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MAINE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
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**Public Participation and Community Awareness
for the I93 Corridor Study in Southern New Hampshire
Bill Cass, Tony Grande**

Introduction: This session this morning is entitled "Public Participation and Community Awareness for the I93 Corridor Study in Southern New Hampshire." The presenters include Bill Cass from New Hampshire DOT. Bill graduated from the University of New Hampshire. He's been employed by DOT for the past 18 years. He's currently the chief project manager for NHDOT and is project manager for the Salem-Manchester I93 reconstruction project.

The second presenter is Tony Grande. He's with VHB. He has over 17 years of experience in civil engineering, involving highway design and civil site engineering. He's been involved in conceptual and preliminary design efforts for permitting and documentation, including public participation efforts on various public improvement projects -- including the I93 Salem-Manchester project.

Bill?

Bill Cass: Thank you. Good morning.

Audience: Good morning.

Bill Cass: I just wanted to give you a brief overview of what Tony and I are going to present. I'm going to start the presentation and just give a brief overview on some of the background of the project. I'll kind of frame the context of the issues that Tony is going to be talking about. Mainly, the public participation process that we use to engage the project during the development of the environmental impact statement. One of the bigger issues for the project is how secondary growth and secondary land-use development concerns were addressed through the FDIS process. I think it's interesting, tracing the history of this project with public participation and the issues that arose, and how that has changed since this project was initiated in the mid-1980s -- compared to what we were thinking about then -- to how the DOT in New Hampshire deals with and addresses these has changed significantly, over the years.

With me is Tony Grande, who is the project manager for the I93 project for his firm, Vanasse Hangen Brustlin out of Bedford, New Hampshire.

The overall project involves reconstruction of 20 miles of I93 in Southern New Hampshire. It begins at the State Line. I don't know how many are familiar with I93 in New Hampshire, here. It begins at the State Line in Salem and runs 20 miles to the split of I93 -- 293 in Manchester. This is a brief overview map of it.

I93 is a central primary arterial that serves much of the rest of the state. It's a gateway to the lakes region and the mountains of New Hampshire. It provides access for the tourism industry as well as being a significant commuter route for the communities in the Manchester area itself, who commute to Boston and Northern Massachusetts for work, each day. Essentially, there are 5 communities that are directly affected, or the I93 directly runs through. Salem, New Hampshire, Wyndham, Derry, Londonderry, and into Manchester.

The purpose of the project. This is the purpose and need from the environmental impact statement. "Our purpose is to improve transportation efficiencies and reduce safety problems associated with this section of I93." We looked at a whole host of options, including reactivating rail service, improving transit, other

transportation demand measures. In addition with widening the main line and reconstructing the interchanges along the way.

As far as some background on the project -- I93 was built in the mid-1960s. It was built as an existing two-lane interstate facility -- two lanes in each direction. Growth along the I93 corridor in the intervening years -- especially some of the boom times in the mid-1980s has grown considerably. A lot of those neighborhoods and communities in Londonderry, in Derry, look at I93 as a lifeline for their communities. They serve as bedroom communities for a lot of the businesses and a lot of the job market in the Boston area and Northern Massachusetts.

Traffic volumes when I93 were built in the 1960s -- it was built around a theoretical capacity of about 70,000 vehicles per day. Current traffic volumes on the facility are in the neighborhoods of 75,000 at the northerly end of the corridor to upwards of over 100,000 or 115,000 in the southerly tier in the Wyndham-Salem area. Projected traffic volume is expected to grow even more over the next 20 years.

What we see is increasing congestion and increasing safety concerns, as a result of that congestion. Basically, I93 is over-capacity today. It's in dire need of rehabilitation. Just this summer, because it's taken us some time to get this project on track and get it delivered -- we've had to do an inlay project to repave the surface. I won't call it an emergency, but it needs to be held together until the facility can be reconstructed.

A number of bridges are in very poor shape. Overall, just the age of the infrastructure needs to be rehabilitated. As I spoke about, as well, safety is a big concern. With that mounting traffic volume and congestion come concerns with safety and dramatic types of traffic crashes. As well, when those crashes occur, and when incidents occur, the ramifications it has along the corridor and along into the surrounding communities that have to bypass or divert traffic.

As I said, the project has been around for a while. The need to make improvements to I93 and address some of the capacity issues were first identified in the mid-1980s. My involvement in the project as a project engineer began in the late 1980s, when we started to develop plans. Relative to how we approach projects, at that time we had a very linear approach. We were going to work on the first door to the project, deliver that, and move on to the next door of the corridor and deliver that. Then we'd move on to the next door and deliver that. We'd widen the highway and improve on the interchanges as we went.

We'd gotten to the point of having conceptual plans developed, and were on track to take the first segment of that project in the Salem area to a public hearing in the late 1980s. At about that time, the concerns from the environmental community about segmenting the project led us to step back and look at the entire corridor from a corridor-wide approach. They said we can't segment the project into these individual packages. If the intent was to reconstruct the entire corridor, we needed to look at the entire corridor from an environmental impact perspective.

So around 1992, we initiated steps to study the entire corridor under the framework of an environmental impact statement. That process got somewhat delayed, because of the regional significance of the project, and the need to look at a better way of developing traffic volumes. We ended up needing to do a statewide traffic demand model. That took some time to pull together, and it was generally completed around 1997. We then restarted the EIS process, in earnest, around the late 1990s. I think around 1999, it was about the time we brought our consultant on board -- BHV -- to being work in earnest on addressing these issues in the environmental impact statement.

That's a brief history and background. As I said, I wanted to kind of frame the overall context of the issues that Tony is going to discuss. With that, I'd like to turn it over to Tony Grande.

Tony Grande: Thanks, Bill. Good morning.

Audience: Good morning.

Tony Grande: I'm going to basically carry on where Bill finished off -- from the project history. I'll continue the timeline process, there. One of the things that we that we heard earlier today was about the Route 26 project. Some of these projects extend out over long periods of time. As you can see, with this project first starting in the 80s, this is one of those situations where it did extend over a long period of time. We needed to kind of regroup. That's where we started when we came onboard for the project.

Our first task was to basically update all the information that had been collected, make sure that it was as current as possible, so that we were using the most up-to-date information. The scoping report was then published in May of 2000. Basically, it identifies the scope for the project. As a result of that scoping report, secondary growth was identified as a concern. Then the question became how to address that in the EIS, and as we move forward in the process.

