Grady noted that NYSDOT would be working on the nearby Bridge Road bridge over the railroad tracks. Traffic will be reduced to alternating one lane, controlled by a signal that will sense the pulse of traffic. This bridge project will take two months.

The meeting adjourned at 10:50 a.m. and was followed by a tour of the construction site by NYSDOT Project Manager Jim Boni.

In attendance:
Rep. Diane Lanpher, VT
Keith Scherer, (alternate for Sen. Little, NY)
Fred Buck, Essex County, NY
Tim Kayhart, Addison, VT – agriculture
Bob Smith, Addison, VT – agriculture
Meg Wood, NY (alternate for Rep. Sayward)
Kimball Provencher, Addison, VT Selectboard
Ivan Vamos, Bicycle/Pedestrian
Tom Scozzafava, Town of Moriah, NY
Ruth McDonough, Village of Port Henry, NY
Irwin Clark, Addison Historic Commission, VT
Eric Gilbertson, (alternate for Ann Cousins) – VT historic preservation
Rick Kehne, Addison County Regional Planning Commission, VT
Mary Ivey, NYSDOT Region 1 Director
Jim Boni, NYSDOT
John Grady, NYSDOT
Jeff Brown, NYSDOT Engineer-in-Charge (Bridge Construction)
Phil LaFave, Flatiron Construction Manager
Geoff Marrachini, Flatiron Human Resources
Ruth Fitzgerald, Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc.
Jill Barrett, Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc.