



natural resources (bio-diversity, wetlands, water quality, farmland soils and threatened and endangered species), physical resources (noise and vibration, air quality, traffic and hazardous materials) and social resources (open space, visual, historic and archeological, land use, social and economic impacts and Environmental Justice). We are looking at all of these resources for all the alternatives, both electric and diesel and the rapid bus.

The scope of the analysis includes the requirements of the Secretary's Certificate of the ENF and the different state and federal regulations. A question was asked if this was for MEPA and NEPA and the answer was yes. Concern was expressed that the limited range of alternatives examined was only pertinent for the state MEPA process and was not necessarily broad enough for the federal NEPA process. There was a question of if the state and federal processes are supposed to be merged and Kristina said the processes were in coordination.

Dr. Standley continued her presentation by explaining inputs to the analysis were started with existing conditions garnered by aerial photos, GIS and other data. The physical impacts such as limits of grading and existing conditions were mapped. Some of the resources that can't be mapped were modeled ahead to 2030 and include air quality, noise vibration and traffic. Each alternative was mapped showing layers including temporary and permanent impacts to resources. Conceptual layouts were made for both areas of single and double tracks.

The future conditions modeling for vibration, noise, air quality, and traffic are based on the frequency and speeds of trains, deceleration and acceleration and the existing freight, vehicle traffic based on ridership numbers. A question was asked concerning those ridership numbers and when they would be finalized. Ms. Egan responded that the preliminary estimates were refined and will be in the DEIS. The numbers used for this analysis are not yet available. A question was asked concerning double tracking and Dr. Standley that there would be some sections of double tracking and Ms. Egan responded that this would also be in the DEIS.

Dr. Standley continued by explaining different kinds of impacts. Direct impacts (footprint) are quantifiable by amount, volume and area. Indirect impacts are caused by the action itself but are not quantifiable. Secondary impacts are the results of regional induced growth (population, housing, jobs). Finally, there are cumulative impacts which take into account past impacts combined with the impacts created with this project. There are negative and beneficial impacts, temporary and permanent impacts.

A question was asked concerning indirect impacts and if it is all loss of function or could it be a change in function. Dr. Standley replied that it could be a change in function.

Dr. Standley continued by offering two different examples of resources for this impacts analysis. The first is noise. The analysis uses guideline called the LDN which is the average day-night sound level. Night time noise is weighed at twice the rate. It takes into account train engine type, train size and weight, train speed, levels at different distance

and compares this to existing noise. If this is over a certain level from moderate to severe then noise mitigation is determined to be feasible or warranted.

The second resource used for this example is wetlands. There are several different kinds of wetlands such as isolated and vegetated wetlands and open water, as well as bank, riverbank and floodplain. We are using DEP's wetland mapping using aerial photos and field delineation. There are permanent, quantified impacts to wetlands. Permanent impacts are the physical loss of wetlands. Temporary impacts include some short term disturbances. Indirect impacts include the loss or change of function of a wetland. These maps depict the rail line and the impacts to wetlands. There is a box for each impacted wetland with the details of wetland and impact to the wetland.

Working with EOT, there is a separate technical report for each resource evaluated and after review and comment they will be posted on the website. Copies will be provided to the Army Corps and will be used to write their EIS which will also be EOT's EIR.

A question was asked concerning air quality and whether emissions from a diesel train will include the reduction in auto emissions that are taken off the road and the answer was yes, that the reduction in VMT's was taken into account.

A question was asked if the ridership figures used are available and Ms. Egan responded that these technical reports are not finalized and these numbers will be in these reports when they are released.

A question was asked if the technical reports would available online and Ms. Egan responded yes they would be.

A question was asked concerning secondary impacts and that induced growth in an urban area is great, but in a rural area it would be considered sprawl. Dr. Standley responded that the secondary impacts analysis had 3 different scenarios. The first scenario was no-build with no rail. The second is the "business as usual" scenario which is induced growth with no controls and the third scenario is the rail line with induced growth using smart growth principles.

A comment was made by the mayor of Taunton that only one alternative was acceptable to the City of Taunton and that was the Stoughton alternative. It is the most direct route in the most timely fashion. There is no alternative that will not impact the environment and are the ridership numbers not being released or adjusted to satisfy the outcry from the environmentalists?

Ms. Egan responded that would never happen and that the numbers are not finalized and they will be released when they are finalized.

A question was asked concerning what is the major obstacle from an environmental standpoint. Dr. Standley responded that the major concern is the out of service track segment south of Stoughton down through Pine Swamp.

Ms. Egan continued to explain that the Whittenton variation avoids the Pine Swamp and 4 alternatives (Whittenton Diesel, Whittenton Electric, Stoughton Diesel, Stoughton Electric) impacts some part of the Hockomock Swamp. The Stoughton alternative goes directly through the Pine Swamp and the Whittenton goes round Pine Swamp. The Army Corps is very focused on wetland resources and on actual impacts and the fragmentation impacts. We are working with UMass Amherst to do some modeling to determine the changes and levels of barrier that the rail will pose to animals.

Roland Hebert asked a question concerning the distance from center line and will the excuse be that you can't do double track because the environmental analysis didn't go that far out or wasn't done. Ms. Egan responded that we're taking very seriously the 'avoid, minimize, mitigate' look at resources and we want to provide good Level of Service without double tracking throughout the environmentally sensitive areas. We have already defined these areas and we cannot go from single track to double track without another environmental analysis.

