

HIGHWAY 104 AT ANTIGONISH COMMUNITY LIAISON COMMITTEE (CLC)

Meeting Notes - Meeting #8
25 February 2009

Attendees:

Ken Donnelly
Roger Garby
John MacDonald
Robbie Fraser (HEC)
Hugh MacDougall
Mary McCarron
Heather Mayhew
Brian Segal
Ken Proctor
Gerry Grant
Anne Marie MacKenzie
Len Robertson
Lindsay Lyghtle
Ian MacCallum
John Glynn-Morris (note-taker)

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The meeting started at 11:00 am with 15 participants. Ken Donnelly welcomed everyone and introductions were made. Ian MacCallum introduced himself and noted that he would be taking the place of Elizabeth Pugh on the project..

NOISE UPDATE

Ken Donnelly re-capped the last meeting where noise issues at Trunk 7 were raised and that the committee was informed that a noise study was underway. Roger Garby said that preliminary reports were completed but not yet finalized.

Ken Proctor asked if preliminary noise studies indicated any change. Roger Garby stated not at this point. Brian Segal asked if there was any existing data. Ken Donnelly noted that both intersection scenarios were being modeled. Roger Garby added that noise issues were taken into account during the environmental assessment.

Ken Donnelly noted that the community was expecting the highway to be placed under Trunk 7 for noise mitigation. Two issues were community expectations and whether barriers such as berms would be required. Roger Garby noted that mitigation scenarios had been discussed such as concrete barriers for noise reduction. Brian Segal asked whether scenarios were site specific. Roger Garby was uncertain. Ken Proctor asked

who was conducting the studies. Ian MacCallum stated it was Jacques Whitford / Stantec. Ken Donnelly added that the Community Liaison Committee (CLC) would have an opportunity to review the results of the study, noting that noise was acknowledged as an important issue and that there would be time for questions and review.

Ken Proctor asked if there would be an open-house on the issue. Ken Donnelly responded that would be the CLC's decision. Roger Garby noted an Open-House could be suggested. Ken Donnelly furthered that the CLC's job was to represent the community, however if an Open-House was deemed necessary by the CLC that it would be appropriate.

CLEARING

Ken Donnelly noted that tenders were closing today, as indicated in The Casket. Ken asked for specific details. Roger Garby answered that the tenders cleared were for Phase #1, and that not all necessary properties have been purchased, however, most development permits have been acquired. The process would start in the west and move east. This was decided because at Beech Hill Road (east) required no clearing. At Addington Forks (west) elements were still in process. Roger added that there was a low point behind the Super Value and that much fill would be required. The hope would be to proceed to West River and that emphasis had been placed on the first kilometer.

Roger Garby noted that weather was determining the ability to clear trees. At present snow and frost was an issue, and that in spring bird habitat loss would be an issue; therefore work would accelerate in the fall. Tenderers, however, know there is a time penalty unless specified to cease activities. Progress will be better known at the end of March, but the intent is to get the contracts behind the Super-Value and at the western end underway. Furthermore, snowmobile routes were an issue.

Ken Proctor asked if there were no hurdles, how much time would be required? Roger Garby answered that would depend on resources.

Ken Donnelly asked how visible the clearing would be? Roger Garby answered very visible; right through the alignment. It would be a corridor through the woods. Ian MacCallum interjected, the exception was at water-crossings. Roger Garby agreed, at least until the construction phase after which those areas would be hand-cut. Ken Donnelly asked, due to visibility, would there be a press-release? Roger Garby answered no not typically unless the CLC found the community was asking a lot of questions. Mary McCarron added if anything, clearing would be viewed positively because it would indicate progress.

Heather Mayhew asked what the riparian zone specifications were? Ian MacCallum noted that policy requires width specifications, and that the environmental protection document is available online.

John MacDonald noted that Phase 2 was scheduled for winter 2009 / 2010, and that maps were available online, but was unsure what the status on riparian buffers was. Roger Garby responded that yes, riparian buffers had been identified in the plan, and that they had been ribboned in the field.

PHASE 2 UPDATE

John MacDonald introduced himself as the Project Manager for the Phase 2 design team. John identified the design team key players and respective roles: CBCL on highway alignment and design, Harbourside Engineering Consultants on four structures for Phase 2, Thompson Conn for legal, surveying and topographic work, and Jacques Whitford / Stantec on geo-technical work.

John MacDonald noted that Stage 2 was at the preliminary stages; that geo-technical work was well underway including bore holes and test pits at the St. River Bridge, that topographical and survey work due April 15th was almost complete, and that profiling was well underway.

Len Robertson asked whether land acquisition for planning and development was mostly completed. Roger Garby answered that on one hand, yes, some areas were totally completed while other areas were taken in part, where there was no legal standing as of yet. John MacDonald added that the preliminary contracts were due mid-April.

Ken Proctor asked about funding agreements. Roger Garby answered that the Federal government would pay an undetermined amount up to 50%.

Len Robertson asked whether the old bridge would be addressed prior to the highway project. Roger Garby answered that it would depend on the current process, which he added was progressing quickly and well. John MacDonald added the old bridge would be a different contract, but that the small second bridge could be built quickly.

Ken Donnelly asked the CLC whether the community saw any issues; specifically, were there farms split by the highway that would have access restriction during construction. Mary McCarron responded that no, this would not be a common issue.

