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MPO Newington-Dover Traffic Mitigation Subcommittee Traffic Mitigation Measures Report (Approved by the Seacoast MPO Policy Committee March 28th, 2002)

The purpose of this report is to propose measures that have the potential to reduce traffic congestion along the Spaulding Turnpike in and around the area of the Little Bay bridges. These measures are comprised of both short and long term projects that could be implemented before and during the scheduled construction period. The series of recommendations outlined in this report provide a scope of work and series of alternative actions for communities and relevant agencies to consider in addressing traffic congestion.

Scheduled Improvements

The 2003-2012 Ten Year Transportation Improvement Program (submitted to NH Legislature) lists two projects for completion. No other transportation projects have been programmed for this area at this time. However, COAST has proposed express service along their Route 2, which if approved would be included in the Ten Year Plan.

Newington 11238 C	NH16 / US4 / Spaulding Turnpike reconfiguration and relocation of ramps and access	C 2003
Newington- Dover 11238	NH16 / US4 / Spaulding Turnpike widen turnpike including Little Bay Bridges from Gosling Road to Dover Toll	C 2008-2011

Subcommittee Recommendations

The identification and discussion of potential mitigation measures span the gamut from lane restriping to the rehabilitation of the General Sullivan Bridge. These initiatives were short/long term and represented varying costs. Ideas were omitted because of cost and/or scheduling constraints. The top priorities are listed below, and have been categorized into Immediate, short and longer term solutions based on the timeframe necessary for implementation.

Immediate Action

- Amend the Scope of work of the Newington-Dover project (11238 & 11238C) to include the evaluation, design and implementation of traffic mitigation measures (such as those mentioned in this report) in the engineering, design and environmental work for the project. If this type of work can be completed independent via another method, then that would be supported as well.

Short Term Solutions

- Incident Preparedness / Management – Develop and implement a plan for rapid response to accidents/incidents on the bridge. This would include rapid response towing service

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during peak hour flows and the installation of a supply facility to provide necessary rapid response equipment. This would also include the development of an emergency response plan that would, depending on the nature of the incident, spell out specific traffic management procedures that should be used. The NH DOT has indicated to the MPO that they are presently developing such a plan.

- Park and Ride Lots – Support the establishment of park and ride facilities in Dover and Rochester. These facilities should include the necessary physical infrastructure to support public transportation services for all providers along the Spaulding turnpike. Many of the options discussed in this report are dependant on the presence of Park and Ride Lots in strategic locations along the corridor North of the Little Bay Bridges.
- Express Commuter Service – Strongly encourage and support the selection of the COAST Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality 2002 application for express bus service from Rochester to Portsmouth. If selected, support the implementation, marketing, and possible expansion of this service.
- Expanded Intercity Transit Service – Look to expand commuter based transit service via all available modes keeping in mind equity issues between those modes. Conduct a review of 2000 Journey to Work Census and other available data to ascertain the potential market and actively advocate for the expansion of service to accommodate potential ridership. Examine the possibility and conditions under which an intercity transit operator would provide service to locations north of the bridges. Support the maintenance and possible expansion of Wildcat Transit routes to Newington and Portsmouth. In addition look at the potential for the Portland to Boston Rail service to provide commuter service, the impacts of that service on congestion, and on other transit modes.
- Pease/Portsmouth TMA – Support the implementation of a transportation management association (TMA) among the major employers at Pease (and possibly in Portsmouth -- e.g. Liberty Mutual and Portsmouth Hospital). The implementation of this TMA would have impacts on other alternatives discussed in this report. COAST would be better able to target its express service, and would have improved ridership, marketing efforts could be coordinated, and rideshare and flextime programs made more effective. Conversely, park and ride lots north of the Little Bay Bridges would help to make the TMA more effective.
- Flextime with Major Employers – Promote flextime policies for the major Seacoast employers at Pease, Newington, and Portsmouth to enable commuters to avoid the highest congestion periods. The promotion of flextime policy should include an active marketing campaign that informs employers and employees about the benefits of commuting during off-peak travel times.
- Rideshare program – Actively support the rideshare program to focus its resources towards attracting participation of Spaulding Turnpike users. Direct the Seacoast MPO, COAST, NH Turnpike Authority, PDA, and the NHDOT to market this service and promote its use throughout the Seacoast region.
- ITS Initiatives – Support the implementation of all relevant ITS initiatives in and around the Spaulding Turnpike. This includes: The deployment of variable messages boards from Rochester to I-95; The installation and proper marketing of an NHDOT webcam to continually monitor traffic flows on the bridge (accessible via NHDOT.COM and easily referenced by affected residents/employees). The establishment of an MPO web site that

provides Spaulding Turnpike information on alternative routes, public transportation alternatives, and other available resources.

- Ramp metering – Install a modified traffic signal on the on-ramps along Exit 6 (Southbound) and Exits 3 & 4 (Northbound) to regulate vehicle flows onto the Turnpike from Route 4, Dover Point Road, River Road, and Woodbury Avenue. The device allows vehicles to enter the mainline traffic flow at regular intervals, which improves traffic flow on the highway. This could lead to congestion on the on-ramps, and would need further study prior to implementation.
- Slow Traffic approaching the bridges as a measure to help reduce the number and severity of accidents in the area. Lowering the speed limits, installing warning signs, and active enforcement will slow vehicles down to a more optimum speed, allowing easier merging from on ramps, and reduced potential for accidents.

Longer-Term Improvements

- Advance Bridge Widening – The Little Bay bridge represents the key constraint to traffic flow along the Spaulding Turnpike. Within the scheduled process put the expansion of the bridge in the first phase of construction and encourage the early completion of that facility ahead of the approach work.
- Jobs-Housing Imbalance – Encourage communities in the affected area and the Pease Development Authority to review their land use policies. Support initiatives that would provide more affordable housing opportunities closer to the major employment centers, as well as providing more desirable employment opportunities near existing housing.
- General Sullivan Bridge – In the short term, encourage the NHDOT to finalize a decision on the long-term viability of the bridge. If that decision is to eventually rehabilitate that bridge, advance the work so that the bridge can be used as an alternate route during bridge closures and emergencies, and as a permanent bicycle/pedestrian facility. Support a long term action to renovate the bridge for at the minimum bicycle/pedestrian use or more extensively for local traffic, emergency management, or as a component of the Spaulding Turnpike exit ramp for Newington.

MPO Action

The MPO Policy Committee reviewed and adopted this report on March 28th, 2002 and authorized staff to forward these recommendation to the NHDOT for review and possible inclusion in their incident management project and project #11238 and #11238C.