



US 113 Project Team

Working Group Meeting Notes

Date of Meeting: February 24, 2004

Time: 5:30 PM – 8:30 PM

Location: Carlisle Fire Company Banquet Hall

Topic: **US 113 North/South Study
Milford Area Working Group
Meeting No. 1**

Attendees: See attached

The following is a summary of the meeting discussion:

- ▶ The Working Group viewed the US 113 video “The Time to Act is Now” prior to the meeting.
- ▶ Bob Kramer called the meeting to order and welcomed the Milford Area Working Group members to their first meeting. The Working Group members then introduced themselves and their affiliation.
- ▶ Mike Simmons thanked the members for agreeing to serve on the Working Group. He noted the value of public involvement in DeIDOT projects and stressed the importance of the North/South study to DeIDOT, Kent County, Sussex County and the Milford area along the US 113 corridor. He stated that the involvement and active participation of each of the towns along US 113, as well as local business and community leaders, farmers and other property owners is essential to the success of this study. Mr. Simmons noted that the US 113 North/South Study will carry out the recommendations in the Sussex County North/South Transportation Feasibility Study. In a cooperative effort between Kent County, Sussex County and DeIDOT, the feasibility study confirmed the feasibility of a north/south limited access highway and recommended that the US 113 corridor be studied for that purpose.
- ▶ Mr. Simmons noted that the purpose of the Working Group is to help DeIDOT develop, analyze and review alternatives for establishing a limited access highway in this area of the US 113 corridor, using the existing roadway where feasible. Mr. Simmons further noted that the Working Group will serve an important advisory role to the Department as one component of an overall public involvement effort that also includes the listening tour, public workshops, a project web site and consultation and coordination with state and federal environmental resource agencies. Mr. Simmons referred to the extensive listening tour effort to date involving over 150 interviews with individuals and representatives of various organizations in the US 113 corridor. He stressed that this study is a joint effort by DeIDOT and Kent and Sussex County governments.
- ▶ Mr. Simmons then introduced Mr. Michael Petit de Mange, representing Kent County.
- ▶ Mr. Petit de Mange thanked DeIDOT for inviting the county to participate in this Study. Kent County wants to be involved to make sure that the right decisions are made. Mr. Petit de Mange noted that he has worked successfully with Mr. Kramer and complimented him for prior efforts in Delaware. He noted that this was the finest opening workshop he has ever attended. He again expressed pleasure in being a part of the study.

