

**MINUTES/NOTES**  
**Northern Tier Expressway (Corridor Study)**  
**Advisory Committee Meeting November 10, 2004**  
**Canton, NY**

- Meeting introduction—Bob Juravich, Executive Director, Development Authority of the North Country
- Opening Remarks—Mark Frechette, Regional Planning and Program Manager, Region 7 NYSDOT. Outlined change in study scope from tiered environmental scoping study to corridor study
- Don Brining, County Administrator, St. Lawrence County—we need results and the whole corridor highway built eventually, including the connector roads, i.e. Ogdensburg, Massena and Lowville. Represents St. Lawrence Economic Development Working Group and this group has the same opinion. We don't want just a few projects built and that would be the end of it.
- Sam Trombley, Clinton County Legislator—We should look at a bridge across Lake Champlain as part of the corridor study.
- Mark F.-- Fort Drum Connector Project is moving ahead and this could be considered first corridor project. The current strategy is better than former planning/environmental study approach. Determining the eastern terminus, including a possible connection into Plattsburgh, is also part of this study. The current scope of services, when completed, will result in a better way to get funding and get projects to construction sooner. This will be a faster process than the tiered EIS process.

*Note: Mark will be attending a "Mega Projects" meeting in Albany. Undertaking the study now could be significant.*

- Bob J.—This process is meant to generate high priority projects. To get to that point, we need to get agreement on scope of work to be undertaken in this corridor study.
- Kathy Mullaney, Vice President, St. Lawrence University—Does scoping document do what we want it to do? Does it address the North Country Expressway concept?
- Mark F.—It addresses the issue of listing, in priority order, those projects which will complete the NTE. Individual project designs will not be developed but strategies for development of NTE will be end result.
- Mark F.—The main focus of this study is the NTE. Spurs are a secondary concern. Spurs are more in line with economic development issues. That will be a secondary focus of this study. There is not a lot of funding available in study budget to analyze spurs.

- Russ Wilcox, former Executive Director of The Thousand Islands Bridge Authority— Does the Federal Highway Administration approve the Corridor Study scope?
- Mark F.—FHWA is on board with the Scope. This study is a more traditional approach and FHWA likes this approach.
- Kathy A, —Will FHWA have to sign on dotted line?
- Mark F.—No. The next step is for NYSDOT to sign agreement with Wilbur Smith Associates (WSA). We want to make sure everyone is on board with scope of study.

*Note: the agreement for this study will be between NYSDOT and WSA, whereas the original agreement was between DANC and WSA.*

- Russ W.—Can we get started now?
- Mark F.—NYSDOT needs to get agreement in place with WSA first.
- Rodney Brown, Clinton County Planning Director—Look into scoping document’s definition of eastern end of corridor. Does it go to Champlain or Plattsburgh? Adjust scope to show that the alignment at eastern end will be decided as part of this study; maybe at end of the Objective I Analysis. Keeping both alignments could be an option; whether or not a bridge from Plattsburgh to Vermont is feasible and realistic may be a deciding factor.
- Peter Plumeau, Wilbur Smith Associates—Under current Scope, Route 11 Corridor would be studied (for example, traffic forecasting) in detail, but spurs would not. Eastern end of Corridor would receive special attention because of the two different termini (Plattsburgh and Champlain). Scoping approach won’t change in we add spurs, but geographic parameters and cost will change.
- Bruce Irwin, Special Assistant, DANC—The Eastern end of the Corridor has to be treated differently than the Lowville, Ogdensburg and Massena spurs.
- Jim Halpen, representative of St. Lawrence Economic Development Working Group--At the eastern end of the Corridor, you have two possible alignments as opposed to having spurs to Lowville, Ogdensburg and Massena at the western end.
- Rodney B.—Clinton County will keep an open mind regarding eastern end.
- Peter P.—There is a New England concept for an east-west highway. There is some money available to study that portion of corridor.
- Bob J.—But, this study is just for the NY portion.
- Mark F.—New Hampshire is just getting started.

- Rodney B.—We need to better define in the scoping document the alignment issue in Clinton County.
- Mark F.—We have to go out to the public to get their comments.
- Rodney B.—The two alignments are different in character.
- Mark F.—The issue of a Lake Champlain Bridge could be an important factor.
- Dave Werner, Franklin County committee member—If we make a determination on solution of which alignment to progress, we may force Vermont to move forward more rapidly.
- Peter P.—Traffic projections either way would not be a problem.
- Mark F.—What we may have at the end of study Objective I is a decision on alignment issue. We have to progress study and get comments and opinions but we don't want to study both alignments in detail and waste time and money.
- Jeff Smith, Franklin County Highway Superintendent—There are good reasons for choosing the Champlain/Rouses Point alignment.
- Mark F.—There are issues with building a Lake Champlain Bridge and this could be a deciding fact in choosing which alignment to progress.
- Bob J.—Will we have enough traffic and other data to make decision on alignment issue.
- Mark F.—Yes.
- Michele LeDoux, Lewis County CCE—The level of scoping work for the spurs is an important issue for Lewis County.
- Mark F.—Yes.
- Peter P.—The methodology to be used in the study is the same for both the main corridor and the spurs, but less detail for the spurs.
- Mark F.—A study North Country Transportation Study (NCTS) has already been done. We looked at more than just Route 11 and more than just highway transportation. Now we are narrowing scope, but spurs are still part of the study. I want a list of projects NYSDOT can fund and build. How much spur work to do with the study has been, and still is, an issue. We don't have enough funds to analyze spurs in detail.

