



## Memorandum of Meeting

**Date:** February 8, 2007

**Time:** 5:30 to 8:30 p.m.

**Location:** CHEER Center, Georgetown, Delaware

**Topic:** Georgetown Area Working Group Meeting #14

**Attendees:** See Page 8

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### *Call to Order*

Bob Kramer called the meeting to order at 5:45 p.m. He welcomed everyone and asked the members to introduce themselves for the benefit of new attendees. He indicated that the meeting had three main objectives:

1. Review key issues: wetlands, cultural resources, RTEs, traffic, socio-economic impacts, and natural areas
2. Discuss the east-to-east connections suggested by one of the members at the last Working Group meeting
3. Discuss preparations for upcoming public workshops in March

Secretary Carolann Wicks directed the US 113 project team to develop a recommended preferred alternative by the end of 2007, meaning that the Working Group should make its recommendation by the end of June. Mr. Kramer reminded the members that the goal of the project is to identify, select, and protect the alignment of a preferred alternative.

### *Review of Key Issues*

Monroe Hite welcomed the attendees and listed the materials in the Working Group handouts. He reminded everyone that from the original 19 preliminary alternatives, nine were identified as Alternatives Retained for Detailed Study (ARDS). Two other potential ARDS will be discussed later in the meeting. The project team has been busy for the last several months working on six key issues: the five listed in the purpose of the meeting plus natural areas, which were designated by DNREC last fall.

#### Wetlands

As discussed at previous Working Group meetings, discrepancies have been discovered between the wetland mapping and actual field conditions. The project team has conducted several field views with resource agency representatives. All areas along all ARDS will be visited and wetland boundaries and quality ascertained.



### Cultural Resources

Nearly 1,200 properties are being examined throughout the US 113 corridor for potential eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places. The project team and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) are working together on a very tight schedule to complete those eligibility determinations, hopefully by this summer.

### Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species (RTEs)

Two Federally-listed species may be found in the Georgetown area: swamp pink (a flower) and bald eagle. There are no known eagle nesting sites in the vicinity of the ARDS. After extensive field studies by the project team and DNREC, it has been determined that none of the Georgetown area ARDS will directly impact swamp pink.

### Traffic

Jeff Riegner noted that DelDOT has completely updated its travel demand model, the tool that is used to develop future traffic forecasts throughout Delaware. Traffic forecasts specific to the US 113 North/South Study are nearly complete. It is clear at this point that all of the ARDS meet the purpose of and need for the project.

Mr. Hite added that short-term improvements at the intersection of US 113 and SR 18/SR 404 are now complete, improving operations and reducing congestion. Lit Dryden asked whether having eastbound and westbound traffic move independently (split phasing) would be more efficient than the new configuration of advance eastbound and westbound left turns. Mr. Riegner responded that both scenarios were considered and that the advance left turns resulted in less delay.

### Socio-Economic Impacts

Mr. Riegner indicated that business impacts are being recalculated to account for the traffic forecast updates mentioned earlier. He also presented agricultural economic impacts for each of the ARDS. This analysis was suggested by Ed Kee of the Milford Area Working Group; the project team chose to perform it in the Georgetown and Millsboro-South areas as well.

### Natural Areas

DNREC approved new State Resource Area and Natural Area maps in fall 2006. The project team has added those areas to the mapping and is calculating impacts. All property owners whose properties contain either a State Resource Area or Natural Area should have received letters from DNREC notifying them of the designation.

Mr. Hite emphasized that the resource agencies have made a major commitment to this project, participating in meetings nearly every other week with the project team.



### ***Introduction of East-to-East Alternative***

Mr. Hite introduced the concept of a connection between the Georgetown area Orange Alternative and the east bypass alternatives in the Millsboro area. This idea, raised by a member of the Georgetown Area Working Group at the last meeting, could have several benefits: fewer natural resource impacts, fewer community impacts, and a shorter overall length. To date, this Working Group has not yet expressed a clear preference for an alternative, and the east-to-east connection could provide another option for the group's consideration.