- ▶ Mr. Kramer noted that tonight's meeting will primarily involve the Project Team providing information to the Working Group, but future meetings will involve a more active exchange between the members of the Working Group and Project Team.
- ▶ Mr. Simmons then introduced Bob Stickels, Administrator for Sussex County
- ▶ Bob Stickels noted the importance of active participation in the work of the three working groups. He noted that nothing is preconceived and expressed concern with the large number of visitors and people moving to Sussex County and how the transportation system will accommodate that growth. Mr. Stickels, referred to the initial north-south feasibility study, the involvement and buy-in by Sussex County and their adoption of the results into the Sussex County comprehensive Plan. Mr. Stickels referred to the importance of US 113 to Sussex countians. He also referred to Maryland's plans to dualize US 113 and MD 404. He also noted the potential decrease in tolls on the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel and the potential attraction of additional traffic to the US 113 corridor. Mr. Stickels stated that the 32 mile corridor involves 12 miles in the towns and 20 miles in the counties, thus the importance of the counties and towns working closely with DelDOT. The recommendations must have wide ranging public support, including Kent and Sussex Counties and the towns along US 113. He encouraged the Working Group members to continue to participate in the Study.
- ▶ Monroe Hite, III, DelDOT Project Manager for the US 113 North/South Study, thanked the Working Group for accepting the challenge. Mr. Hite noted DelDOT realizes the rapid pace of development in the US 113 Corridor, therefore, timing is critical. He stressed the importance of developing a plan that has broad-based support. He noted that the process that DelDOT must follow will be discussed later in the meeting, and that the Department intends to move forward as efficiently as possible. He then introduced the Project Team members, noting the role each will play during the study (see project notebook Tab 2 and Tab 3, slide 4). Mr. Hite then quickly reviewed the contents of the project notebook and stated that the Project Team would provide material at each meeting for easy insertion into the notebook. Mr. Hite discussed the dates established for Working Group meetings Nos. 2 and 3, i.e., March 23 and May 11, respectively. Mr. Hite then reviewed the Project Team effort to date including the video preparation, the listening tour involving over 150 interviews, 3 public workshops in October, data collection, etc. (see Tab 2). Mr. Hite referred to three potential types of improvements; short, mid and long-term. He also asked members to fill out a form regarding their contact information - but he noted that once provided, the contact information is public. Mr. Hite advised that any Working Group member who wished to receive a copy of the video should contact him.
- ▶ Mr. Kramer introduced Mayor Ronnie Rogers of Milford and thanked him for attending.
- ▶ Mr. Kramer noted that all the PowerPoint slides are included in their project notebook (Tab 3).
- ▶ Mr. Kramer then briefly discussed the Working Group guidelines (Tab 1) and requested that members review the guidelines prior to discussion, potential modification, and approval at the next Working Group meeting. Mr. Kramer noted that these guidelines attempt to describe how the Working Group will function. The guidelines discuss "how we treat each other," "how we make recommendations," and "how we communicate with the outside". He stated that it is his job, as facilitator, to keep the Group moving ahead and not have the group get "bogged down." He noted that hopefully the Group will work by consensus, ("i.e., a sense of the Group") and will only formally vote when absolutely necessary. He stressed that all opinions are valid and that there will be no suppression of ideas.
- ▶ Mr. Kramer then discussed the results of the more than 150 interviews completed to date as part of the listening tour effort, and the October Public Workshops. The results are summarized on slides 8 – 10 (Tab 3) and in more detail under Tab 4.

- ▶ Mr. Hite then reviewed the Project Team Purpose and Need and the Overall Goals and Objectives for the Study (Tab 3, slides 11 and 12). All alternatives subsequently developed will be evaluated with respect to the project Purpose and Need. Alternatives that do not meet Purpose and Need will not be retained for detailed study.
- ▶ Mr. Hite expressed the Department's goal to convert US 113 to a limited access highway, utilizing as much of the existing US 113 general alignment as possible, while addressing existing and projected transportation needs and anticipated land development in the US 113 corridor. Mr. Hite then introduced a draft of the Working Group's Vision, Goals, and Objectives for the study area (Tab 3, slide 13, and Tab 5). He noted that the Project Team developed this "first cut" of the Vision, Goals and Objectives, and stressed the importance of Working Group, Resource Agency, and Public comments on these items. The goals and objectives are extremely important, and although somewhat general in nature, will guide the development and evaluation of short, mid, and long-term alternatives. Monroe requested that Working Group members review the "first-cut", which was developed using information from several appropriate documents (Tab 3, slide 13) and be ready to discuss these at the next meeting.
- ▶ Mr. Hite then noted that the federal resource agencies have agreed to divide the project into 3 areas for environmental purposes; 1) Milford, 2) Ellendale and 3) Georgetown-South. This should streamline the environmental process. Mr., Hite expressed the importance of complying with all federal requirements in order to retain the potential to use federal funding for any improvements.
- ▶ Mr. Hite noted that copies of constraint maps will be mailed to the members for their review prior to the next meeting. The Project Team is interested in whether any specific constraints (such as environmental or historic features), have been missed.
- ▶ Richard Carmean, Milford's City Manager, and Karen Emory Brittingham, City Planner, provided information regarding anticipated growth in and near Milford. Mr. Carmean started by emphasizing the role of the City Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission in fostering well-planned growth of the City. The City has a simple plan for growth: annexation best serves the area because development can be easily tied to comprehensive infrastructure improvements. Until five or six years ago, most growth around Milford occurred in unincorporated Kent and Sussex Counties. Milford often provided some measure of municipal services in those areas, despite being unable to provide central sewer and water. [Residents outside City limits typically pay one and a half times the in-City rate for City services.] Now, the annexation strategy ensures community water and sewer as well as electrical, fire protection, and other City services.
- ▶ Mr. Carmean stated that the slightly greater density that often accompanies development of annexed parcels is not particularly consequential if the developments are planned better as a result of the annexation. He did, however, emphasize that the City will generally comply with requests from either Kent or Sussex County not to increase density in particular areas. Growth in Milford, according to the Carlisle Fire Company, is likely to be about 30 percent through 2015, although Mr. Carmean believes that estimate may be low.
- ▶ In reference to US 113, Mr. Carmean said that the City would not rule out consideration of a bypass, provided that such a bypass would have no local access, thereby protecting existing businesses on US 113 as much as possible.
- ▶ Ms. Brittingham then provided the group a wealth of information on the City's planned and future growth. Milford updated its comprehensive plan in 2003. One key element which received DelDOT support included limiting growth east of SR 1, with most growth south and west of the City. Due to the