Further comment was made to include the evaluation of the double track from New Bedford and Fall River in the EIR.

Ms. Egan responded that it cannot be done. Our studies show that ridership does not warrant it.

A question was asked concerning the technical reports and the potential to comment on them and when that might be.

Ms. Egan responded that these would be made public. There is the risk that the information in these reports may differ from the DEIS. We always welcome comments but I cannot guarantee that they will be considered by the Army Corps or anyone else.

A question was asked about the total cost of this project.

Ms. Egan responded that the range from Rapid Bus alternative to the Attleboro Electric option is \$500 million to \$2 billion during construction. How we pay for it has not been determined.

A question was asked concerning the local contributions to this project, especially considering the current economic situation and the shortage of funds.

Ms. Egan responded that this has not yet been determined. District Improvement Financing is a possibility.

A question was asked concerning secondary impact analysis and the smart growth plan. What will implementation look like?

Ms. Egan responded that the smart growth scenario will be based on a series of assumptions and will show a range of what's possible. This range will be for the preferred alternative only because this will be a more in-depth analysis.

#### 4. Status report – Kristina Egan

Ms. Egan explained how they are trying to reschedule the corridor plan event because the plan is completed. The first element of the plan is the quantification of the economic

benefits, including jobs, economic activity, etc. The rapid Bus has less of a benefit. The second element is the state corridor map, there are also conceptual plans for station areas, smart growth tool kit tools and there are state policy commitments.

Mr. Bullard asked that since the Secretary was here there have been a lot of changes, including proposed taxes, shortfalls, etc. What is the impact on this work going forward? Ms. Egan responded that the gas tax not moving forward eliminates our dedicated source of funds. The biggest change is in the federal funding opportunities are fairly exciting, especially with an administration so dedicated to rail. There will be opportunity for bigger money in the long term.

A question was asked concerning local investments, it would make more sense to build the rail from the Southcoast up and we're doing all we can do as local officials.

Mr. Bullard responded that this task force is not the only way to have a conversation about the rail. This group is an advocate to bring all the communities together and to make this a fair process, so the local mayors and officials should make their voices heard in other venues. The financing is still the most elusive element. Can we talk about more public interaction?

Ms. Egan responded that we are producing technical reports for the Army Corps and they will turn these into the DEIS and if accepted by EOT it will be adopted as the Draft Environmental Impact Report and we were targeting Labor Day for a completion date. The Corp has not yet committed to a schedule and they have stated that September may not be possible. The schedule is out of our hands at this point.

A question was asked as to how long the Corps can take.

Ms. Egan responded that there are no regulations for the Corps.

A follow-up question was asked. Could the Corps take 10 years? Ms. Egan responded that technically, yes, they could, but I cannot speak for the Corps and I am disappointed, but we are still hoping for the fall.

A question was asked to a reference to an environmental exchange.

Ms. Egan responded that we presented that information today. There may be other meetings.

Someone asked if the Corps will use these reports? Ms. Egan responded that yes, we provide the reports and the Corps interprets them.

A question was asked if it was possible to have more than one corridor plan meeting, instead of just one in New Bedford.

Ms. Egan responded that it was a good suggestion.

Someone suggested videotaping these meetings and sending them to local cable channels.

A comment was made that it's frustrating that the Corps' mission is very narrow and their decision may not take into consideration other factors.

Ms. Egan responded that she finds the Corps to be very reasonable and they will look at all impacts and benefits.

A question was asked if technical reports could be summarized.

Ms. Egan responded that each report contains a brief executive summary and these will be presented in an easy to understand format during presentations. She assured the group that they will layout all the facts.

A question was asked concerning the single and double tracking. Is it being considered to shift track in case expansion to double tracking may someday be possible?

Ms. Egan responded that this would increase the temporary impacts and it is being looked at by a case by case basis.

A question was asked concerning the Army Corps requesting information and how can we find what they have requested.

Ms. Egan suggested calling the Corps for that information. Ms. Standley continued by responding that there is no list available and a lot of the requests have been verbal requests.

## 5. Future Meetings

Mr. Bullard suggested skipping an August meeting and September 9<sup>th</sup> was decided on for the next meeting and then October 14<sup>th</sup> for the following meeting which would include a presentation by Mass Audubon. A publication of the study of land use changes by Mass Audubon entitled "Losing Ground" was offered to meeting members.

A question was asked on the progress of purchasing of rail lines.

Ms. Egan responded that some progress has been made.

Roland informed the group that meetings on the state's Rail and Freight Plan are being scheduled and we are trying to schedule one in this area, possibly in October.

A question was asked concerning which federal funds EOT is seeking.

Ms. Egan responded that we submitted a pre application to consider this project in the high speed rail category.

## 6. Other Business

Erik Hove explained how they are wrapping up the first year of technical assistance. The current year has funds available to further assist local communities. The 4 main areas of technical assistance includes station area assistance, housing plans, environmental by-laws (open space), and economic development and transportation. We will send out applications in mid-August. The Department of Energy Resources has a "green communities" program and a community can be certified as a 'green community' and that would open the door to further funds. Those applications are on-line. Ms. Egan

reminded everyone that the chief elected official from each community needs to sign that application.

7. Adjourn

Mr. Bullard adjourned the meeting @ 6 pm.