Mr. Kramer remarked that at its February 6 meeting, the Millsboro-South Area Working Group was generally supportive of showing an east-to-east connection as an alternative. He emphasized, however, that the Working Groups are not being asked to endorse such an alternative, but simply to indicate their preference as to whether it should be presented to the public.

Joe Wutka provided more information about the East-to-East Alternative as detailed in the presentation materials. He said that even if this alternative is added, DelDOT is committed to retaining the current project schedule, with the recommendation of a preferred alternative by the end of 2007. He also reminded the attendees of the original Sussex County North/South Feasibility Study. A continuous east bypass of both Georgetown and Millsboro was shown as a possibility in that study. The Feasibility Study had the goal of staying on the existing US 113 alignment wherever practical and pursuing bypasses only where needed. Through the study process, the individual bypasses of Georgetown and Millsboro were moved out due to environmental and development concerns to the point that traveling from east of Georgetown back to US 113 and back east again to bypass Millsboro would be out of the way. An East-to-East Alternative would also avoid potentially difficult cultural resource impacts at the intersection of US 113 and Governor Stockley Road.

Carlton Moore asked why the Millsboro area stakeholders are opposed to an on-alignment alternative. Mr. Wutka responded that many perceive such an alternative as splitting Millsboro in half, especially considering that most of the town's new growth is on the west side of US 113, separate from the traditional downtown. Mr. Kramer added that it is disruptive to businesses and emergency services.

Mr. Wutka then oriented the attendees to maps showing two potential alignments for an East-to-East Alternative. The first option, Violet, provides a fairly straight connection between the Georgetown and Millsboro east bypasses. The second, Dark Blue, bends to the east to avoid State Resource Area (SRA) impacts as requested by the resource agencies. Dark Blue also follows a utility corridor and crosses Deep Branch further upstream than Violet. Harold Johnson asked where the East-to-East Alternatives cross SR 30. Mr. Wutka responded that Dark Blue crosses about 2,000 feet south of Peterkins Road and Violet just south of Zoar Road.

Guy Phillips asked how SRAs work, and whether they represent a taking of land without compensation. Mr. Wutka replied that property owners can choose conservation easements if they like. Mr. Kramer added that this is an older program, originating in the early 1990s; the only



change in the past year is the issuance of new maps. SRAs are not protected from development unless the governing land use authority (county or town) enacts those protections. Although DNREC and other resource agencies want to protect the area between Violet and Dark Blue, that is not a prohibition on development. Further, Mr. Wutka indicated that many SRA-designated lots in this area have been logged recently.

Mr. Wutka then discussed the preliminary impact matrix on slide 27 of the presentation. The East-to-East Alternatives represent a savings in length of about 2-1/2 to 3 miles as compared to the separate east bypass alternatives around Georgetown and Millsboro. Wetland impacts are comparable and fewer relocations would be required. Actual forest impacts would be lower than shown on the matrix because of recent logging activity. Some impacts are still being calculated.

Keith Moore asked what the Working Groups to the north are considering. Mr. Wutka said that a preferred alternative has been determined in the Ellendale area consisting of upgrading existing US 113. Further to the north, the Milford Area Working Group is considering seven alternatives: three east bypasses, two west bypasses, one on-alignment, and no-build.

Carlton Moore asked how the cultural resource studies work. Mr. Wutka replied that the project team develops a recommendation for each of the 1,200 properties under study, and that recommendation goes through DeIDOT and SHPO review before being updated based on those agency comments. Mr. Kramer emphasized that is a huge number of properties to be considered under one project, both due to the project's size and because this part of Sussex County has not undergone detailed study by SHPO before. To maintain as aggressive a schedule as reasonably possible, the project team is adjusting alternatives to avoid even potentially eligible properties prior to the completion of the eligibility determinations.