frequency of subsequent annexation requests, sometimes as often as two per week, the five-year comprehensive plan has become, in Ms. Brittingham's words, an "eight-month plan," and as such another update is underway to re-establish a reasonable boundary for Milford's growth.

- ▶ Using a map showing anticipated areas of annexation, Ms. Brittingham explained the City's strategy for working with multiple landowners requesting annexation. For example, in the vicinity of SR 1 and SR 30, the City is working with six property owners to ensure a comprehensive extension of City services, such as sewer, water, electric, and a fire substation, to the area. In fact, to provide better service to a particular area, farms in the agricultural preservation program may be annexed so that development parcels are contiguous to the City boundary. Ms. Brittingham emphasized, however, that such annexation does not change the status of the agricultural preservation in any way.
- ▶ In response to a question by Tom Shafer, Ms. Brittingham said that parcels that are not contiguous to City boundaries cannot be annexed unless the intervening parcels are annexed as well. City law permits annexation by vote if one parcel is in between; this process has been used only once because that intervening property owner was not responsive to annexation requests.
- ▶ Bob Kramer asked how many dwelling units are in the City's development pipeline. Mr. Carmean and Ms. Brittingham responded that over 200 dwelling units have been approved in the past four years, with another 1,200 in the development approval process. For comparison, the City currently has about 3,400 homes.
- ▶ Bob Stickels congratulated Milford on setting a good example for other towns by ensuring that infrastructure is in place prior to annexation. He believes that higher density in towns is beneficial, reducing sprawl in more rural areas.
- ▶ Mr. Carmean closed by stating that Milford's character is changing. Milford is no longer an inland "little Dover," but rather is part of greater eastern Sussex County. Many new residents live in the City only part of the year, viewing their property as a beach house despite the distance from the actual beach. These new residents will demand good access to and from the south on SR 1. In fact, growth in Milford is starting to mimic that in the beach area. Only a few years ago, Milford averaged about a dozen housing starts a year; in 2003, a construction season shortened by bad spring weather, that number had risen to 160.
- ▶ Bill Hellmann re-introduced the Project Team Task Managers for the three broad study components, i.e. Traffic, Safety and Engineering (Tom Hannan), Community Involvement (Bob Kramer) and Environmental/Land Use (Joe Wutka).
- ▶ Mr. Hellmann then briefly described that the data gathered and developed for the three study components and the Study Vision, Goals and Objectives would guide the development and evaluation of alternatives. All of this information will be provided to the Resource Agencies, the Working Groups and the General Public for their input (Tab 3, slide 14).
- ▶ Mr. Kramer then reviewed the overall community involvement effort including ongoing interviews, the October Public Workshops and smaller meetings anticipated during subsequent phases of the study with those most directly affected. Mr. Kramer indicated that the Working Group will be advised of the results of all meetings held by the Project Team. Mr. Kramer pointed out that in addition to the advice and recommendations that the Working Group will provide, the Department will consider input from the federal and state resource agencies and the general public (largely from the Public Workshops and e-mails). Furthermore, he indicated that given the magnitude of this project and the likely improvements

that will be proposed, the Governor and General Assembly will be involved, particularly when it comes to funding decisions.

