Below is a summary document of the comments and questions discussed during the recent December 16th meeting with abutters regarding the York Toll Plaza Replacement Study. While notes were taken at each session, this document is not intended to be a verbatim record of the meeting. Rather, it is intended to provide you with a summary of the topics and questions discussed followed by brief responses. As always, we are available to discuss any of these topics in more detail.

ACCESS ROAD: A number of comments and questions arose surrounding the access drive to potential toll plaza locations including what it might look like, how its location would be determined and why it is not shown on current plans.

- How do you determine a location for an access road?
- Can the MTA say toll plaza access will only be from the turnpike tonight?
- Could the road on backside of Whippoorwill be an access road that could become an access for EMS?
- How safe can you say a new access road and parking lot will be for kids in the area? Where would the access drive go? Was that cost compared to existing site?
- How can you design further and have estimates if you don't know where the road would go?

Responses:
Presently the project is in a conceptual planning stage, referred to as Phase I. The inclusion of an access drive to potential plaza locations is premature at this stage for a number of reasons including:

- It has not yet been determined whether access drives in necessary.
- Screening of potential toll plaza locations must be based on a consistent set of variables. Access to a plaza could take on a variety of forms from a drive from a local road or access from the mainline. In either case this could be from either the east or west side of the Turnpike. Access to a plaza could look very different from one location to another.
- A final slate of shortlisted sites has not been approved by the Maine Turnpike Authority or the USACE. Once this slate has been determined, the access drive alternatives can be developed and compared.

- A number of factors effecting the feasibility of one access route versus another would need to be reviewed including: wetlands, nearby homes, streams, and engineering concerns like ledge, steep grades, etc..
- In all cases the access drive will be designed to meet applicable safety and design standards

CONSTRUCTION: A number of questions were asked about the impact of the construction project on local traffic and noise levels

- Will construction vehicles use the turnpike or local roads to access the construction site

What about construction noise?

Response:

We are keenly aware of the concerns about construction activities construction the noise. Written into all construction contracts are terms and conditions relating to allowable work hours and work days as well as holidays, shut-down periods, work-windows etc. We would work with the Town and contractors to make sure these issues were addressed as they relate to the Town of York and its residents.

Construction vehicle traffic will likely access the project site via the Maine Turnpike very similar to access during the Widening Project.

NOISE: A number of comments and questions were received surrounding noise, its potential increase or decrease and its potential abatement.

- Is there anything planned for noise barriers?
- Will the noise from vehicles accelerating and decelerating change? What about noise pollution? What would the levels be like?
- How do you get noise walls built?

Who establishes the policies?

Response:

The noise levels will be addressed according to the Maine Turnpike Authority's Highway Traffic Noise Policy. This policy parallels the Maine Department of Transportation's Noise Policy, with both policies following the criteria set forth in 23 CFR 772 which is the FHWA's Highway Traffic

Noise Policy. Future noise levels will be modeled according to FHWA procedures, impacts and potential mitigation measures will be based on the Highway Traffic Noise Policy.

The noise heard at an Open Road Tolling Plaza expected to similar to what is heard along the mainline of the highway today. It is expected to be less than what is heard at the existing plaza today. A good portion of this is attributed to the design guidelines for locating a toll plaza and the implementation of Open Road Tolling.

SITE SELECTION/PLAZA DESIGN: A wide variety of questions were asked regarding the design of the toll plaza and the site selection process, including:

- I understand that there are plans to widen the mainline from 3 to 4 lanes; is there adequate space here to do that?
- Will the current Exit 7 be changed?
- If you keep the plaza exactly where it is, do you have to go to the USACE for permits?
- How many feet do the parking and the outer buildings take up?
- Did you review a split plaza?
- What is the size and location of the utility building?
- Why not push the plaza further north? Such as south of Wells, it appears this area is straight, no obstruction, homes and wetlands seemed minimal?
- Did you review south of York for the plaza?

Responses:

- The MTA has no plans to widen the mainline to 4 lanes.
- The toll plaza design, as shown in the Phase 1 report, incorporates the ability to convert a cash lane into an Open Road Tolling lane at the point in time when such conversion is appropriate.
- Each of the HNTB recommended alternatives for the existing toll plaza locations include modifications to the existing Exit 7 interchange. Option 4a at MileMarker 7.3 would include separated ramp lanes. Alternatives at MileMarkers 8.7 and 9.1 would include the removal of the existing toll plaza and subsequent realignment of the interchange ramps with the mainline. More information can be found in the Phase 1 report, Parts 2, 3 and 4.
- While marginally meeting the Project Purpose and Need, Option 4a at MileMarker 7.3 is the best of the existing site options. It will require pavement widening which results in wetland impacts and permitting requirements. More information can be found in the Phase I report, Parts 2 and 4.

