

**14th Amendment Highway Study
Expert Working Group (EWG) Meeting 3
March 9, 2011**

Attendees List

- Project Team
 - Kevin Adderly, FHWA (Atlanta)
 - Stefan Natzke, FHWA (Atlanta)
 - Marc Cutler, Cambridge Systematics (Atlanta)
 - Elizabeth Sanford, Cambridge Systematics (Atlanta)
 - Bruce Spear, Cambridge Systematics (phone)
 - David Kall, Cambridge Systematics (Atlanta)
 - Joanna Hite, Cambridge Systematics (Atlanta)
 - Harry Rice, PBS&J (Atlanta)
 - Barry Barnes, PBS&J (Atlanta)
 - Billy Bachman, GeoStats (Atlanta)
 - Martin Weiss, Consultant (phone)

- Expert Working Group
 - Federal Members
 - Steve Luxenberg, FHWA Georgia Division (Atlanta)
 - Shaun Capps, FHWA Alabama Division (Montgomery)
 - Andy Hughes, FHWA Mississippi Division (Jackson)
 - Randy Warbington, USDA Forest Service (Atlanta)
 - Ed Johnson, US Army Corps of Engineers (Atlanta)
 - Lewis Grimm, FHWA, Eastern Federal Lands (Atlanta)
 - Non-Federal Members
 - Matthew Fowler and Cindy VanDyke, Georgia DOT (Atlanta)
 - Carey Kelly, Alabama DOT (Montgomery)
 - Kim Thurman for Keith Purvis, Mississippi DOT (Jackson)
 - Robert Smith, Montgomery MPO (Montgomery)
 - Rick Jones, Columbus Consolidated (Atlanta)

- Expert Working Group Members Not Present
 - Federal Members
 - Jerry Ziewitz, US Fish and Wildlife
 - Ntale Kajumba, US EPA
 - Jennifer Simpson, US Army Fort Benning
 - Bill Triplett, Delta Regional Authority
 - Stacy Jones, US Army Fort Gordon

- Sarah Kennedy, US CDC
- Non-Federal Members
 - Paul DeCamp, Augusta MPO (Atlanta)
 - Keith Bryan, Auburn-Opelika MPO (phone)
 - Don Tussing, Macon MPO (Atlanta)
 - Mitch Stennett, Economic Development Authority of Jones County (MS) and Southern Economic Development Council (Jackson)

Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was called to order and Kevin Adderly, FHWA, provided introductory comments to the group. It was noted that the project is on schedule. Marc Cutler, Cambridge Systematics, thanked the group for attending and asked for self introductions. Introductions were made by all participants.

An overview of the meeting was provided by Marc Cutler who stated that the meeting will focus on alignments and cost estimates as well as outreach and next steps.

Review of Project Objectives

Marc Cutler provided to the group a brief overview reiterating the project's background and purpose as defined by Federal legislation. The group was told that the study will not necessarily lead to construction of any specific highway improvements, will not commit the States or MPOs to further analysis, and will not result in recommendations for design unless requested by FHWA.

Phase II of the project is currently nearing completion. Detailed engineering tasks, such as cost estimates, are being performed during this phase. Alignments have been revised to reflect comments received at the last EWG meeting and subsequently. Draft cost estimates have been prepared and are the focus of this EWG meeting. Feedback received will be used as the project transitions into the third and final phase during which the final report will be prepared and recommendations will be made on optional planning studies.

Draft Cost Estimates and Steps to Complete

Harry Rice and Barry Barnes, PBS&J, were introduced to present draft cost estimates for alternatives for all alignments. It was noted that while the presentation will provide a summary of the results, more detailed information on calculations compiled will be emailed to EWG members for examination, if desired. Before providing the cost estimates, a summary of highway construction assumptions used in determining cost estimates was provided. These assumptions included details on contracting method, design, right of way, interchange configuration, and bridges. Cost estimates presented do not include highway projects that are currently under construction or projects included in a state's transportation

improvement program (STIP). Therefore, projects such as the I-85 extension, Montgomery Outer Loop, and Fall Line Freeway are not included in the 14th Amendment Highway cost estimates.

A brief overview was provided of how estimated costs were determined for items such as construction, construction engineering and inspection, preliminary and final engineering, environmental documentation, public outreach/involvement, right-of-way, and environmental mitigation. A question was raised about the source of the \$15,000/mile cost for environmental documentation and whether that assumption was based on preparation of an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The project team responded that it was based on their experience for rural area corridors and does not necessarily assume an EA or EIS. The group discussed whether a worst case scenario for environmental documentation should be assumed, which would increase the cost based on the assumption that an EIS would be required in all areas of the corridor. The project team said that making this assumption would likely have a marginal impact on the overall total cost, however, they would consider increasing the environmental documentation cost.