The next item on here -- environmental streamlining -- partnering, based on former Senator of Bob Smith's recommendations at the time. He recommended that the department hold a Partnering Session with the Environmental Agencies reviewing the project at the item. That, we did. It was actually a 2-day conference. That conference kind of set the tone for how the project would move forward, and how it could possibly streamline the process as we moved forward, as well.

The rationale report was then published in January of 2001. The rationale report basically identified alternatives for the project. What was looked at for the project, and what would be carried forward after that, into the DEIS process.

The DEIS was then published in August of 2002. You can see there's a significant time difference there, in trying to deal with some of the issues that came to be. Public hearings were held later on that year, after the publication of the DEIS. Public hearings were held in November, 2002. Following that, you can see another fairly significant time shift from the date of the public hearings to the publication of the FEIS. Again, trying to handle a lot of the issues and deal with a lot of the issues within the FEIS process. Trying to make sure that they don't come back later on and hold the project up. At this point, with the FEIS published, we're currently awaiting FHWA record of decision in working through the permitting process.

A description of the selected alternative. When we were putting this presentation together, I thought that we would focus more on the process than on looking at plans and things of that nature. So I'm going to basically just give you a general description of what we did. Bill kind of gave you a graphic of the project. Basically, we're reconstructing the 20 miles of I93 from the State Line up to the split at Manchester. Widening from the existing two lanes in each direction to four lanes in each direction. Looking at expanding bus service and things of that nature, as well.

The interchanges themselves are being reconstructed. There are 5 interchanges within the study area. Looking at constructing new park-and-ride facilities. Those new park-and-ride facilities -- at least 2 of the 3 are planned to be constructed ahead of the widening project, to try to promote the use of those park-and-ride facilities before the actual widening of the highway. In addition to that, we would be trying to promote enhanced ride-sharing, as well, to try to complement those park-and-rides to some of the higher-employment centers in Massachusetts, as well.

One of the other things we've done, as part of the project, was leave room within the median to not preclude the possibility of a future light rail system within the median, itself. Not to say that this is where it would be placed, but again, to leave the room there for the potential of it in the future.

Transit investment study. With the State of Massachusetts, there's something that the department is also undertaking. That would be a Boston-to-Manchester, and what the department will be considering as kind of the first step in a long-range transportation plan, including bus service, as well.

Finally, intelligent transportation systems and incident-management strategies. Such things as variable message boards. Highway advisory, radio broadcasts, and a website that could be updated to check conditions as you go along. This is something new that the department is just getting into. It wouldn't have been available in the 1980s when this project first came to be.

The public participation process. Jim Linker and Bill mentioned this earlier. The process itself has changed, over time. I think the DOTs are adapting and kind of embracing these changes in their own way. One of the ways that NHDOT has done this is similar to the PACs in Maine. They have an advisory task force in New Hampshire, which serves a similar role.

[Quarterly] community meetings are a method that we've gone through. Advisory task force -- we have meetings, as well, similar to the PAC meetings. Local meetings. Resource agency meetings. Newsletters are another method, and project website. These are all tools that we're using for this project that we have used for this project, to kind of get the word out as to what's going on. I'll talk to each one of these in a little more detail.

Advisory task force -- made up of members from each of the 5 communities that Bill had mentioned were directly impacted. Salem, Wyndham, Derry, Londonderry and Manchester. The task force also includes members from the local regional planning commissions that are affected by the project. There are three of those commissions that are affected by the project.

When we first started the project, we had ATF meetings on a regular basis, to try to distribute information to the public, to the advisory task force, held in a similar way to what Ray had described with the PAC meetings. These were held to really present information to the task force, and allow them to try to formulate decisions and provide input or feedback back to us. It was open to the public for comment on completion of those initial tasks at the meeting.

Twelve ATF meetings were held between March 2000 and June 2001. As I mentioned, they were on a fairly regular basis at that point in time. We did reach a point where it only made sense to meet to present information. We tried to make sure that it didn't just get into a mundane type thing. All the meetings, as I mentioned, were open to the general public, and we encouraged participation, as well.

As the project moved on, and the SEIS process or in the NEPA process, and the details became more localized, the participants themselves within the ATF kind of focused a little bit more on their own areas. Our meetings, as far as the ATF, also kind of stopped at that point -- and our meetings turned more toward the quarterly community meetings, of which there were several times, as well. Public officials' meetings were one of those types of meetings that we held.

I have up there three rounds of meetings. The three rounds, basically, means that we would get to a point where we had some information to disseminate to the public. We would hold a meeting in Salem, we would hold a meeting in Wyndham, Derry, Londonderry, Manchester -- we'd work our way up the corridor, so that each corridor could participate and offer comments on it. We didn't hold one major meeting -- we held one in each community.

We did that three times throughout the process. One of those meetings was in an open-house format. These were evening meetings for the most part, from 5-7. Plans were on the wall or laid out on tables. The public

could come in and ask questions or provide comments. Then at 7 o'clock, we would do a formal presentation for what we had to offer as information.

Public informational meetings came along after that. In addition, it was three rounds of public informational meetings. That carried basically for a year. Again, it just kind of was an extension of the information. As we had more detailed information, we tried to formalize the meetings a little bit more.

In addition, we had local planning board meetings, selected meetings with conservation commission meetings. Those were held at various times. I can think of a very in particular in the Wyndham area, where there were a number of different alternatives for the interchange. We held specific meetings at the request of the town, to make sure that everybody understood exactly what we were trying to present and offer to the public.

Property-owner meetings. There were several cases where there were meetings requested to try to understand some of the different types of information that was being put out. I think Ray mentioned earlier that sometimes we talk in engineering language too much. We tend to do that as engineers. It doesn't go over well with the public. They don't necessarily understand what's going on, even though they sit there and nod their heads. They may be afraid to speak up.

One of the things that was good to see through this process, because we had so many meetings, people did feel more comfortable talking to somebody. I know that after being to several of these meetings, and as you see at the bottom they numbered over 50 public meetings, people felt comfortable coming up to me by name and asking me a question. They felt that they knew me over this time period. I felt that I knew them, as well. Some of the issues were more specific to properties where we had experts go out and answer questions with respect to noise or wetlands, or things of that nature. Or where the impact was coming to their property. We did that, as well.