- At this conceptual stage of planning, the toll plaza footprint, includes Open Road Tolling lanes, cash lanes, shoulders, medians, grading, toll building and toll staff parking. The width needed for grading, toll building and parking are estimated on the high side. As the project enters the design stage each of these elements will likely change in shape and decrease in width to match existing conditions.
- The Phase I report details the Existing Site Evaluation, the Alternate Site Evaluation, and the Existing and Alternate Site Comparitive Screening in Parts 2, 3 and 4 respectively. Within these sections, there is detail on the study corridor, the alternate sites identified, the screening criteria by which sites were compared, the sites dismissed from further evaluation and finally a recommendation for those sites to move to the next Phase of development. Part 4 details the alternate sites south of the existing site and why they were dismissed. Similarly, sites north of the existing plaza in Wells are documented with factors leading to their recommended dismissal.

ENVIRONMENTAL: Comments and questions regarding a variety of environmental matters were primarily focused on wetland issues, including:

- The streams and outlets are not shown on the plan? What about the flooding? And culvert size?
- If you destroy a wetland do you have to rebuild it?
- Does the USACE/DEP tell you where to build it?
- How do new wetlands work? I've researched it and found they fail.
- So the USACE is only concerned with environment?
- Don't you have to justify to the USACE the Need?
- Have you measured for Air Pollution?
- Are there any studies on asbestos from truck braking?
- Have you investigated wetland makeup in the area, Hydrostatic pressure from water in the area and original water flow? Seems like the Spur Road is acting like a dam preventing the natural water flow.

Responses:

The New England Division of the USACE has developed a "Highway Methodology Workbook" that explains the Highway Methodology Process that is being followed by the Maine Turnpike (can be viewed online at: http://www.nae.usace.USACE.mil/reg/index.htm). The USACE also coordinates with other federal and state regulatory agencies in reviewing projects that impact regulated wetlands. During the final design process, a plan to mitigate impacted wetlands will need to be prepared and submitted to the USACE and Maine Department of Environmental Protection for obtaining final permit approvals to construct the proposed project.

The final design process will analyze the watersheds in the project area for determining the appropriate size of any existing and new drainage structures for minimizing impacts to the Turnpike and surrounding areas from normal rain events and normal spring runoffs.

New technologies have been developed for providing asbestos free brake pads and linings that should reduce asbestos exposure risk from brake dust.

Air quality analysis is usually required on transportation projects that would increase capacity. The proposed project is an upgrade/replacement of an existing facility and is not considered a capacity increasing project. Further we would expect improved air quality due to the implantation of Open Road Tolling which will minimize vehicle stops.

All Electronic Tolling: A number of questions were asked regarding the MTA's decision to implement an Open Road Tolling system instead of an All-Electronic (cashless) tolling system.

- 58% of your traffic uses E-ZPass, why not switch to a cashless AET system?
- Why are you resistant to AET technology?
- Why don't you sell the advantages of AET to other states?
- When did E-ZPass begin in Maine?

Response:

What is an AET (cashless) toll system? In short, it would eliminate the collection of cash tolls and replace it with a system that would require the MTA to collect all revenue from non E-ZPass customers by (1) video-taping vehicle license plates, (2) using plate numbers to track down owner addresses, (3) processing and mailing more than a million bills a year. to non E-ZPass users.

The MTA acknowledges that All-electronic tolling is feasible on a limited number of highways that serve traffic mixes with very specific characteristics. All-electronic tolling is typically feasible on highways that are dominated by daily commuter traffic, and thus have extremely high E-ZPass usage rates. The high *E-ZPass* usage rate means that the agency only has to rely on the process of video-taping, address tracking and billing to collect a small percentage of their revenue. For example, a 90% E-ZPass usage rate means that you only have to rely on video-tape tolling to collect 10% of your revenue. Successful cashless tolling systems also typically serve populations that reside within a common state or jurisdiction, making it possible to obtain accurate address information and enforce the payment of tolls.

The Maine Turnpike does not share these vital traffic mix characteristics. Our highway is not dominated by commuter traffic. In fact, more than 50% of our revenue comes from out-of-state vehicles, many of them tourists. Less than 60% of our customers are E-ZPass users, many

of them come from states that do not even have E-ZPass. That means that we would be relying on video-tolling to collect revenue from a more than 40% of our customers.

The primary risk is not related to the technology, but rather the absence of any reliable interstate enforcement compacts, especially for a highway like the Maine Turnpike which collects such a large percentage of its revenue from out-of-state residents. These compacts do not exist and there is no reliable indication that they will exist in the foreseeable future. Failure to effectively collect tolls from out-of-state travelers will only shift a heavier burden onto Maine toll payers. The Maine Turnpike Authority has determined that the financial risks of AET are unacceptable.