- ▶ Tom Hannan then reviewed the efforts to date in collecting traffic, accidents and land use data and how that data would be used in developing and evaluating alternatives. He explained that existing traffic data that was collected included counts, composition (trucks/cars), other users (transit/peds/cyclists), usage characteristics (by day, week, month, season and local/through), origins/destinations, access points and system performance. Future traffic was forecast using DelDOT's regional model. This effort yielded two key findings about traffic levels in the out year of the model, about 20 years from now:
 - > Average daily traffic will approach current peak season traffic levels.
 - > Peak season traffic will be as much as 2/3 higher than it is today.
- ▶ Safety was assessed using three years of accident data. There was a high percentage of rear end accidents, which is common for a road with traffic signals such as US 113.
- ▶ Socioeconomic studies indicated that there has been and will continue to be a steady climb in population in all of Sussex County – approximately 28% on average between 1990 and 2000; approximately 12% projected every 10 years through 2030. Households and employment will grow at a similar rate.
- ▶ Land coverage in the County has changed over the past ten years. Agricultural and forested lands and wetlands declined slightly while residential land use increased. Known land development information presented earlier in the evening will be used to help the Working Group and Project Team develop solutions that better fit this area. The land use maps will be continually updated during the study.
- ▶ Tom Hannan then presented information about alternatives development. Mr. Hannan noted that should the Working Group identify problems that can be addressed with feasible short-term solutions, these solutions could proceed in advance of the long-term-solutions. Examples of these types of solutions include:
 - > Traffic Signal Modifications
 - > Improved signing
 - > Turn lanes/prohibitions
- ▶ For the long-term plan, the Project Team will solicit input from the Working Group on alternatives that:
 - > Respond to the Purpose and the Need and Vision, Goals and Objectives
 - > DelDOT can secure approval and can build (environmental documents, permits, funding, etc.)
- ▶ The types of limited-access roadway alternatives that will be considered include:
 - > No-Build (essentially the same type of roadway as today, but with minor modifications – e.g. reduce signals, driveways, crossovers, etc.)
 - > More significant improvements to existing US 113 (e.g. Interchanges and/or frontage roads)
 - > Upgrade of the existing road systems
 - > New roadway alignments (bypasses)
- ▶ Joe Wutka then reviewed the effort to date to collect environmental and cultural resources data and noted that ultimately alternatives will be developed in a manner that attempts first to avoid resources and, if not possible, to minimize impacts on resources and to mitigate unavoidable impacts. Mr. Wutka

referred to the development of an environmental inventory to date, including baseline data in GIS format and a study area key map with the following: aquatic resources, wetland resources, terrestrial resources, socioeconomic resources, cultural and historic properties, planning resources, protected lands, land use and community facilities, land evaluation site assessment LESA model, traffic, and imagery.