Robbie Fraser described two bridge scenarios. One objective was to mitigate noise. Robbie noted that the major culvert would be cement and that there would be an interchange structure at Taylor Road, which was currently forecasted to go over the 104. Robbie passed around bridge option plans and noted that costs and configurations would be clearer in several months. Brian Segal asked how reliable bridge-cost forecasts were. Robbie answered that there is a high level of reliability due to many past and similar projects. Any possible changes in cost would be due to excessive gypsum, oil prices, and contractor abilities.

Note: The document Robbie Fraser passed contained five conceptual bridge design options labeled SK-03, SK-05, SK-07, SK-08, SK-09.

Robbie indicated that he would lead the CLC through the design options starting with SK-09. Robbie described that there were two global options being presented: a shorter span bridge and a longer span bridge. The variable was river channels, and that the main channel would be prioritized due to environmental sensitivity. Robbie noted that the prior engineering firm was given approval for only a short-span option which was not ideal. As a result, structures would have to be placed in the back channel which was not an easy solution. Conceptually, however, RFT accepted these plans.

Robbie Fraser said that as a rule of thumb, a bridge costs \$4000 per square meter to construct. SK-08 and SK-09 are 240 meters. These options do not touch the main river channel and only the flood plain. Abutments, however, would be in or near the back channel. Robbie stated that long-span and short-span designs had similar price-tags, but that the short-span design was not as environmentally friendly. Robbie added that today environmental concerns could factor into consciously choosing the more expensive option.

John MacDonald noted that First Nations' say traditional fishing areas are a concern.

Heather Mayhew asked about the back channel, and said that a long-span bridge seemed much more environmentally sound. Robbie Fraser stated that there were no current thoughts to reinstate the back channel with reference to the existing Second Bridge Road.

Robbie Fraser continued that SK-08 was a 250 meter twin structure with minimized piers and foundations. This option was more expensive and more environmentally friendly. SK-09 was a similar structure but merged into one. The highway would be divided by a median, however the angle of the river would require a wider highway which was undesirable. Robbie added that SK-03, SK-05, and SK-07 were everyone's, including First Nations, favorite models.

Robbie Fraser described SK-03 as a longer span structure of around 300 meters. This model would keep river slopes stable and keep piers out of channel. One issue worth noting was a small amount of still water on the north side which might require compensation for environmental mitigation. Furthermore, there would be in-filling required on back channel where there was a small quantity of water, otherwise costs would be too great. The latter would be similar to SK-08.

Robbie Fraser described **SK-05** as a similar structure with shorter spans due to MSC retaining walls, which look like LEGO. This would bring the abutments closer without touching the water. Smaller in-filling may lead to small environmental mitigation and compensation. Abutments cost \$350 per square meter, saving on the \$4000 per square meter cost of bridge.

Robbie Fraser noted that the next month (March) each structure would be presented with more precise costs and material requirements, and the associated costs and benefits. Planning decisions would take CLC and First Nations concerns as primary objectives. Robbie added that he would like to have the anted CLC's input.

Heather Mayhew noted that climate change must be taken into account. Robbie Fraser responded that hydrological modeling utilized 100 years of flooding data, and included erosion, flooding, and ice forces.

John MacDonald noted that the report would include all associated costs. Robbie Fraser clarified that Level B costs were estimates.

John MacDonald noted that the environmental assessment recommended backfilling of the back channel. Robbie Fraser furthered that the initial environmental assessment did not indicate First Nations hunting and fishing grounds, but that has now been identified.

Robbie Fraser concluded the bridge design option descriptions with SK-07 which has a different pier system which is more expensive because it's in the water. Furthermore, this option had more associated costs than the twin structure..

Robbie Fraser summarized the bridge options by identifying the short-span options as either combined or twin structures, and where backfilling would be required in the back channel. The long-span options, by contrast, had no associated channel activities. Robbie noted that the forthcoming report would contain professional recommendations, all costs, CLC and First Nations opinions, all possible options, associated costs and benefits, and stake-holder objectives.

Ken Donnelly noted that electronic scans of the bridge designs were needed, so that CLC members can note preliminary thoughts.

SIGNAGE

Ken Donnelly noted that the signage meeting was positive where it was agreed that signage broadly includes marketing community events, would lead to cleaning up sidewalk and grass structures, and include web and GPS planning. Ken noted that at the last meeting there was more community discussion. Ken suggested the development of a position paper to get feedback and help build a sense of cooperation. Feedback to Ken was minimal but helped him develop a draft discussion paper. Next steps would be planned in early March.

Ken Donnelly noted that two signage requests had been made by Brian Storrie. The first, to create signage between Truro and Antigonish because there were currently only two and the closest was 45 km outside. The second, would be for signage between Cape Breton and Antigonish. Ken added that Brian Storrie had made a request for Exit #18 and another near New Glasgow.

Brian Segal felt there should be an Antigonish sign at the 102 / 104 interchange. Anne Marie Mackenzie agreed. Ken Donnelly noted that Brian Storrie agreed and was seeking resolution, and wanted to participate at a future signage meeting.

Ken Donnelly discussed the number of logos per sign and that 24 was too much. An option Ken observed in the Niagara region was multiple consecutive signs so that every business/organization would be included. Ken said that the CLC should develop a strategic approach to signage by September 2009 and that Brian Storrie was keen to participate.