We met with local conservation and land preservation associations. One that I can think of in particular when, we were doing the work on mitigation, was the Crystal Lake Preservation Association of Manchester. They had a lot of knowledge on the local area. We were able to draw on that knowledge and use that information as we pulled the mitigation packages together. [inaudible] the public hearings. Because of the size of the project, the department decided to hold two public hearings -- basically one on each end of the project -- to allow as much participation as possible. As I mentioned before, over 50 public meetings were held for this project. That was between March of 2000 and July of 2002. I know that there've been a number since that time, as well, which I haven't even included in here.

The resource agency meetings. Those were monthly meetings, typically attended by state and federal agencies. NH Department of Environmental Services, Fish & Game, Department of Historic Resources, the DOTs, environmental staff and the regional planning commissions. From the federal side, the EPA, Army Corps of Engineers, Fish & Wildlife, Federal Highway and Federal Transit Authority.

Those meetings had typically been held at the DOT and were not necessarily publicized. As a result of the environmental streamlining or partnering meeting that we had earlier on in the process, it was decided... In those meetings, there are a lot of brainstorming sessions where the resource agencies and the department got together to try to come up with a better way to do what we do, basically. In, "How could we move the process along," and kind of streamlining it a little bit, based on the way it had been done.

One of the things that came out of that meeting was that we should hold those meetings along the corridor, so that we could be out to the public. On the one hand, the public would get another opportunity to comment on the information being presented. But also, the public would be able to hear the comments from the environmental or the resource agencies as to what their feelings are on the project. I know in previous times, let's say a property owner would come up with an idea or a suggestion. The Department would have to say,

"Well that would never be permissible." In this case, it could be a one-on-one conversation where the property owner could suggest something like that, and the resource agency representative could have a chance to give his opinion as to why that would be feasible or not. I think that made a big difference.

Another thing that came out of the process was a memorandum of agreement on holding joint public hearings, as well. I wanted to just kind of go into the streamlining process a little bit more, here. I'll go over it and bring up some of the other points or I guess accentuate some of the points that we had.

Environmental streamlining initiatives was something that came out of the T21 funding bill. Basically, it focused on timely delivery of transportation projects, while protecting and enhancing the environment. The purpose of it was to integrate the permitting process, and to try to coordinate all that effort at the same time. As you all know that may have been working in this process and the NEPA process for a number of years, it's never necessarily flowed in one direction.

This was to try to make sure that the process kept moving forward and didn't have to take two steps backward. It might get held up at a certain point, but the idea would be to formulate a process that would help the decision process move forward. The ultimate goal, I think, of the environmental streamlining initiative is to basically cut the time of NEPA documentation down from its existing timeframes. That is in the legislation, itself, as it's written.

As I mentioned before -- the partnering workshop was held in the July-August timeframe of 2000. There were some agreements made at that time. We agreed to facilitate decisions at key points. And there was a process for resolution. If they agreed to disagree, then it would be taken to a higher level of disagreement. Then they would come to some resolution as to how to move forward. Again, some of the things that came out of that were a signoff by all the parties involved. This partnering workshop, as I mentioned, was attended by all of the federal and state agencies and the DOT. They actually signed a partnering agreement. They all signed their names to it, as to what they would agree to. One of the things that really pushed this forward was getting a signoff on the range of alternatives, I think sooner than we would have, had we not had this in place. And, as I'd mentioned, holding the resource agency's meetings on the corridor, itself.

The memorandum of agreement, as I mentioned before, with the DES -- that was for holding a joint hearing. Previous to this, the department would hold its hearing, and then at some future time, the Department of Environmental Services would hold its hearing. So just after the department had dealt with comments from their public hearing, then they would have deal at a future time with comments from DES public hearing. This was an effort to kind of join these together and have everything happen at one time.

Because the Army Corps of Engineers was already doing that, this allowed the I93 project to have all three permitting agencies there at the same time, and hold one public hearing for all the agencies. Then further on down the road, more recently, the I93 project was selected as one of the priority projects under the T21 Environmental Streamlining and Stewardship Initiative.

Back to the types of tools that we had available. Project website -- when this project first started, there was no website really, that the DOT had to speak of. We started development of this in 2000, and the department didn't really have total control of their website at that point in time. When they wanted to put information on it, they had to go through another agency, in order to do that. They were kind of building at the same time as this project was moving forward.

At the time, we were trying to develop the website. We were finally able to do that. The department has now since created a tremendous website. They have somebody full-time keeping it up-to-date, and there's a lot of information on there.

We kind of used a phased buildup of how the information was put on to that website. As of today, basically all the meeting minutes from all of the public meetings were on there, in addition to the resource agency meeting minutes. The documentation -- all the reports that were produced -- that's also accessible on the website, as well.

Finally, newsletters. That was the final method that was used on relaying information to the public. It basically covered the process that was followed, issues that were raised, and feedback that was received back from some of the meetings. We tried to describe some of the history and the stats and the concepts of the projects. I gave them updates on the schedule and contact information, regarding basically meetings that would be coming up soon.

What did we get from all this public participation process that we went through? We basically heard three major concerns. One was the institution of rail service within the region. Again, the department has not precluded that by leading the room in a meeting for that. In addition to that, the investment study that they'll be undertaking shortly to also look into that. The extent of secondary growth that may occur, in addition to what might be expected if improvements were not completed. We understand that there's some growth that's going to happen, whether the highway's widened or not. But the feeling is that there's some additional growth that's going to happen if you do widen the highway.

Then finally, the water quality concerns from road salt use that's come up as the project has moved forward. That's being dealt with, as well. The issue that I'm going to focus on today is more the secondary growth issue. What's been done to date, and what's going to be done in the future is what Bill's going to focus on when he comes back.

The impacts themselves of secondary growth -- I think everybody has his own understanding of it. But I think a general definition of it would be when we look at impacts from a highway project, we look at the footprint of the roadway, basically. We ask what impact that will have on the environmental and on the transportation system and everything else, given the added capacity.

Secondary impacts basically look outside of that area -- and not just immediately outside of that area. In this project was on a more regional basis. The thought being that if you widen the highway, you might induce more people to move to this area. Better jobs -- better opportunities or whatever. Or better quality of life, even. That could be an issue. The thought definitely was a common belief -- "If you build it, they will come." I don't think it's quite as simple as that to talk about.