A map of the entire corridor with the five major alternative alignments was presented. The following descriptions and total project costs of each alternative were provided:

Alternative	Total Project Cost
Alternative 1 (All Interstate)	\$6,001,970,637
Alternative 2 (Maximum Use of Existing Roadways)	\$619,561,974
Alternative 3 (Highway utilizing US 84 to I-59 at Laurel)	\$1,197,373,524
Alternative 4* (Highway utilizing US 84 to I-65 at Evergreen)	\$2,868,190,436
Alternative 5* (Highway utilizing US 84 to I-65 at Greenville)	\$3,202,185,686

*Totals for Alternatives 4 and 5 include Alternative 3 costs for the project segments from Montgomery to Augusta.

It was suggested that rounding the cost estimates to the nearest \$100,000 instead of to the nearest dollar would emphasize the planning-level nature of these estimates. The project team agreed and it was decided that the figures will be presented as suggested in the future.

Next, Harry Rice proceeded to walk through detailed cost estimates for individual sections of the corridor. Comments made by the EWG are recorded here.

An EWG member from MDOT commented that Alternative 1, which travels through the northern tip of a national forest in Mississippi, would likely not obtain the proper approvals and that this alignment should be discussed in more detail.

A question was raised regarding the Natchez Trace Parkway and whether or not it would be impacted. The project team replied that the impact would be minimal because US 61, the basis for the alignment, was already an existing 4-lane divided highway, and would only need to be widened slightly.

A question was asked about environmental mitigation followed. Specifically, did the cost assumptions include landscaping, erosion control, and retention ponds? The project team responded that it did not include these items and that only typical environmental requirements such as mitigation for wetlands, historical property, and archaeological sites was included.

The project team asked for clarification from the Alabama delegation on the upgrade of US-84 whether the cost estimate should include bypasses around existing rural towns. The EWG member from ALDOT stated that there should be no need to consider bypasses..

It was commented that Alternative 1 in the Macon area is a rather awkward interstate route given its zigzag nature. The EWG member from GDOT commented that the route for Alternative 3C around the south side of Macon should be considered for the interstate option to avoid public concern about an interstate route through the middle of Macon. The project team said they would discuss this change with the EWG member from Macon MPO, who was not present at this meeting. {Subsequent discussion indicated concurrence with this approach}

The presentation then shifted to discussion of additional costs to complete construction . The project team will look at the following items: the additional materials needed for planning and environmental documentation; the number and types of permits required; the quantity and types of ROW acquisitions; the number and types of contracts required; and other actions required. Input from EWG members regarding these items will be needed.

Public Involvement and Outreach

Liz Sanford, Cambridge Systematics, led the discussion on public outreach. The group was reminded that the public involvement plan objectives are two-fold: To communicate about study progress on the FHWA website, which is now live and available at http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/section_1927, and to facilitate direct public involvement at key decision points. Since a number of decisions have been made and are being vetted, it is time to begin sharing information with the public through speaker's bureau events. Assistance from EWG members is needed to schedule these events in the appropriate forums for each state. Public involvement will also be facilitated through a large webinar to be held in April or May. EWG members will be asked to provide a list of stakeholders who might be interested in attending the webinar. Through these public engagement opportunities, the public and stakeholders will be invited to provide comments using the project website.

Discussion ensued and a framework for speakers bureau events was developed and finalized over the following weeks. It includes:

- Meeting with Montgomery, AL MPO – March 17, 2011
- Meeting with Columbus, GA MPO – March 29, 2011
- Meeting with Augusta, GA MPO – April 13, 2011
- Meeting with Macon, GA MPO – April 14, 2011
- Meeting with Natchez, MS – TBD

The project team noted that these meetings coincided with the identified control points in the SAFETEA-LU legislation authorizing the study. At the speakers bureau events, the project team will give an overview of the study and present detailed project alignment and cost estimates information that is relevant to each control point geographically. Auburn-Opeleika MPO subsequently requested a briefing, which was handled by Harry Rice at PBSJ.

Next Steps

Next steps for the project team include finalizing cost estimates and steps to complete based on feedback from the EWG, conducting planned public outreach activities, and preparing a draft final report and recommendations for sub-studies. EWG Meeting 3 presentation and meeting summary will be sent to EWG members by email. EWG members were asked to forward additional discussion or material comments by March 23, 2010. It was decided that the next EWG meeting will be held during week of June 6th 2011. Subsequent discussion with FHWA GA Office finalized that plan and set the meeting for June 8, 2011 from 2:00 – 3:30 EST. The meeting will again be videoconferenced to the FHWA offices in Montgomery, AL, and Jackson, MS.

The meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.