- ▶ Mr. Wutka then discussed the coordination to date between the Project Team and the Environmental Resource Agencies, which began about a year ago and has involved sharing data collected, along with two field reviews of the US 113 corridor to confirm information in the environmental inventory. Two informational sessions have also been held with the agencies. Mr. Wutka discussed the constraints map (which will be mailed to all Working Group members), which indicates the environmental and cultural resources identified to date in the Milford study area. Mr. Wutka reviewed the various resources noted on the map and requested that Working Group members review the map and provide, at the next meeting, comments on resources that may have been missed. He expressed the importance of attempting to identify resources early in the process, prior to developing and subsequently evaluating alternatives.
- ▶ Mr. Wutka noted that short-term improvements must have minimal environmental impacts that result in straightforward documentation and timely agency approvals. Longer-term improvements are more likely to have greater impacts, more complex documentation and require more time to secure agencies' approval. The Project Team will attempt, when possible, to present data to the agencies prior to presenting that data to the Working Group. In this way, the Working Group can be apprised of agency comments and positions prior to reaching conclusions and making recommendations.
- ▶ Elliott Workman asked about the size of the study area and how rare, threatened and endangered species (RTEs) are being considered., Joe Wutka responded that the area encompasses roughly 2-1/2 miles on either side of existing US 113. Furthermore, both the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and DNREC have provided information to the project team regarding RTEs. However that information is typically not shown on maps to protect those resources. Finally, in response to Mr. Workman's follow-up question, Monroe Hite noted that the Delaware Greenways will be a consulting party under Section 106.
- ▶ Mr. Hellmann then very briefly reviewed the environmental coordination and consultation process for the study, referred to as the Mid-Atlantic Transportation and Environmental Streamlining Process (MATE) (Tab 3, slide 15), noting that Step 1 (Planning) was virtually complete, that Steps 2 and 3 were underway (Scoping and Purpose and Need) and that Step 4 would get underway shortly (Alternatives Development).
- ▶ Elliott Workman asked for examples of a resource agency. Joe Wutka noted the US Army Corps of Engineers, US Fish and Wildlife Services and DNREC, as examples.
- ▶ Mr. Simmons then reviewed the substantial DeIDOT projects in various stages of development throughout Sussex County, referring to a list and map of the projects (Tab 3, slides 16 and 17). Mr. Simmons noted that these projects involve a DeIDOT commitment of \$350 million in transportation funds to Sussex County and \$23 million for projects in southern Kent County.
- ▶ Mr. Simmons then reviewed prior DeIDOT East/West Corridor Study efforts in the 1970's, 1980's and 1990's, many of which considered major capacity improvements. He noted, however, that none of these studies led to construction due to significant local opposition. Mr. Simmons stated that this opposition led DeIDOT to change direction, i.e., recent efforts have focused on operational improvements, such as the addition of center turning lanes, bypass lanes, and local road improvements

which result in a better overall transportation network/highway grid. Mr. Simmons referred to the East-West Study currently being conducted by DeIDOT's Planning Division in the Southeast and Northwest areas of Sussex County. The study is scheduled to be completed in the summer and will establish priorities for projects that will move from planning to project development (Transportation Solutions Division). Mr. Simmons referred to the significant commitment of DeIDOT funds in the 6-year Capital Transportation Program (CTP) for east/west routes, e.g., SR 26 (\$28M), SR 54 (\$30M), SR 24 (\$72M), among others. Finally, Mr. Simmons encouraged the members to review the projects in the CTP (Tab 3, slides 16 and 17) and to call him should they have questions. He acknowledged that Sussex County has significant needs, but noted that DeIDOT has made a significant financial commitment (\$350M) and is making a significant manpower effort to address those needs. Mr. Simmons noted that US 113 will be the spine of the Sussex County Transportation system for years to come.