The Maine Turnpike Authority favors Open Road Tolling, which would allow E-ZPass customers to pay their tolls by simply passing beneath a sensor at regular highway speed. Cash paying customers will be channeled to the right where they will pay at a more traditional toll plaza. This plan provides E-ZPass users with the convenience they desire while ensuring the Turnpike's ability to collect cash revenues from the millions of vehicles that visit Maine from out-of-state every year. Finally, the new plaza will be designed so that it can be easily converted to a cashless system, should that option become feasible sometime in the future.

The Maine Turnpike Authority would have little influence in persuading other toll agencies to adopt an AET system. Each agency serves a different traffic mix and should operate the type of system that best serves their customers and the fiscal integrity of their business.

The Maine Turnpike, in 1997, became the first highway in New England to implement electronic toll collection. The MTA converted to the current E-ZPass system in 2005.

More detailed information about the feasibility of All-Electronic Tolling on the Maine Turnpike is available in the Maine Turnpike Southern Toll Plaza Phase I Report, Appendix E.

E-ZPass*:* There were a number of questions regarding E-ZPass; the cost, marketing and projected growth of E-ZPass.

- Why don't you give out free E-ZPasses?
- Why do we have to pay $25 for an E-ZPass?
- Why can't the MTA make it easier to get an E-ZPass?
- Why don't you make E-ZPasses available in kiosks?
- Why don't you promote E-ZPass?
- Why don't you make out-of-state drivers wait in long lines to encourage them to get E-ZPass?

- What do you project for E-ZPass growth?

Response:

- The Maine Turnpike does not give away "free" E-ZPass devices, because there really is no such thing as a free E-ZPass device. Someone has to pay for the devices. The MTA believes that those who benefit from the convenience and savings of E-ZPass should bear the cost of the device, and that the cost should not be borne by other toll payers who do not benefit from the service. The MTA does not make a profit on the sale of E-ZPass devices, selling them at cost.
    - The MTA has been committed to an ambitious E-ZPass advertising campaign, which has included television, newspaper and radio advertising. While there will always be people who choose not to take advantage of the program, all indications are that the MTA has successfully penetrated the market of frequent Turnpike users. and is now issuing most E-ZPass devices to people who only occasionally use the Turnpike.
- The MTA's E-ZPass program offers discount plans that are not offered in other states. These discount plans add a bit more complication and consumer decision-making to the application process and thus makes it difficult to sell the E-ZPass devices at shopping centers, kiosk and other remote locations. The MTA is also concerned that the security of user account information will be compromised through less controlled methods of distribution. We are always trying to simplify the program, but do not want to sacrifice the discount programs that are popular with our customers.
- While the E-ZPass program provides convenience and discounts to subscribers, the MTA <u>does not</u> attempt to market E-ZPass by punishing those who choose to pay cash by forcing them to wait in long lines. Remembering that Maine is a tourism state, we do not believe it is appropriate to punish our visitors from out-of-state by delaying them in long lines. In addition, long lines at toll plazas compromise safety.
- The MTA projects that by 2014, 62.17% of revenue will be collected through E-ZPass and 37.83% will be collected in cash.
- By 2019, the MTA projects that 65.71% of revenue will be collected through E-ZPass and 34.29% will be collected in cash.

- Projecting the growth of E-ZPass transactions and revenue is a complicated calculation that considers not only traffic growth and E-ZPass account growth, but also the number of transactions that will be produced by new E-ZPasses issued in the future, among other factors. This is important because the number of transactions per E-ZPass has steadily declined over the years as the frequent user market has been fairly well saturated and most new E-ZPass customers are only occasional users of the highway.

Property Acquisition and Compensation: Several questions were asked regarding the Maine Turnpike's process for acquiring property and how the value of property is determined.

- Will property owners be compensated based on present or future use?
- I have 4 acres, worth about $150,000. How much will I get for that?
- What happens if you cut a lot so that it becomes a nonconforming lot?
- Will the properties next to an affected property be compensated?

Response:

- The MTA strives to design projects that avoid and minimize right of way impacts. The MTA's Property Acquisition policy is designed to ensure that property owners are treated with respect, and that all efforts are made to acquire a property through friendly negotiation. The MTA's Property Acquisition Policy is available on the Maine Turnpike's web site at http://www.maineturnpike.com/pdf/about/MTA%20Acquisition%20Policy.pdf

- The MTA will prepare and present an offer of fair market value at highest and best use as determined by a Certified Maine Appraiser. If a property owner feels that the offer presented by the MTA is unfair they are encouraged to make a counter offer. Counter offers are usually presented in the form of an appraisal by a Maine Certified Appraiser.