How did we address it? It was kind of difficult to address, because in a different fashion from the bypass opportunities that were discussed earlier, we were widening an existing facility. So we're making an incremental improvement as opposed to creating a totally new facility.

It's a complicated subject. There are many factors involved. As I mentioned, some of them were housing costs, job market, the growth in the area and quality of life. Southern New Hampshire is a great place to live. I enjoy living there, myself. Political motivations. No income tax. And depending on who's in or not in, we may or may not have one. I'd say that for the going time, we're probably not going to have one. The "Live free or die," attitude. That is our motto.

Our secondary study area was developed based on some original studies done for origin and destination -- going back to the traffic model that Bill referred to early on. That kind of set the other limits of the secondary study area, as you can see there, in the areas colors. The different colors basically represent different regional planning commission areas, but contain several towns. There are 5 primary towns that are impacted by the corridor, as we mentioned earlier. There are 18 additional secondary communities within New Hampshire, and

6 additional communities down in Massachusetts, making up the total of 29 corridors in this secondary study area of the community.

How did we go about this? Along with the EPA and some other discussions from some of the other environmental agencies, the department agreed to give the Delphi method a try. [Bigsby] hired a sub consultant, including Sam Seskin, whom I believe is on a panel here tomorrow. It's basically a methodology for looking at what some peoples' idea would be, or what some peoples' vision would be of growth in the future. The panel was made up of 16 panelists, based on their knowledge and experience in local and regional planning, development, real estate, economics, environmental policy -- all of those things. They came from a variety of areas. They were asked to assess the likely growth in each of the 29 communities that would result in a "no-build" and a "build" condition.

Basically, there were 2 phases. Phase 1 would be, "What is the growth that you anticipate happening over the next 20 years, without widening the highway?" Phase 2 in similar manner asked, "What is the growth or additional growth that you would anticipate after widening the highway?" Basically, what they were asked to do was to allocate population and employment numbers to each of those communities.

The results of that varied. Some estimates were high. Some estimates were low. Basically, what they did was a moderator took all the results and tried to create a blended average of the results or a weighted average. We provided that information back to the panelists.

The panelists were then allowed to see that information, and they were allowed to revise the numbers, if that's what they chose to do. They went through this a series of times until basically the numbers were not changing so much, any more. There wasn't necessarily consensus. There was not consensus reached on these. I want to make sure that that's clear, because they were very clear about it. They called them, "Informed individual opinions." They had very strong feelings on it.

Some people felt that something totally different was going to happen than another person did. That, we tried to reflect in the way that the numbers were weighted. Basically, it says that without widening the highway, the population would increase by 140,000 people. If you widen the highway, the population will increase by an additional 40,000 people. Increase in population was about 5 percent. Increase in the rate of growth was about 25 percent, based on that information.

This graphic shows how the population changes by higher or lower numbers. The brighter pink or purple colors that you see up there is the higher population change, down to the lighter blue color, which is the lowest population change. Basically, the peripheral towns -- the smaller peripheral towns -- were the ones that were getting the greatest increase in population. That was mainly residential increase in population. As Bill mentioned, there are lots of bedroom-type communities where people commute to work in other locations. Not even necessarily in Massachusetts, but other locations in New Hampshire.

That was, I thought, an interesting statistic. It was one that I guess I would see happening, anyway. Because they're nice places to live. They're still quiet and quaint. This is what's drawing people to them. Unfortunately, the people that are drawn to them -- once they get there -- they want to put the gate up so that nobody else can come in, so that it could stay that way. The one thing that I will mention as well, is Bill has brought along some tables that list the weighted average that the panelists put together. Those are out on the table, outside, if you are interested in that any further.

What does this mean? Well, the study itself is speculative. The Delphi method is what "might" happen. These 16 individuals are well versed in the area. It's what they think could happen. But again, there was no consensus drawn. The purpose of doing this study was to try to consider the issue itself, of secondary growth. To get a

sense of the possible ramifications and provide information to the local towns, local decision-makers and resource agencies so that they could use the information and try to possibly plan for the future.

The one thing to me that came out of this loud and clear is that growth is coming to Southern New Hampshire, whether the highway is widened or not. It's happened to date. It's going to continue to happen, whether we widen the highway or not. I think it's really heightened the awareness of growth -- this study and the I93 project, in general. It's kind of been a catalyst, I guess, or a major awakening of the people in these towns. They apparently had no idea that people really want to move to the same towns that they live in, for the same reasons that they moved there, themselves.

As mentioned in one of the previous panel discussions, some of these studies can make people aware of things that they were never aware of before. As Deb mentioned earlier, she didn't realize she had some of these animals along her property -- or maybe some of the conditions that existed around her property. I think this was similar case here, where people just were not aware of the situation. I think some of the focus was more on the 40,000 people that are coming if you widen the highway, as opposed to the 140,000 people that are coming anyway, if you don't widen the highway. I think this has caused quite a stir. I think the department is trying to do something about that. That's what Bill's going to talk about next. He'll talk about the department's community technical assistance program, which is aimed at helping some of the local and secondary towns deal with some of this growth.

Bill?

Bill Cass: I think part of the logical question is almost a "So what?" All right. So we've done this secondary growth study, and we've considered it. But then what do we do with all this information? How are we going to address this issue? When I say, "we," it's not just "we," as the Department of Transportation, but "we," as a community and as the State of New Hampshire. Because it is a far-reaching, broad issue to deal with in Southern New Hampshire. It's a generalized issue of growth and all that's involved with it.

It certainly had become a very premier project concern, through the public hearing phase and as we published environmental documents. Because of the interest and concern and because it is an issue, one of the project enhancements in the project mitigation enhancement package involved what we would put forward as a project commitment -- \$3.5m toward providing communities in the areas influenced by I93 with tools they need -- with planning assistance to deal with growth-related issues.

It's kind of a broad idea, and a lot of our efforts since that time have been dealing with how to take that idea or concept and put it into practice, and implement it. Basically, it was done as a recognition of continuing growth. The growth pressures and the link between land use and transportation. Growth and growth pressures have an impact on our transportation infrastructure. The more that we as the Department of Transportation can do to help foster good land-use policies -- that recognize that link between transportation and land use -- the more efficient and the longer our facilities will last.

In New Hampshire, and I'm sure it's very similar in Maine, land-use regulations are the sole prerogative of the individual communities. We look to this community's technical assistance program as a way of supplementing that local approach to land-use planning.