- ▶ In response to I.G. Burton's question, Mike Simmons confirmed that all \$350 million in Sussex County projects is in fact in the current Capital Transportation Program.
- ▶ Elliott Workman asked whether transit is considered in the Department's program for the County. Mike Simmons responded that it is; for example, sidewalks to support transit are an important part of the plans for the SR 24, SR 26, and SR 54 corridors. Bob Stickels said that proposed transit service in Sussex County is even over and above the \$350 million programmed in the CTP. Tom Hannan also said that DTC will be holding a public hearing for expanded transit service in the County on [Friday, March 19, 2004 from 9 am to 4:15 pm at the DelTech campus in Georgetown. DTC expects 150-200 participants. The stated purpose is "to educate the public on the background issues DTC and DeIDOT are facing in Sussex County in providing an efficient and effective transit service."]
- ▶ Richard Carmean agreed with the Department's position that upgrading roadway networks (in the SR 24, SR 26, and SR 54 corridors, for example) makes more sense than a new major east-west route.
- ▶ Mr. Hite reminded the Working Group of the importance of their providing comments on the Draft Vision, Goals and Objectives and the constraints map, that will be mailed to the members.
- ▶ Mr. Hite then spoke about future meetings. The March 23 and May 11 meetings, as well as a meeting likely to be scheduled in June, will focus on alternatives development and evaluation and will lead to a public workshop in the fall. He indicated that the proposed schedule called for the Working Group to take the summer off, then reconvene in the fall for 2 or 3 meetings (alternatives retained for detailed analysis phase), then picking up again in early 2005 with a series of meetings to determine preferred/recommended alternatives. Mr. Hite anticipates the study will take about 18 months to complete with about nine Working Group meetings, i.e., meeting about every two months (excluding the Christmas Holiday and summer periods).
- ▶ Mr. Hite reminded members that, should anyone want a copy of the Environmental Inventory or video, to please let him know.
- ▶ Mr. Hite then offered two options for beginning the development of alternatives. The first option would begin with a "blank slate", using a map of the corridor as a base, with the Working Group members developing suggestions and conceptual alternatives to upgrade US 113 in this study area to a limited-access highway. Mr. Hite then presented a second option that would have the Project Team using what they have learned from the listening tour and workshops, as well as background research to date on various constraints, and provide initial ideas and concepts to the Working Group as a starting point. The Working Group would then offer comments and suggestions on these ideas and concepts as well as propose additional alternatives.

- ▶ Mr. Kramer again reviewed the two approaches. Following a brief discussion by the members, the Working Group reached a consensus to pursue Option 2.
- ▶ I.G. Burton asked Tom Hannan to provide some clarification on the traffic model. Mr. Hannan explained that DelDOT's existing model looks at average annual daily traffic, not seasonal peaks. By May, the project team will develop a model that covers the entire Delmarva peninsula and examines both average traffic and summer traffic. This model ties into other regional models (for example, over the Chesapeake Bay Bridge) and will serve the Delaware Department of Transportation as a whole, not just the US 113 project.
- ▶ I.G. Burton asked for copies of engineering studies prior to the next working group meeting. Monroe Hite responded that because the next meeting is only four weeks away, there would not be time to provide information in advance. However, the team committed to providing a host of engineering and environmental data over the next few meetings so that the working group can make informed decisions. One piece of information that will be provided within the next two weeks is a half-size copy of the Milford area environmental constraints map; Bob Kramer asked all members to review and mark up that map prior to the March 23 meeting.
- ▶ Mr. Kramer noted that the next meeting would be held on March 23, 2004 beginning at 5:30 at the Carlisle Fire Company Banquet Hall.
- ▶ Mr. Kramer asked the Working Group to review 3 items, prior to the next meeting, and come prepared for a discussion:
 - > Working Group Guidelines
 - > Vision, Goals and Objectives
 - > Constraints Map (to be provided to the Working Group prior to the next meeting).
- ▶ Bob Stickels noted that Sussex County does not have an MPO, with funded staff – thus the rationale for providing an annual written report on transportation priorities to the County Council and DelDOT. Mr. Stickels referred to DelDOT as a partner in this study effort and emphasized the need for a limited access north/south highway in Sussex County. He noted the importance of all three north/south routes (US 13, US 113, and SR 1).
- ▶ Randy Marvel asked that the status of the Thompsonville interchange and SR 1 / SR 30 interchange be provided at the next meeting.
- ▶ Mr. Kramer said the agenda for the next meeting will include those three items and initial discussion on the development of conceptual alternatives.
- ▶ The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 PM.