

**I-75 Oakland County Planning/Environmental Study
Scoping Meeting
August 29, 2002
Troy Library – 9:30 a.m.**

Background: Scoping allows agencies to become familiar with a project and voice preliminary concerns about the purpose and need for a project, the alternatives to be considered, the likelihood and nature of impacts, and the methodologies to be used in the course of analysis.

Purpose: To solicit comment of regulatory agencies.

Attendance: See attached list.

Discussion:

Dave Wresinski chaired the meeting. First, those present were asked to introduce themselves. Several comments were made in the course of these introductions as those present indicated why they were there. For example, Tom Barwin of Ferndale emphasized the need to examine long-range land use planning for the region, noting the current lack of such a plan.

Following introductions, Jim Kirschensteiner reviewed the federal process that guides development of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). He noted the EIS process attempts to reach consensus but acknowledged that consensus was not always achieved. Then, Joe Corradino reviewed the project background and established the basis upon which further discussion could be undertaken, including the following:

- C. Tom Barwin asked that a survey be performed of people within a thousand feet of the interstate corridor to determine whether asthma was more prevalent in this corridor.
- R. Joe Corradino indicated while such a survey was not part of the project, zip-code based data could be gathered from the Michigan Department of Community Health on asthma conditions in Oakland County. Joe Corradino also noted air toxics would be covered as much as EPA has information on that subject. He also said that the indirect (secondary) and cumulative impact analysis would look at population shifts. Regarding land use, he noted that SEMCOG's data are a buildup of population and employment drawn from the constituent members of SEMCOG.
- C. Tom Barwin noted that housing at the north end of the corridor was in the high-end of the market and the result was an effective trapping of the poor in the inner suburbs.
- R. Jim Kirschensteiner noted that the environmental justice analysis would cover such socioeconomic issues.

- C. Dennis Toffolo of Oakland County Economic Development noted that trucks needed to be moving, not at idle, and they would be both more productive and less polluting when they were moving on an improved I-75.
- C. Tom Barwin stated that I-75 over the last 30 years had been a conduit for the inner suburbs to lose population.
- C. Mayor Matt Pryor of Troy said it was a waste of money to study HOV; that that decision could be made here and now. He suggested the best course was to study only those alternatives that could legitimately be implemented.
- R. Joe Corradino responded that to ensure the viability of the study, and the underlying NEPA process, it was necessary to do an adequate analysis of HOV. He noted that the next step in the HOV assessment should be concluded within a matter of six weeks. The HOV analysis would be performed by examining the modification of the interchanges at I-696 and M-59, plus other interchanges as well as the I-75 mainline.
- C. Karen Kendrick-Hands indicated some communities have no transit service, so, if the analysis relied on the transit system in its current configuration, ridership would be understated.
- R. Joe Corradino responded that today's condition was not what was being examined. Future conditions include an expanded bus transit network, as well as the rapid transit system along Woodward Avenue.
- C. Tom Barwin asked whether the transit analysis tested increased densities around rail stations to reflect the experience of other communities around the nation.
- R. Joe Corradino responded that was not done but indicated that the computer model likely overpredicts ridership, because it assumes transit characteristics, like frequency of service and travel speeds, that are very optimistic. This has the effect of counterbalancing the lack of increased density that would occur over time.
- C. Jim Schultz of the MITS Center noted that a massive signal retiming program was underway in Oakland County that would have benefits for I-75 and travel generally throughout the region.
- C. Ms. Hands made several additional points: 1) transit in a regional sense is never acknowledged in individual highway projects; 2) the major dollars involved in individual highway projects together had a cumulative cost that was very high and that transit might serve as an alternative at a much lower price; 3) transit had not been mentioned as a potential mitigating factor during construction of an improved I-75; 4) it was implicit in the I-

- 75 EIS analysis that extensive improvements would need to be made to the alternative arterial grid system; 5) the environmental cost savings of transit should be compared to the highway construction cost; and, 6) the effects of the M-59 interchange should be incorporated into the I-75 project.
- R. Jim Kirschensteiner responded to the last point, indicating that the M-59 interchange had received environmental clearance in 1988 and that it had been reevaluated recently. Joe Corradino responded to the remark about transit use during construction, noting that it will be covered in the analysis, and that the effects on arterials would be covered under indirect (secondary) and cumulative impacts, for those roads where there was a 10 percent change in traffic volumes due to improving I-75. Greg Johnson added that MDOT cannot stand by and watch its roads further deteriorate.
- C. Ms. Hands indicated that level-of-service shouldn't be the only measure of effectiveness used in the evaluation.
- C. Dave Vanderveen stated that, generally, "highway dollars" were used for highway projects and "transit dollars" for transit projects so that, to some degree, the issue of financing was unique to each mode. Ms. Hands indicated that there is some flexibility in shifting Surface Transportation Program funds.
- R. Joe Corradino indicated that such shifts rely on reaching a regional decision to do so.
- C. Robin Beltramini, Councilwoman from Troy, urged that the process should move forward.
- C. Carmine Palombo from SEMCOG noted misstatements with respect to the cost of some projects. He stated that there was about a \$17 billion shortfall with respect to projects in the adopted transportation plan. Further, there was a \$1.4 billion placeholder in Southeast Michigan for proposed I-94 improvements. About 24 to 26 studies are underway and SEMCOG was working with MDOT on priorities for these projects. I-75 is one of these. Transit and ITS need funding as well. He stressed that transit should be considered seriously as a mitigation measure during construction and noted that SEMCOG's ridesharing office would certainly be involved in efforts during construction.
- C. The Road Commission for Oakland County indicated that it was waiting to see the results of the study.
- C. The Drain Office of Oakland County indicated it would comment on engineering plans once work was further along.
- R. Joe Corradino noted that a special study would be performed to develop drainage strategies that would be reviewed at a later date by the Drain Office.