[tape turn]

...to help them do their jobs better.

Lastly, there have been different initiatives in the State. Our former governor had a "Smart Growth" Initiative, looking at issues of growth, and what we wanted. As that kind of wound down, there wasn't anything waiting in

the wings to come in and keep its pace and keep that momentum going. So another thought of this program was to build out and continue that awareness process, and to build up on other initiatives in the State.

The secondary impact study area also essentially forms the area of the community technical assistance program, and where that technical assistance would be earmarked. It involves 26 communities. It doesn't involve those blue communities at the bottom, south of the border. It involves 26 communities in New Hampshire, and the colors here also indicate the four regional planning commissions that are involved or that will be involved in the process, as well.

Like I said -- it's kind of a concept. It was kind of a concept, and we've been trying to articulate what the deliverable are -- what it needs to implement this program. It's still in the organizational and planning phase, but we have some ideas that have been generated.

You see this technical assistance kind of falling into four, more or less, broad categories of training and education -- to provide training and outreach efforts. Basic and advanced training for the local boards, as well as "Smart Growth" awareness for the general public.

We see this training effort as being broad based. It has broader applicability. Things that were developed for these 26 communities will hopefully have broader applications to the remainder of the State, as well.

Technical assistance. I'm focusing that on specific assistance to communities -- providing them help and assistance in doing visioning and writing master plans and revising their local regulations and ordinances to help be in concert with what their master plans are saying they want to be like in the future.

Providing assistance with local planning efforts. Another component. It's difficult, because in this southern area, we're dealing with some markedly different communities -- big cities in the secondary impact, in the area of the community technical business program. Cities like Concord and Manchester -- they have very well-staffed planning departments. They have a lot of ongoing processes. What they were looking at was leveraging maybe some resources -- some additional resources for community-sponsored projects or innovative projects.

We're also looking to utilize this program to foster and hopefully coordinate these individual municipal efforts into more of a regional approach to meet regional objectives. We're also dealing with some very rural communities -- small communities that just need some of that basic assistance and training as to what their roles are, and how they can influence, and what they can do in their communities. Ideally, this program will provide something of benefit to all of those communities.

Lastly, we talked a lot about planning tools and analysis. Providing build-out analysis so that again, in a graphical form, people and communities can realize what the ramifications of their current land-use policies are.

There's been a lot of focus on growth. What does this abstract concept of "growth" mean to those communities, based on their local zoning? If all these 140,000 people come or 180,000 or whatever the number is going to be, growth is going to occur. How is it going to be absorbed and assimilated into those communities? Where is the growth going to happen? And what can be done to better manage it?

Through that, it involves accessibility to the GIS tools, as well as to hopefully more regional objectives. Things like regional conservation plans. They're planning, and these individual communities don't stop at the timeline. But they can consider the bigger picture. That's as I said, the general idea. It's still in the organizational and planning stage. We're working with a kind of select group of agency representatives and regional planning commissions to kind of formulate these ideas. There's still a lot more to do. This fall, for example, we'll be embarking on a more-structured, strategic planning process to develop an actual, specific work plan.

What we envision right now through the discussions has been a community-driven, open, inclusive process that builds on collaboration. To facilitate that, we've envisioned a 3-committee structure -- committees made up of a corridor community committee, representatives of the 26 communities forming a committee, as well as an agency committee that involves representatives from the various regulatory agencies that'll be involved. As well, a non-governmental advisory committee -- kind of a big tent. A steering committee would kind of run the whole show that's made up of a subset, representing each of those broader committees.

The roles of these committees are still being clarified. What we envision now is the corridor community committee that represents and is a communication conduit to the 26 represented communities. Also, I see that community committee as being a regional forum to promote, as I said, a more regional approach or subregional approach to some of these issues.

Off the side, we also see this community committee as being a conduit for dissemination of project information. A lot of the stuff that we'll be talking about or that we envision talking about through the secondary community technical assistance program is stuff that's out there. We talked about [inaudible] analysis -- what's going to be happening 10 years -- what's going to be happening in 20 years. Trying to engage people in that thought process is difficult. Twenty years out, it's easy to put off. I think people approach it with an attitude of, "Why should I get excited about this?"

Part of what we see going through this program and through these committees is focusing on the immediacy of the project. Providing them the information of what's going to happen tomorrow and two years and the next year with the I93 reconstruction project. We used that to draw people in. "This is happening now. This is what's going to be happening in the next year and the next year and the next two years." Then parlay that into trying to generate the interests. What are the ramifications when this is all built and open to 4 lanes in each direction in the next 10 years? You've got to be thinking about what's going to happen then, beyond that. So it's using projects, the specifics and the interest in the project to try to draw people in and engage them in thinking about further ramifications of growth and such in their communities.

The agency committee is a coordinating group for the participating regional, state and federal agencies. We look to this group as leveraging the resources. Each agency has different programs. They have different efforts and different areas of interest. But they can all bring something to the table, and hopefully we can leverage those resources to make the \$3.5m earmarked for this program go farther.

There've also been benefits already utilized through this organizational process. We had people in the same room and at the same table and found several agencies were doing like activities, as far as inventorying and trying to map in a regional basis some of the conservation lands. I think it was the Audubon Society of New Hampshire, as well as Fish & Game, were doing very like activities. As a result of the organization discussions and trying to put those together, they have come together and are working more collaboratively to a single end - instead of each working to the same end but independently.

Lastly, we have an advisory committee, to advise on the specific tools and strategies. We see this as representing a broad spectrum of stakeholders, and providing that input both from conservation groups to business associations to the tourism industry in New Hampshire. They all need to weigh in. We've kind of been taken to calling this the "Big Tent" committee.

Some of the direct goals are in providing that technical assistance to the community. Some of the indirect goals are to continue to raise awareness. There's been an awful lot of focus on growth as part of the I93 project. We don't want to see that momentum regarding the project lost. When the FEIS is done and the project is underway, everybody kind of loses that involvement and passion that had been raised about the issues of growth.

We also want to build capacity in the state. That's part of this collaborative approach in engaging the communities. We had talked early on about how we were going to deliver this program. We could hire a consultant and have them work for 3-5 years or however long this program lasts. Then at the end of that program, they'd go away and there's nothing that's been built to sustain that effort in the State. So the process with the 3-committee structure is intended, indirectly, to build that capacity in the State and keep that momentum going.

