

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ATTENDEES

**ETF Attendees
(March 3, 2005)**
 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
 National Marine Fisheries Service
 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
 U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
 Federal Highway Administration
 New Jersey Dept. of Environmental Protection
 New Jersey Dept. of Transportation
 New York State Dept. of Environmental Conservation
 New York State Dept. of State
 New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation
 New York City Dept. of City Planning
 New York City Dept. of Environmental Protection
 New York City Dept. of Parks & Recreation
 New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission
 County of Union
 City of Elizabeth

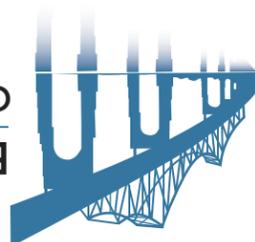
**TAC Attendees
(March 3, 2005)**
 U.S. Coast Guard Activities New York
 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
 Federal Aviation Administration
 Federal Highway Administration
 New Jersey Dept. of Environmental Protection
 New Jersey Dept. of Transportation
 New Jersey Turnpike Authority
 NJ TRANSIT
 North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority
 New York Metropolitan Transportation Council
 New York State Dept. of Environmental Conservation
 New York State Dept. of Transportation
 The Port Authority of NY & NJ
 New York City Dept. of City Planning
 New York City Dept. of Transportation
 New York City Economic Development Corporation
 County of Union
 City of Elizabeth

**Stakeholder Committee Attendees
(March 24, 2005)**
 380 Development, LLC
 Arcadis for CSX
 Automobile Club of New York
 Baykeeper, NY/NJ Harbor
 Black Car Assistance Corporation
 Central Jersey Bicycle Club/East Coast Greenway Alliance
 City of Elizabeth
 City of Linden
 East Coast Greenway
 Elizabeth Fire Department
 Elizabeth Police Department
 Gateway Regional Chamber of Commerce
 Greater Elizabeth Chamber of Commerce
 Kean University
 Mariners Harbor Civic Association
 Meadowlink
 New York Container Terminal, Inc.
 Regional Plan Association
 Staten Island Chamber of Commerce
 Staten Island Community Board 1
 Staten Island Community Board 2
 Staten Island Economic Development Corporation
 Trinitas Hospital
 Union County College



United States Coast Guard
 c/o Howard/Stein-Hudson Associates, Inc.
 517 West 35th Street, 7th Floor
 New York, NY 10001

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT GOETHALS BRIDGE REPLACEMENT



ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT GOETHALS BRIDGE REPLACEMENT

NEWSLETTER 3 / JUNE 2005

INTRODUCTION

The United States Coast Guard (USCG) is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to evaluate the environmental, economic, and social impacts of the proposed Goethals Bridge Replacement (GBR). The Port Authority of NY & NJ, the project sponsor, has proposed this action as part of its Goethals Bridge Modernization Program. This is the third in a series of newsletters to inform stakeholders and the public about this study as it progresses.

IN THIS NEWSLETTER

Introduction.....	1
For More Information.....	1
Progress to Date.....	1-2
First Round of Committee Meetings....	2-3
What's Next.....	3
Advisory Committee Attendees.....	4

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For project information, visit the GBR EIS Web site at www.goethalseis.com. The site contains links to presentations made at the committee meetings, as well as to previous newsletters and other study materials.



United States Coast Guard

PROGRESS TO DATE

The first GBR EIS newsletter described the background and the purpose and need for the proposed project. Newsletter #2 summarized the results of Public and Agency Scoping, which concluded in November 2004. (Copies of these first two newsletters are available on www.goethalseis.com.) The study team considered comments and suggestions received during the scoping process in compiling a preliminary list of project alternatives and the definition of criteria that will be used to "screen" the preliminary alternatives. The purpose of the screening is to identify alternatives that perform best against the defined criteria, address the project purpose and need to an acceptable degree, and therefore, should be evaluated in detail in the EIS. In addition to project alternatives, the EIS will evaluate the "No-Action" alternative, which describes future conditions if no Goethals Bridge project is undertaken.