- In the event that a non-conforming lot is created, the Appraiser will factor this into the appraisal to assure that the land owner is appropriately compensated.

- Compensation is only made for acquired properties, which also includes portions of properties acquired, e.g. a narrow strip of abutting property for slope grading. Compensation is not made for properties next to or near the acquired property.

Presentation Suggestions: It was suggested that the presentation maps be rescaled to show not only the homes of abutters, but homes in the general area.

Response:

The maps presented at the meeting were specifically designed to provide as much detail as possible with respect to the abutting properties. This required a scale that did not show other homes in the general vicinity. New maps using a scale that shows nearby homes will be developed and made available on the MTA's web site.

Revenue and Costs: Questions were asked about the sources of MTA revenue, revenue raised at the York Toll Plaza and the cost of varies site options.

- How much revenue is raised at the York Toll Plaza?
- What percentage from cash?
- What percentage from E-ZPass?
- How do you project that those percentages will change in the future?

Response:

- The Maine Turnpike does not receive any federal or state tax dollars. It is funded by tolls and rental revenue generated at Maine Turnpike service plazas.
- In 2009, $36,725,713 was collected at the York Toll Plaza. 58.2% of the revenue was collected from E-ZPass and 41.8% was collected in cash.
- The MTA projects that by 2014, 62.17% of revenue will be collected through E-ZPass and 37.83% will be collected in cash.
- By 2019, the MTA projects that 65.71% of revenue will be collected through E-ZPass and 34.29% will be collected in cash.
- Projecting the growth of E-ZPass transactions and revenue is a complicated calculation that considers not only traffic growth and E-ZPass account growth, but also the number of transactions that will be produced by new E-ZPasses issued in the future, among other factors. This is important because the number of transactions per E-ZPass has steadily declined over the years as the frequent user market has been fairly well saturated and most new E-ZPass customers are only occasional users of the highway.

Emergency Services

- When will the local emergency services providers be included in the planning process?
- Is it possible that the road on the backside of the Whippoorwill subdivision will be used as an emergency services access road to the highway?

Response:

- Consultation and coordination with local EMS providers is an important part of every Maine Turnpike project and it will be an important part of this project. Local EMS officials will be consulted during Phase II of the study when more detailed and specific information about each of the four remaining options becomes available, allowing discussions with officials to be meaningful and productive.
- If an access road to the highway is determined to be necessary all possibilities will be considered in an effort to find a practical option with minimal environmental and community impacts. However, at first glance, the road on the backside of Whippoorwill appears to be at a significantly higher elevation than the mainline of the Turnpike, making its use as an access road unlikely.

Length of Study: A number of comments were received expressing frustration with the length of the study.

Response:

- The environmental permitting process requires an exhaustive evaluation process that at times may seem lengthy and frustrating for both the agency and involved citizens. However, it is our experience that this process results in the best long term decision making regarding projects of this nature.
- The environmental permitting process itself, however, has not caused the extended length of this particular study. The length of this study can be attributed to the MTA's attempt to strike a fair balance between moving the study forward and trying to fully consider and accommodate the questions and concerns of local officials and citizens. For example, at the request of York Selectmen, the MTA suspended the overall study for more than a year to conduct a comprehensive, detailed study of options at the existing toll plaza location. The existing location had been eliminated from consideration because it failed to meet basic engineering and safety guidelines. The study of the existing site resulted in the development of nine options, none of which were able to meet engineering and safety guidelines, however one of the options was advanced for further consideration as the best option at the existing site.

The Study Process: Several questions were raised regarding the study process and opportunity for further public input.

- The MTA will hold a public meeting in York on January 21 to present and receive comment on the four options recommended by the General Engineering Consultant (GEC) for further consideration.
- If, after considering public comment, the MTA approves the GEC recommendations, the MTA will submit the entire Phase I report to the USACE for review.
- If the USACE concurs with the findings and recommendations of the Phase I report, the MTA and the GEC will begin Phase II of the study, which is a more detailed investigation of each of the recommended site options in an effort to identify a single preferred option.
- The GEC will then present the Phase II report, including the recommendation of a preferred alternative to the MTA.
- The MTA will then hold a public hearing to present and receive comment on the Phase II report and the recommended preferred option.
- If, after considering public comment, the MTA approves the GEC's recommendations, the MTA will submit the entire Phase II report to the USACE for review.
- The USACE will then review the Phase II report and will determine the Least Environmentally Damaging Practicable Alternative (LEDPA).
- Once the USACE certifies the LEDPA, the MTA will begin the process of applying for the necessary environmental permits for the preferred alternative. This initiates a subsequent review process that is supervised by the permitting agencies.