As I said, we also want to foster a regional approach, and leverage and consolidate resources and activities. There are lots of agencies and lots of people talking about similar things relative to growth, and "Smart Growth." Ideally, we'd like to leverage it and concentrate it and consolidate it.

One of the concerns is how to measure success. As I said, we had this broad concept. We're taking steps to flesh out the details as far as implementation. This is one of the real issues, still, that we have to deal with. How do we measure success on such a looser issue.

We wanted to make a difference. One of the people in our department had made the comment that if this program just keeps doing the same things that we have been doing for the past five years, we're not going to be any better off. We want to make a difference.

The other concern is through the committees and such, and some of the other efforts that'll be going on with I93 -- about overwhelming people. It tends to be in individual communities that the people involved in planning and involved in their community are involved in a lot of other things, as well. We are cognizant of the fact, and hopefully you don't want to overburden or burn people out, but engage them in a positive and constructive sense.

We want this to be a positive and a proactive, collaborative approach. I think from our perspective, it's an innovative approach to deal with the issues of growth. Hopefully, it'll be an impetus and a catalyst to continue that momentum.

To wrap up, I'd just like to kind of go over some of what I think are the lessons learned. I think the Expert Panel, the Delphi Method was useful in developing an idea of what "could" happen -- what "may" happen. It's not right; it's not wrong. It's just a methodology that we used to get a handle on this issue. It's been exceptionally helpful, I think, in raising awareness of the growth implications both of the project and in Southern New Hampshire, in general.

One of the drawbacks, I think, has been a tendency to view the results of the expert panel too definitively. It's been said there are definitely 35,000 people coming into Southern New Hampshire directly as a result of this project. Consequently, what are you going to do about it, to deal with it?

There has been a huge focus on the change. I don't think there has been enough focus on the fact that growth is coming -- whether the highway is widened or not. It's questionable if the growth that may occur because the highway's widened will be significant over the growth that's already anticipated.

You saw the results that Tony had had up there. If the projections of allocations that the expert panel came up with are correct, or in the ballpark, you're talking about a 5 percent increase over what might otherwise occur. The planners that I've talked to have a margin of error in their growth projections of 5-10 percent, which are certainly reasonable. The other thing is, it's growth that's coming otherwise. Widening the highway and doing the project may hasten it to a certain degree, but it's still growth that's coming, anyway. That's been part of the regulatory controversy associated with this project. The fact of what we're going to do relative to the secondary

growth and the impacts of the project on growth. Particularly, looking for specific mitigation for that secondary growth. It has been a regulatory controversy that still continues to play itself out.

Lastly, the value of public involvement and difficulty in achieving consensus. Achieving consensus is very difficult. Some of the issues that Tony had brought up that have come up to the public participation process continue. There's generally a consensus that I93 is over capacity and needs to be addressed in some way, shape or form. How to go about doing that remains the difficult part, as far as building consensus.

The value of public involvement has grown. I think about it as we have initiated this project in the late 1980s. Our process was very linear in development. We would go to a public official's meeting, roll out the plans and tell the town officials what we planned to do. We'd take those same plans back to a public informational meeting and tell the general public that was invited what we planned to do. We'd take their input and make changes as necessary, but very linear in that process. Then we'd go through a public hearing and work through that and get the project underway.

You can see how that has grown from the mid-80s into a much more intensive public participation process. People demand information in today's society. The information provided through the means that we had talked about -- through the number of public meetings -- through the newsletters -- particularly through the website -- helps relieve a lot of anxiety. Just providing people access to that information. They want to know what's going to go on, and when. That helps relieve a lot of anxiety. There are countless people through those meetings and processes that I've talked to who've said they don't agree with what we're doing, but they're very appreciative of knowing what was going to happen and what was going to go on.

There are just some, I think, of the lessons learned that I took away from it. In conclusion, you've heard Tony talk about the idiom of, "If you build it, they will come." It's hard to know if that's true or not. We need to understand the relationship between transportation and land use, and I think the Delphi method and the expert panel approach that we used tried to give an indication of that. What are the implications of this project toward potential population and employment growth in the area?

I think one of the conclusions that I've drawn and that the department has drawn is, "They're coming," -- regardless. What can be done to proactively address it? The core issue is not whether the transportation project is going to cause growth or not, but how can the growth that is coming anyway be absorbed and assimilated? The challenge, I think, is to balance this need for housing, jobs and economic development -- all those reasons that we do transportation projects -- with the need to preserve our natural resources and our quality of life.

With that, I guess I'll open it up to questions, or however you want to do it from here, Mr. Moderator.

Audience: [applause]

Moderator: Okay, Bill.

Do we have any questions?

Question: Actually, I live in [Furst]. [We have] regulator controversy. Could you discuss it in relationship to the secondary impacts?

Speaker: The main regulatory controversy. We have taken this approach to consider secondary growth. Based on the expert panel studies, the population increase that may happen of 35,000 additional people over what would otherwise be projected to come. The question or the controversy is how to deal with that. The number of regulatory agencies would have us do more extensive mitigation, to mitigate for the potential impacts of that additional population growth on resources.

From our perspective, we're talking about growth. Undefined growth. Undefined impacts. Growth that presumably if it would happen, would have to be mitigated in its own right. So the issue of mitigation for secondary growth and secondary land-use impacts has been part of the regulatory controversy.

I think that the steps that we are taking to address issues of growth -- the Technical Assistance Program -- is an innovative approach to try to address that core issue of growth, and the implications of growth.

Question: What type of mitigation were they asking you to do?

Speaker: Mainly, the thoughts have been for much more extensive preservation of open space, and preservation of open land. Particularly in the secondary communities. Most of our project mitigation package involves preservation and creation and enhancement of wetlands, within the corridor communities. The 5 corridor communities are receiving the brunt of the secondary growth, as well as all of the primary and direct impact to wetlands, wildlife and so forth. So we have focused our specific mitigation package within the 5 corridor communities. Part of the controversy has been that some mitigation and some of that land preservation should be earmarked for the secondary tier communities.

Question: I have a couple of questions. One is, is the perception that because of this public involvement effort and 50 meetings and all this extensive outreach that controversy is higher, since you've increased the awareness of the people -- in terms of what's happening with the project? Is the perception that there's more controversy, or is the perception that you have better addressed the issues and concerns of the community -- and that therefore the controversy has been better understood? That's number one.