- C. Dennis Toffolo indicated his concern was that factual information be brought forward and studied.
- C. John Austin of Madison Heights indicated he would like to see a full analysis of economic impacts of the HOV lanes. He further commented that he didn't know where park-and-ride lots could be built.
- R.. Joe Corradino responded that the economic impact analysis requested would be performed only if the HOV lanes were carried forward as a practical alternative.
- C. Sherry Kamke of EPA said that typically, in a meeting like this, one would look at the purpose and need and alternatives and that EPA's primary interest was on natural resources, air quality, water quality, and the like. EPA is concerned about the effects of diesel on special groups. Nevertheless, she noted that a causal relationship had not been established between diesel pollution and asthma. She further indicated she believed that the analysis to date of transit and HOV appeared to be appropriate and that it was also appropriate to carry transit forward as part of the vision process. She noted further that, from the perspective of EPA, transit was a metro-wide issue.
- C. Carmine Palombo of SEMCOG indicated that it was likely that SEMCOG would work with the area's congressional delegation to seek federal dollars for an alternative analysis of rapid transit in the Woodward corridor.
- C. Alex Sanchez of the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality said his agency's concerns related to water and air quality and the effects on natural resources.
- C. Ron Ristau of SMART indicated that SMART generally agreed with the results of the model with respect to transit, but had some concerns about ridership in the 15-Mile Road area.
- R. Joe Corradino responded that The Corradino Group would take a second look in that area.
- C. Jim Kirschensteiner noted that as the I-75 project moves forward, it will have to be incorporated into a fiscally constrained long-range plan and that air quality conformity could not occur until that was accomplished. These two elements were necessary before a Record of Decision could be developed that is required to advance the project to the next step.
- C. A representative of Orion Township indicated he was concerned that I-75 improvements be extended north due to the poor level-of-service being experienced around M-24 and Baldwin Road.

- C. John Abraham of Troy stressed the desire of Troy for noise abatement in residential areas. He also noted that Troy was moving ahead on a number of arterial projects independent of the I-75 project.

The meeting concluded with a request for additional input as participants further studied the scoping document and other products of the I-75 EIS.

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Attendance

Name	Representing
Abdel Abdalla	Federal Highway Administration
John Abraham	Troy
Michael J. Allen	Madison Heights
Jon Austin	Madison Heights
Thomas Barwin	City of Ferndale
Robin Beltramini	Troy
Mary Ann Bernardi	Troy resident
Dick Cole	Royal Oak
Joe Corradino	The Corradino Group
Sue Datta	Michigan Department of Transportation
Brenda Peek	Michigan Department of Transportation
Paul Davis	Rochester Hills
Bob DeCorte	Traffic Improvement Association for Oakland County
Steve Demeter	Commonwealth Cultural Resources Group
Jerry Dywasek	Orion Township
Keisha Estwick	Orchard, Hiltz & McCliment
John Freeland	Tilton & Associates
Gerrad Godley	Rowe, Inc.
Bob Gosselin	State Representative
Steve Hinz	Federal Highway Administration
Gerald Holmberg	Road Commission for Oakland County
Linsay Jaiyesis	City of Detroit
Wayne Johnson	City of Berkley
Sherry Kamke	US EPA
Sean Kelsch	URS
Karen Kendrick-Hands	TRU
Jim Kirschensteiner	Federal Highway Administration
Sarah Lile	City of Detroit – Environmental Affairs
Art Mitchell	City of Pontiac
Carmine Palombo	SEMCOG
Jayn Page	Madison Heights
Matt Pryor	Mayor of Troy
Ron Ristau	SMART
Alex Sanchez	Michigan Department of Environmental Quality
Jim Schultz	Michigan Department of Transportation
Eugene Snowden	Oakland County Drain Office
Ted Stone	The Corradino Group
Ed Swanson	Madison Heights
Brian Tingley	Schutt & Company
Dennis Toffolo	Oakland County
J. David Vanderveen	Oakland County
Tara Weise	URS
Ken Wells	Rowe, Inc.
David Wresinski	Michigan Department of Transportation
Bill Zipp	Orchard, Hiltz & McCliment