David Pedersen asked whether the wetlands shown on the mapping are up to date, because there may be some benefit realized by connecting SR 18/SR 404 west of US 113 with the north end of the Orange Alternative. Mr. Riegner said that the field-verified wetlands will be smaller than those currently shown on the mapping. He indicated that the project team continues to look for opportunities to improve east-west travel in the Georgetown area. If an East-to-East Alternative is pursued, east-west travel could be improved in one of three ways: (1) Mr. Pedersen's suggestion, (2) through reduced north-south through volumes on US 113 conflicting with east-west volumes, and (3) with an update of existing Alt. SR 24 (Speedway Road to Mount Joy Road).

Mr. Kramer then invited general comments on the East-to-East Alternative.

- In response to Mr. Pedersen's question, Mr. Wutka indicated that the diamonds on the East-to-East Alternative maps accurately indicate where the project team believes interchanges would be provided.



- David Baird asked what will happen to existing US 113 if a bypass is built. Mr. Hite replied that it will remain as it is today between Georgetown and Millsboro. Some access management principles could be applied, but they would likely not be as restrictive as corridor preservation. Mr. Baird believes this could represent an economic development opportunity for the Town.
- Merrill Moore asked whether farms in the farmland preservation program would be affected. Mr. Hite said they may, and the project team will provide those impacts in the matrix. Mr. Wutka added that the East-to-East Alternative would avoid impacts to the Town of Georgetown spray fields, which are currently in farmland preservation.
- Harold Johnson expressed concern that if farms are split by an alternative, farmers would not be able to cross the highway to access both remaining parcels. Mr. Hite said that the alternatives are developed to follow property lines to the greatest extent possible with the intent of avoiding that situation.
- Mr. Baird cautioned that a new set of stakeholders will be affected by the East-to-East Alternative and asked whether they had been notified. Mr. Kramer said that if the Working Groups agree that the East-to-East Alternative should be brought to the public, they will be notified immediately of upcoming public workshops.
- Mr. Pedersen indicated concern about the expense of a bridge over the Indian River and its potential impact on navigation. Mr. Kramer said that the East-to-East Alternative does not include that bridge; it is part of the Millsboro area east bypasses. Advantages and disadvantages listed for East-to-East are in comparison to other east bypass alternatives. A similar West-to-West connection was considered as well, but it offers none of the potential benefits of an East-to-East Alternative.
- In response to Mr. Baird's question, Mr. Kramer noted that the East-to-East Alternative will be added to the impact matrix for the next Working Group meeting pending the group's decision to present the alternative to the public.
- Mr. Dryden asked how the East-to-East Alternative could be assessed so quickly when the US 113 North/South Study has taken years to reach this point. Mr. Hite cautioned that the study of the East-to-East Alternative is by no means complete, and Mr. Kramer added that it has taken six months of focused work by the project team to reach this point with respect to East-to-East.
- Harold Johnson asked why East-to-East was brought up in the first place. Mr. Kramer said that it was suggested at last May's Working Group meeting. He reminded the group that no one is being asked to recommend East-to-East as a preferred alternative, but rather to determine whether it is worthy of consideration alongside the other ARDS. The purpose of



the potential March public workshops is specifically to inform the public of the East-to-East Alternative.