Then number two -- did you have any low-income minority participation? If you did, how did you deal with this in your website, community-based "Let's hold meetings," as opposed to... How did you deal with those issues? Or were there just none?

Speaker: To your first question -- Is that relative to the extent of public participation process creating controversy? Is that basically what you asked?

Question: Is the perception...? In Florida, I deal with the more people I have involved, the more people I've stirred up. I'm trying to see if more people are involved, the better the understanding is, anyway. I want to see if that was your experience.

Speaker: I think so. I think it's individual interpretations of that, I think, that would matter. My interpretation is all I can speak of. It's necessary. Yes. I think the extensive public involvement process probably did stir up more controversy. But it also represents an informed public. If you have that many people talking about controversy, again, they may disagree about an approach, or disagree with some of the results of our study, but they are aware of it. They know of it. I think in the long-run, we have a more informed public, and we have a better process, so that those types of issues that they're raising now don't come up...

Question: ...later.

Speaker: ...several years later, when things are under construction.

Question: So informed consent really works?

Speaker: Yes.

Question: In that we agree to disagree, but we're not going to disagree enough to stop you. And you agree that when they get to the design, build and construction, if there are controversial areas that exist, you know about it earlier. Now, did you have low-income minority issues?

Speaker: I can't say that specifically we did. A lot of the corridor that we deal with did not have at least direct impact on specific areas that were identified as such. Most of the community corridors are fairly homogenous, I would say, in their character, and such. We were cognizant of that. We did not want to direct all of our public participation toward the website. That's a key part, but there's an awful lot of people that don't have access to the Internet and such, still. So through the project newsletters, through the direct mailings relative to public informational meetings, and through the postings in the paper, we hope to get that wide cross-section of representation of the population. I hope that answers your question.

Speaker: I guess I'd like to add, too, to the comment on whether or not it caused more controversy or not. I think that my own personal opinion is because the way of doing business has changed in general, yes -- more issues are brought to light sooner. They may linger for a while, but I think in the overall process, in the long-term, you're taking care of an issue earlier on that could come back to haunt you in a much larger way down the road. No pun intended.

Question: I have a question about the preservation of green spaces. You said earlier that was part of the mitigation. How is that done?

Speakers: [crossing / inaudible]

Question: Preservation of green spaces -- open spaces?

Speaker: As part of the mitigation for the project?

Question: Yes.

Speaker: How was...?

Question: How was that done?

Speaker: How was it selected?

Question: Who was responsible for it? Who carried it out? How were they preserved?

Speaker: Right now, in the process, we're just at the permitting phase. We have identified a mitigation package. We haven't gone through the approval process and started acquiring those properties, yet. As far as the selection, it's through the natural resource agency meetings. A number of sites were presented. EPA and the Audubon Society had been doing a collateral study relative to what they call these [concurrent] maps. They looked at a number of parcels, and did overlays, as far as what they were near additional conservation land and what type of values they had on there. To pick sites that had the highest ecological value.

We also interacted very closely through the communities. Much of the mitigation package was formed by the individual communities and the individual communities' conservation commissions. We directly queried them, "What are your priorities in your community, in your town? Where are your highest priorities?" We forged the mitigation package on that, based on that community input of where their high priorities were.

Speaker: You had a question?

Question: I had a couple of comments to make. Then a couple of questions. First of all, I want to commend the NHDOT for what I think is [inaudible]. I've been involved with the Community Impact Assessment work since about 1996, I'd say, or 1997. We had our first conference in 1998. I think that this is a measure of success of getting out the word of how important CIA work is.

This is wonderful work. Like I said, I want to commend you for this. It's set a tone for the rest of the country in understanding the complex interlinkages between transportation and the many issues -- social, economic, cultural, safety, land-use, all of these various things -- which is what CIA is about. I can't say enough. Thanks for stepping outside the box. Thanks for pushing the envelope and helping the rest of us to be able to go back to our states or other places and say that these are success stories.

Now in terms of the question -- the CCAP program that you came up with. How did you decide to fund that? Is that being funded through the mitigation dollars? Or perhaps even enhancement moneys? Is that specifically coming out of project funds? Do you understand what I'm saying?

Speaker: Yes. Right now, they're planning on and have it programmed as "Project Funds," as part of the overall mitigation and enhancement package associated with the project. Those funds are associated with the I93 project.

Question: Fantastic. All of you, I hope you heard that. We can use project money to mitigate and for enhancement. Many DOTs are stepping back, or many will say, "This is not our responsibility." But what NHDOT has done here is assumed some responsibility. Not all of the responsibility, by any means -- you've recognized that. Now how did you decide to spend \$3.5m on the CCAP program?

Speaker: I'm not 100 percent sure. It was talked about as a range, and I think it came out as some of the discussions relative to the overall appropriateness of size of the overall mitigation and enhancement package.

Question: Okay. So many some kind of percentage of the total?

Speaker: It wasn't based on a percentage. It was kind of an idea of what someone thought should be a reasonable range of funding from the overall mitigation and enhancement package. At one point in the process, dealing with the regulatory agencies, there was a very large discrepancy. I think there still is somewhat a discrepancy. There were some discussions relative to what could be done to compromise and to come a little bit closer together. I think that range of values kind of fell out of those broad discussions.

Question: I would ask -- I'm with the Center for Transportation and the Environment, and working with Brenda Craig. We are developing a national CIA course. In fact, she has a draft of it. We've included numerous case studies, and I would like to include this project as a case study. If there's any way that you could figure that out in a way that we could put it into a case study, I would appreciate that.

Speaker: Okay. Yes. And [inaudible] going to be here the rest of the afternoon, so maybe we can talk to you about that. Sure.

Question: Thank you.

Question: I have, actually, 2 questions. How did you select the members for the community task force?

Speaker: For the Citizens Advisory Task Force?

Question: Yes.

Speaker: Generally, we [inaudible] the 5 communities. We sent a letter to the communities, telling them our intent, outlining the goals and responsibilities of the task force members. We asked the individual communities' governing bodies -- the board of selection for the aldermen -- to nominate a representative from their community to sit on this community.

Question: Okay. Thank you. Also, because this is going to be a phase-in project, if I understand that correctly... Are there plans to go back and figure out what's changed in the projections? Or how far the projections were off? To go back and revamp? Impacts at future times?

Speaker: Not really.