Four types of preliminary alternatives have been identified:

1. New Crossing Alternatives (alignments north or south of the existing bridge):
 - Replacement bridge and removal of the existing Goethals Bridge
 - New parallel bridge and reconfigured existing Goethals Bridge
 - Twin replacement bridges and removal of the existing Goethals Bridge
2. Transit Alternatives:
 - Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) via a new bridge and with local bus enhancements
 - Ferry service with local bus enhancements, with or without a new bridge
3. Travel Demand Management (TDM) Alternatives:
 - Congestion pricing with or without a new bridge
 - Dedicated high occupancy vehicle (HOV)/high occupancy toll (HOT) lane on a new bridge

4. Freight-Movement Alternatives:
 - Highway-based freight-movement enhancements with a new bridge
 - Rail-based freight-movement enhancements with or without a new bridge
 - An intermodal facility near the New York Container Terminal at Howland Hook with or without a new bridge

Other candidate alternatives were eliminated from further consideration for one or more of the following reasons:

- inability to address the purpose and need for the proposed project;
- significant design and operational complexities compared with other candidates with similar ability to meet the project purpose and need;
- significantly greater environmental impact potential compared to other candidates that would provide the same or greater benefits;
- inability to attract sufficient riders, in the case of certain candidate transit alternatives, given the dispersed pattern of trip origins and destinations; and
- significantly greater costs to build and/or maintain than other candidates without providing greater benefit.

The criteria for the initial level of screening address whether a preliminary alternative is reasonable and feasible and how well it would meet the purpose and need for the proposed project. Once the initial level of screening is completed, alternatives that are deemed reasonable and feasible will be advanced to the second level of screening; some of the alternatives may be combined to increase their effectiveness to more fully meet the project purpose and need. *Continued on page 2.*

PROGRESS TO DATE (con't)

The second screening will use a set of criteria to compare alternatives to determine the relative advantages and disadvantages of each, in terms of the following considerations projected to the year 2030:

- their ability to enhance mobility on the Goethals Bridge and its approaches;
- whether they result in deterioration of traffic conditions in the Goethals corridor, and at the other Staten Island bridges or in the region;
- their ability to enhance non-single occupant vehicle (SOV) commutation opportunities;
- their potential effects on different aspects of the natural and human environment; and
- the level of complexity, maintenance of transportation services during construction, and reasonableness of costs compared to other alternatives.

The alternatives that remain after the comparative screening will be examined in much greater detail in the EIS.

More information on the preliminary alternatives and the screening process and criteria can be found on the project Web site in a PowerPoint presentation to the ETF/TAC committees.

In addition to the work described above, the study team has also made progress on the following tasks:

- investigating and documenting existing environmental conditions in the study area;
- conducting noise monitoring at selected noise-sensitive locations;
- investigating historic and visual resources in the study area;
- collecting and analyzing traffic data; and
- developing the transportation forecasting model that will be used to predict future traffic volumes, patterns, and conditions.

FIRST ROUND OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS



Community and government agency input continues to play an important role in this study as it progresses. The USCG has organized three committees to provide input to the EIS. Each committee is expected to meet approximately three times during the preparation of the draft EIS. These committees are:

An *Environmental Task Force (ETF)*, consisting of federal, state, and local agencies to provide technical guidance on all environmental aspects of the project not covered by the TAC.

A *Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)*, comprised of federal, state, regional, and local agencies to provide technical guidance on traffic/transportation and mobile-source air quality and noise issues and analyses.

A *Stakeholder Committee (SC)* of representatives from a cross-section of interests and organizations that may be affected by the proposed GBR project. This committee is to provide input via open discussion about project issues and findings.

Over 60 organizations have been invited to participate in the SC, including:

- community groups;
- civic associations;
- commuter and driving organizations;
- chambers of commerce;
- trucking and shipping associations;
- economic development groups;
- large local employers;
- hospitals and emergency service organizations;
- environmental groups;
- regional associations; and
- local government representatives.

On March 3, 2005, the USCG hosted the kick-off meeting of the ETF with 20 attendees representing 16 agencies. The kick-off meeting of the TAC also took place at the USCG offices on March 3, 2005, with 27 attendees representing 18 agencies. The Stakeholder Committee held its first meeting in Staten Island on March 24, 2005, with 33 attendees representing 24 organizations.

Each meeting included presentations on the EIS Status and Scoping Process, as well as on the Preliminary Alternatives and Alternatives Screening Methodology. The presentation slides are available for viewing on the project Web site. In addition, the USCG and consultant team presented the ETF with information on existing environmental conditions in the study area, while they presented the TAC with information on the traffic data collection program and Goethals Transportation Model (formerly called the Best Practice Model - Goethals) that is being developed. The TAC also heard a presentation on the noise and air quality analyses that will be undertaken for the EIS. Below is some of the feedback received from committee members.

Environmental Task Force - The majority of the feedback from ETF members involved concerns over potential impacts to wetlands in Staten Island from construction of a new bridge. Members requested additional information on the types and functions of wetlands in the area and emphasized the need to minimize impacts as much as possible. The study team will be evaluating potential impacts to wetlands and other natural resources in great detail. The study team has prepared wetland and ecology maps, the latter with details on trees and habitat quality and function.