- Harold Johnson suggested that instead of improvements in the US 113 corridor, an elevated highway should be constructed along SR 1 with a connection from SR 404. Mike Simmons reminded everyone that improving traffic flow to the beach is not the goal of the project. Furthermore, he indicated that DelDOT previously studied an elevated highway along SR 1 in the beach area. In addition to its enormous expense, it did not adequately address transportation needs and was rejected by elected officials. Mr. Kramer added that huge amounts of traffic growth are forecast on US 113 due to growth in towns in the corridor, not due to the beach. US 113 cannot adequately function as both a highway and a main street.
- Keith Moore suggested rerouting east-west traffic on SR 404 to Road 40, which would provide a better connection to the Orange Alternative.
- Mr. Baird asked whether the nine alternatives currently under consideration could be narrowed to fewer so some residents can move on with their lives. Mr. Hite responded that according to the project process, it is desirable to carry all alternatives until the end. However, stakeholders may be able to draw their own conclusions as impacts calculations are finalized.
- Eric Buehl indicated his support for upgrades to existing Alt. SR 24 to accommodate east-west traffic.
- Carlton Moore asked what will prevent this kind of study from happening all over again prior to eventual construction. Mr. Hite responded that the goal of the study is to identify and select a preferred alternative and to protect the right of way to allow for eventual construction. DelDOT will look to program funds for early acquisition of right of way as soon as the preferred alternative is selected. Mr. Wutka said that the SR 1 study in Kent and New Castle Counties began in 1984, and segments of the highway opened in stages between 1993 and 2003, illustrating the success of early corridor identification and construction over an extended period of time.
- To conclude the discussion, Mr. Hite reminded the Working Group that although there are two separate groups in the Georgetown and Millsboro-South areas, their recommendations will be combined into one Federal environmental document for the “Georgetown-South” area. This document will include one preferred alternative for all of the US 113 corridor from East Redden Road north of Georgetown to the Maryland state line at Selbyville.

### ***Schedule/Next Steps***

Mr. Hite presented the upcoming project schedule as illustrated in slides 33 through 36 of the presentation. DelDOT’s goal remains to identify a preferred alternative for the Georgetown-South area in November 2007.



Upcoming Working Group meetings for the Georgetown area are scheduled for four Thursdays: March 29, May 3, May 31, and June 28. Workshops to present the East-to-East Alternative to the public for the first time are scheduled for Monday, March 12 at the Millsboro East Elementary School and Thursday, March 15 at the CHEER Center in Georgetown. Both will be held from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m., and the same information will be presented at both workshops. Mr. Kramer asked each Working Group member to attend one of the workshops for at least 60 to 90 minutes. He also emphasized that Working Group members put the dates of the upcoming meetings on the calendar now to ensure that their constituencies are represented in the discussion.

To wrap up, Mr. Kramer said that the current lengthy study process pays huge dividends in ensuring that conclusions reached now will not need to be revisited in the future as construction nears. For example, our work with the resource agencies will allow us to receive provisional permits. Although those permits will require some reassessment between now and when construction starts, that is not nearly as much effort as redoing the study at that time. The outcome of this process will allow DelDOT to proceed with construction when funding is available and needs dictate.

With regard to the East-to-East Alternative, Mr. Phillips asked where the Georgetown area Working Group's responsibility ends and the Millsboro-South Area Working Group's begins. Mr. Kramer said that there is no formal breakpoint. Both groups will need to agree on an alternative, and the project team will facilitate that agreement by sharing the status and opinions of both Working Groups at each upcoming meeting.

Carlton Moore asked whether the Working Group will vote at the end of the process. Mr. Kramer said that the group has had divergent opinions so far, and that consensus means compromise. Ultimately, each Working Group member may not love the recommended preferred alternative, but can support it. Impacts are inevitable in a project of this size, and the project team's goal is to share or balance those impacts. He also reminded everyone that the Working Group provides only part of the input to a recommended preferred alternative; the public and resource agencies also have a say.

The meeting adjourned at about 8:30 p.m.



**Working group members in attendance:**

Howard Abbott, Jr.  
Donna Atkinson  
David Baird  
Eric Buehl  
Allison Burris  
Carol R. Campbell-Hansen  
Mark Davis  
David Diehl  
Lit Dryden  
Martin Donovan  
Matthew Gibbs  
Bryan Hall  
Harold Johnson  
Terry Johnson  
Carlton Moore, Sr.  
Keith Moore  
Merrill Moore  
David Pedersen  
Guy Phillips  
Mike Simmons  
Walter Smith  
Scott Thomas  
Russell Warrington

**Others in attendance:**

Ken Christenbury, Axiom Engineering  
John Elliott  
Charles R. Ertwine  
Mike Esposito  
Tim Hodges, Village Developers  
Adam Huber, Sussex Countian  
Tom Klein, Town of Georgetown