Question: [inaudible / crossing]

Speaker: Again, they weren't really projections. I'm very interested, and I think the people who have been involved will be interested in more or less monitoring it or tracking it. There weren't really projections, as Tony said. They were the kind of people that are experts with opinions. Again, the results were a blended average, but it wasn't a consensus. It was very much individual opinions.

We needed some way to present that, and I think that being engineers as such, we needed a way to consolidate that -- kind of averaging it was the best way to summarize it.

Question: I was wondering also, how does this fit in with the upgrade of the Franconia Asset project of Route 93? Was that before or after?

Speaker: That was much before. Yes. Yes.

Question: Okay.

Speaker: I'm not sure, exactly, how it fit in. Most of the folks involved in the project today weren't involved in the I93 project. I think that in a broader sense, the Department of Transportation of New Hampshire has been engaging more recently in taking more proactive steps organizationally, to formalize our public participation approach, and institute context-sensitive solutions into our organizational structure.

I think that the I93 project through Franconia Notch was a very good example of what could be considered context-sensitive solutions, before that term was even coined. Hopefully we've learned and continue to learn and build off that as we go forward.

Question: I have two questions. First, was partnering an agreement based on the concepts of the NEPA 404 Merger Agreement? If so, did you receive concurrence at the major milestones from the resource agencies? Secondly, did you also use an expert panel to determine how you were going to address cumulative impacts?

Speaker: The first question is relative to the partnering agreement. It was generally under the auspices of the enabling legislation -- T21. I don't have the specifics, but it was an integral approach with the Army Corps of Engineers Methodology. They were partnering agencies. It as kind of all together. I don't know if I'm answering your questions.

Speaker: I could add a little bit to it. Basically, it was kind of a forerunner to any of the more formalized -- at least that I was aware of -- any of the more formally environmental streamlining initiatives going on. It was done to try to get the resource agencies and the Department of Transportation to agree to what has now become an environmental streamlining process across the country. I was able to participate in one day of it. Again, it was good from a brainstorming reasoning session.

In addition to that, the heads of each of the agencies -- not necessarily all the people that attended the workshop -- but the heads of all those groups had gotten together the night before, in establishing what it would say. What their "vision" was, I guess, of what they were trying to achieve.

I think overall, it probably followed along the guidelines that you're talking about. But I couldn't say for sure that it did that.

Speaker: Relative to the second part of the question about the cumulative impacts. When I talk about the expert panel, it was a vehicle of methodology for allocating and accepting growth. With the numbers that came out of that expert panel study, what may happen or would likely happen based on that expert panel, we took those results and then in the environmental documentation looked at what the impact of that growth may be. At the review of all the individual communities' master plans and trying to ascertain how much development they envisioned in their master plans. How much developable land was in each community. We tried to get a sense of ascertaining what the potential impacts of that secondary growth might be, on top of the impact of the growth that was happening, anyway. In that sense, it was looked at cumulatively with the impact of the growth that was happening, anyway. You have the potential impact of what growth may happen as a result of the highway project -- looking at that in an overall sense.

Speaker: I wanted to talk a little bit about that, also. I think it was very interesting and could be a conclusion of this study -- the recognition that the public understands about growth, and the inevitability of growth. But also, it understands that accessibility can result in additional incremental growth. I think the study was good in identifying that.

Secondly, it was interesting that the study identified the relationship between the relative growth -- the growth that would occur with regard to the accessibility -- but also the relative growth on those parts of the area that are further distant from the actual facility, itself. The impact, relatively speaking, is quite large on places away from the facility. In fact, the northern end of the facility showed a pretty good-sized growth area at the end. I thought that was most interesting. The important thing is that the public recognized it and also input it into the study. I think that was a plus for the entire effort.

Speaker: Thank you.

Moderator: We have time for one more question, and it's mine.

Could you help me out a little bit to understand how this \$3.5m is going to be used? Is it to support the 3 committees? Is it in grants to the 26 communities? To assist with planning efforts? Just how is it going to be done?

Speaker: That's a big part of what we're trying to figure out, right now, in that part of the strategic planning that's going to go on. We never envisioned it as a pass-through, or as grants specifically to the community. We see that 3-committee structure and the steering committee as weighing in, in helping us determine how best to apply that -- where the most needs are -- where the most bang for the buck is.

Ideally, it'll be a component of all of those. There will be some fraction, some component that may be earmarked toward innovative projects for the towns. They would come to this committee with some innovative project, and through the steering committee...

[tape ends]

[tape begins]

...under this program. As well as, again, broader tools in development. Exactly how it's going to be spent -- that's what we're going to be planning and working on in the next several months.

The one thing I will say -- it really hasn't happened, yet that needs to happen... It needs to be community-driven. It needs to be, as a service, to be valuable and useful to the communities. We, the DOT -- our DES went to the regional planning commission and kind of brainstormed and thought about this stuff that I have up here. What needs to happen and what's going to be happening with the strategic planning process, is much more involvement from the community in helping shape and forge this program so that it's useful to them.

Moderator: Thank you. Any more, Judy? Last question.

Question: Maybe I missed part of this, but how were the members of the expert panel selected? Who selected them? Was there ever any public controversy about who served on that panel?

Speaker: There really wasn't any controversy on it. It was an organizational committee that with the help of the consultant outside and with the regional planning commissions involved, it was a kind of brainstormed list of names. I know we had sent out invitations and asked about peoples' willingness. It was larger than that -- the [NAF16] -- with the indication of interest from a number of people, it was chosen to provide a diversity of input. We didn't want it heavily weighted with conservationists or heavily weighted with land developers. From that cross-section that we sent out interest to and received interest back, we felt that what we got was a broad representative cross-section. As far as I know, there really wasn't any controversy relative to who got picked or who didn't. [I think they were all well-respected].

Speaker: I just wanted to add one more thing, too, before we close on the initiative here with the towns. Some of the problems that we will probably experience or that the department will experience in doing this is that a lot of these towns are rural. They don't have some of the tools that some of the more-populated towns have. That's going to be an issue that's going to have to be dealt with. It's like Bill said -- you almost need to have a champion in each town that's willing to do this. Until you find somebody that's willing to take that on in each of those communities, it could be a bit of a challenge.

Moderator: Okay. Really good session. Thanks, Tony and Bill!

Audience: [applause]

Announcement: We're going to have lunch, now.

[session ends]