Members asked about evaluation of cumulative impacts and were told that this evaluation will take place during the EIS phase. It was also related that the evaluation will consider programmed and committed projects as well as those that are only in the planning phase. It was noted that the GBR EIS study team is coordinating with the studies currently underway for the NASCAR project, proposed south of the Goethals Bridge and Staten Island Expressway.

FIRST ROUND OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS (con't)



A member questioned the follow-up to the Mayor of Elizabeth's Public Scoping comment requesting the convening of a summit comprised of the Cities of Elizabeth and Linden, Union County, NJDOT and the NJ Turnpike Authority. A Port Authority representative stated that they had already convened such a meeting and that additional meetings with these entities are planned.

Additional recommendations by ETF members were made at the meeting, including: any proposed new bridge should be combined with Transportation Demand Management (TDM) schemes such as congestion pricing or high-occupancy vehicle lanes; and the existing bridge should be rehabilitated, due to its historic value.

Technical Advisory Committee - This committee discussed a variety of topics. Members asked if the screening criteria used to evaluate alternatives carry the same value or weight. They also asked if energy efficiency and production of greenhouse gas emissions could be added to the criteria. The study team responded that the criteria all carry the same value, and that energy efficiency and greenhouse gases would be considered in the criteria.

Members asked whether the analysis for air quality would take place at both regional and local levels. The team will analyze air quality on a regional level during the screening of alternatives, and will examine localized impacts during the EIS phase. TAC members also recommended that the study team analyze particulate matter of both 10 and 2.5 microns in diameter (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}) at both the local and regional level; the study team responded that these analyses will be conducted.

TAC members also questioned the mechanics of the transportation forecasting model, asking if transit modes are included (yes), the design year selected for the EIS (2030, based on estimated construction start-up in 2010), and what the congestion levels on the bridge would be if no action is taken (not yet determined, but No-Action forecasts will serve as the basis for determining the number of lanes needed for a bridge improvement project to maintain efficient access on this corridor, and additional transportation services that could result in traffic and transportation improvements).

Another member inquired whether the Goethals Bridge Replacement project would consider the truck staging area currently occupying streets in Elizabeth, NJ, which were stated as being disruptive to the city's operations. The Port Authority indicated that this issue is currently being addressed in order to take this staging area off city streets, regardless of the outcome for the proposed Goethals Bridge project.

TAC members also made several recommendations, including: the study team should consider connections from I-278 to Routes 1/9 northbound; and there should be no closure of the Arthur Kill navigable channel during the proposed project's construction period. The study team responded in the affirmative regarding both issues. A further recommendation was that the study team should share information on the project with the two Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) in the region (i.e., New York Metropolitan Transportation Council and North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority) for air quality conformity determinations as the proposed project will need to be incorporated into the agencies' transportation plans. The study team responded that coordination with both MPOs is underway.

Stakeholder Committee - Several committee members raised concerns about limited bicycle and pedestrian access over local bridges and emphasized that a new Goethals Bridge should include capacity for both. The study team responded that addressing this deficiency is part of the proposed project's purpose and need.

Members asked for clarification of the size of the study area to be used for traffic analysis; they were assured that the analysis will address both the regional and local street networks in Elizabeth and Staten Island. A member suggested that the TDM alternatives might not be effective and that the study team should consider whether a bridge with three lanes in each direction for traffic will be sufficient for the growth that is expected in the corridor. The study team responded that transportation forecast modeling will help determine the potential effectiveness of TDM alternatives and the most appropriate number and use of lanes on a proposed new bridge.

A member questioned the level of coordination among the entities responsible for the regional network of roads and bridges, and wondered whether input received during the agency and public scoping meetings is being integrated in the study. The study team described the TAC and ETF as the venues for inter-agency coordination and emphasized that all comments are being considered to help refine the study. In addition, there will be public meetings at key study milestones. The study team also noted that information from the committee meetings will be shared with the general public via study newsletters.

Additional comments included: concern over potential impacts to wetlands from any new construction; a recommendation that two-way tolling on the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge be considered as a potentially viable alternative; and a recommendation that rehabilitation of the existing bridge be considered as an alternative.

WHAT'S NEXT

During this EIS process, the USCG will provide future opportunities for stakeholders, agencies and the public to learn about, and review and comment on the draft results of the screening of alternatives through several venues. The next meetings of the ETF, TAC, and SC, as well as Public Open Houses are currently scheduled for Fall 2005.