- Kathy M.—We need to look at spurs as part of this study because factoring in international bridge traffic will help justify the need for Route 11 Corridor improvements.
- Mark F.—It would require a lot more work to study spurs in detail.
- Kathy—Yes, but economic viability of the Northern Tier Expressway concept depends on spur development. Without that, concept falls apart.
- Mark F.—I agree, but the work to justify the entire project was done in the NCTS.
- Kathy M.—I still believe we must keep the project together as a whole so it doesn't fall apart and become a series of small isolated projects. We need to study spurs to same level of detail as Route 11 so that the whole concept progresses.
- Dr. John Miller, Lewis County representative—The Lowville spur should follow Route 812 from Lowville to Gouverneur and then on to Ogdensburg. A Route 12 spur from Watertown to Lowville would not help economic development.
- Bob J.—The NCTS looked at this issue and Route 26 was examined as a compromise between a Route 12 or a Route 812 spur.
- Bruce I.—A Route 26 spur is problematic since the Army could close that portion of Route 26, which runs through the Fort.
- Bill Dashnaw, St. Lawrence County Highway Superintendent—We need to keep spur development in the study.
- Kathy M.—Spurs should be included at some level of analysis so that they remain a part of the complete project, even if they are not studied in great detail, maybe carry them through Objective I, but not through Objective 2 Analysis.
- Mark F.—Are specific projects on the spurs to be an outcome of this study?
- Don. B.—Route 11 is the priority and spurs take a secondary role. The spur to Lowville is slightly different in that it ties in another county/community. The focus should be on the Route 11 corridor. We are just debating what levels of work should be focused on the spurs.
- Kathy M.—Yes, we have to agree on what level of work to perform on spurs.
- Peter P.—The Lowville connection could be Route 26 or Route 812. This can be decided in future—review original decisions from NCTS to see how Lowville connection was arrived at. Looking at the future of Fort Drum is an important factor which could affect the Lowville connection decision.

- Bob J.—Objective I will be modified to include the East End Corridor alignments and spurs. We also need to better define Lowville connection.
- John M.—Additional land in Lewis County will be added to Fort Drum. This could be a factor.
- Peter P.—We will add the spurs to Objective I and assume there will be only 3. The question of whether the Lowville connection will be via Route 11, 26 or 812 will be decided by NYSDOT, with input from committee, before WSA starts its work.
- Dianna Pell, Lewis County representative—The decision should also be made with Lewis County input.
- Jim Feeley, Franklin County Manager—Should Franklin County Route 52, Chateaugay to the Canadian border, be added as a spur since there is an international border crossing there?
- Mark F.—There is not a need for this addition.
- Kathy M.—To sum up, the wording in the scoping document on pages 3 and 5 has to be changed, the analysis of the spurs has to be included and the alignment at the eastern terminus of the corridor has to be analyzed.
- Don. B.—We must maintain focus on the overall project. At some time in the future, a spur project may rise in importance and then the decision to advance such a project over a Route 11 Corridor project will need to be made.
- Bob D.—Therefore, put high priority on first few projects and leave the priority of the others a little vague so changes can be made.
- Don B.—NYSDOT needs to e-mail changes in scoping documents to committee members with quick turnaround so that work can begin ASAP.
- Russ W.—What is the time table?
- Peter P.—12-15 months once WSA gets the authority to start work.
- Peter P.—We received a comment that there may be too much public participation time built into the scoping documents. Can we get a clarification or decision on the appropriate level of public involvement?

*Note: There was general agreement that level of public involvement was about right.*

- Bruce I.—A Lowville meeting will be added in Task A-4 (page 8). Also in Sub Task F.2 (page 8). The proposed location names will be deleted. In their place, the wording—six accessible public locations—will be added.

- Kathy M.—What is this committee going to be called?
- Mark F.—Northern Tier Expressway Study Advisory Group or just SAG.
- Rodney B.—Who ultimately has decision on projects to be on list and priority?
- Peter P.—This will be worked out through study process as consensus is reached with counties.
- Don B.—We need input from everyone, but NYSDOT should have final say. We should be striving for consensus.
- Bruce I.—It should be kept in mind that although needed projects will be placed in priority order, a project lower on the priority list may be built first. This is due to the fact that some higher priority projects, such as bypasses, require more time to develop and could be a lot more costly than lower priority simpler projects
- Don B.—Look at supporting any corridor project because it will help all. We should put up corridor signs.
- Rodney B.—The scoping document does not include a discussion on rest areas.
- Mark F.—This discussion would take place as projects are designed.
- Sam T.—Improving this highway corridor is important since we no longer have East-West railroads.
- Bruce I.—Is the use of kiosks still in the scope? They should be added.
- Jim D.—The existing one (now in St. Lawrence County) should be sent back to WSA to be updated when the scoping process starts. Information can go out to public posted on kiosks prior to first public work session.
- Bob J.—What happens next?
- Peter P.—Once contract is signed between NYSDOT and WSA (one to two months), WSA will begin scoping work as outlined in the Scope of Services document. The first public meetings will be held in early spring. The SAG will meet prior to these meetings and information will be sent out to public before meetings.