

### Findings Related to Option 4

The following documentation is the view of the New Hampshire Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration regarding “Option 4” of the Bow-Concord, I-93 Transportation Planning Study based on information gathered through several Planning Group meetings.

#### Background

During the Bow-Concord I-93 Project study, the Planning Group participants assisted with the development of a series of project alternatives. These alternatives have been screened to determine their ability to address the Bow-Concord I-93 Project’s problem and goal statements. A set of screening criteria (developed by the Planning Group) have been used to ensure that all alternatives are evaluated against all of the components of the problem and goal statements before the alternatives are determined to be reasonable or unreasonable for further study by this project. Opportunity Corridor Concept Option 4 (Option 4) is one of the sixteen alternatives being screened.

Bow-Concord I-93 Project Goal Statement:

*The Bow-Concord I-93 Corridor should balance the needs of all users and the surrounding communities by providing a safe, affordable, reliable, environmentally acceptable and community compatible transportation system. The system will offer mobility choices and complement the unique character of the Capitol Region communities. It will support their economic initiatives, preserve and/or enhance their natural and historic resources, facilitate non-vehicular access, and sustain the communities’ quality of life, now and into the future.*

Option 4 is essentially a combination of two other alternatives. It includes all of the elements of the Opportunity Corridor Concept (Option 1) and the Route 106 Connector with access to Garvin Falls, plus an Exit 2½ on I-393. Option 1 includes an in-corridor widening of I-93 developed by the City of Concord to support their redevelopment of the City’s Opportunity Corridor, which is west of I-93 between Exits 12 and 15. Option 1 was screened and deemed to be reasonable for further study by the Planning Group. The Route 106 Connector would be a new roadway to connect the I-93 and I-89 corridors to NH Route 106. The Route 106 Connector as a stand-alone alternative was screened and deemed unreasonable by the Planning Group, as it did not adequately address the transportation demand along I-93, the compelling purpose or goal of the project.

Input used in the Central NH Regional Transportation Demand Model for the project was revised to address the specific land use associated with Option 4. According to the traffic projections for Option 4 using the revised land use projections, as provided by the City of Concord, the following adjustments to the afternoon peak hourly traffic volumes are predicted in 2030. These traffic volume figures represent the total for both directions as compared to Option 1, if Option 4 were to be constructed:

- \* 2,800 total trips an hour on the Route 106 Connector;
- \* 400 fewer total trips an hour on I-93 between I-89 and Exit 12;
- \* 1,600 fewer total trips an hour on Manchester Street; and
- \* 800 additional total trips per hour on I-93 between Exits 13 and 14.

This data indicates that Option 4 would only provide some relief to one segment (I-89 to Exit 12) of the Bow-Concord I-93 Corridor while increasing demand on other segments of the Corridor.

### Option 4 Screening

The Planning Group discussed the screening of Option 4 at four meetings in 2006 and 2007. There were generally two points of view regarding the reasonableness of Option 4. Those who considered it to be reasonable cited the following:

- Responds to the needs of surrounding communities (Concord, Bow and Pembroke all have I-93 widening and a Route 106 Connector in their respective master plans)
- Supports economic initiatives (redevelopment of the Opportunity Corridor and development of land in Garvin Falls area)
- Supports NH's Smart Growth Legislation (by coordinating multiple uses within a new node of development)
- Benefits transportation (Reduces traffic volumes on I-93 south of Exit 13)

Those who considered it to be unreasonable cited the following:

- Would increase traffic on I-93 north of Exit 13, requiring greater widening and increased "footprint" impacts
- Would impact an area with high natural resource value, which permitting agencies stated would have difficulty meeting their permit requirements
- Would increase costs to study resource impacts, with no apparent return as it is unlikely to be advanced or permitted
- Majority of development to occur after 2030
- Promotes economic development, which is not a goal of the project

After a great deal of discussion, it became apparent that the Planning Group could not reach consensus on this alternative. The Group was then asked to vote to determine if a super majority (at least 75%) could determine the fate of Option 4. A super majority was not reached because the Group was so closely divided on the merits of this alternative.

The NHDOT and the Federal Highway Administration also discussed Option 4 in separate meetings and correspondence with the City of Concord, the strongest proponent for this option.

Option 4 was presented to the public at the Public Informational Meeting held on April 17, 2007 at Concord's Rundlett Middle School. Public opinion regarding Option 4 was mixed. The public was informed of the model results that indicate a reduction of traffic south of Exit 13 but increased traffic north of Exit 13, and little change in traffic on Route 106. Members of the public who supported Option 4 still felt it could be used as an alternate route for people heading to the Lakes Region. However, there was also opposition to Option 4 because of environmental concerns.

### Conclusions

After this additional review and discussion, the NHDOT and FHWA have affirmed that the principal purpose of this project is to improve transportation through the I-93 corridor. They and other Planning Group members note that Option 4 would actually be contrary to this purpose, as illustrated by the aforementioned traffic projections.

This option is also in conflict with other elements of the goal statement developed by the entire Planning Group for this specific project. For example, the phrase "...support economic initiatives..." indicates the project will accommodate economic initiatives and will take into account regional growth and planned development within the design horizon for this project. It should not be construed to mean that the project will promote and facilitate large-scale development independent of any transportation benefit. Furthermore, this alternative does not preserve and/or enhance the Capitol Region communities' natural and historic resources, and it is not viewed by many Planning Group members as an environmentally acceptable option. Therefore, this alternative does not meet the overall goals of the Bow-Concord I-93 Project, and is not considered reasonable for this project. The City of Concord or others could independently pursue a connection to Garvin Falls for development as a separate project that would have its own distinct goals and merits. The Bow-Concord I-93 Project will consider the effect of such development on future travel through the corridor.

At the conclusion of this Part A study, a Summary/Classification Report will be completed. The report will clearly note what land use has been incorporated, and what level of development has been included at Garvin Falls. It will also note that Part B of this project, which is the further refinement of alternatives and environmental documentation, will take into account all reasonable land use expected through 2030, which could include additional development at Garvin Falls.