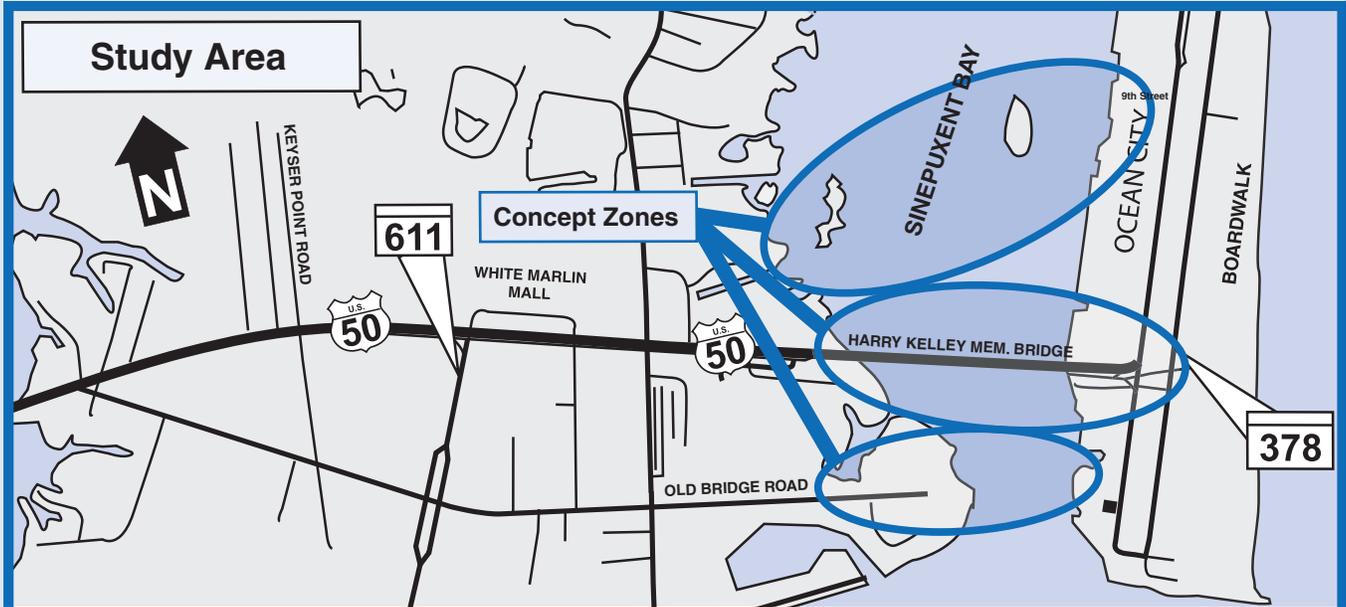




US 50 CROSSING STUDY Ocean City



STUDY UNDERWAY: IDEAS AND CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED



This is the second newsletter for the US 50 Crossing Study, sponsored by the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The purpose of the newsletter is to provide you a brief update on progress so far, which includes identifying community and natural resource issues, and soliciting ideas for improvements to the US 50 crossing. We would also like to invite you to a public meeting in October.

Public Meetings -- October 6 & 7

WHAT: Learn the latest about the study and give us your thoughts at an Informational Open House that will be held in Ocean City on October 6 & 7, 2005. To make it easier to participate, we have planned three identical sessions over two days. There will be no formal presentation, but state representatives will be available to receive comments and provide information. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend a session!

WHEN:

October 6, 2005
1:00 PM - 4:00 PM
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

October 7, 2005
9:00 AM - 11:00 AM

WHERE:

Roland E. Powell
Convention Center
Room 217
4001 Coastal Highway
(40th Street)
Ocean City, MD 21842

Many Ideas on the Table

One of the first steps in planning any project is to identify a wide range of options. For the US 50 Crossing Study, this began in the spring, with discussions with the public, regulatory agencies, local governments and others. The kick-off public meeting in June was part of the process.

This "brainstorming" generated a long list of ideas, some of which were quite innovative. These ideas include several non-bridge options for the US 50 crossing, such as a ferry or water taxis. Also suggested were a variety of locations for a new bridge, ranging from 9th St. to the north to Old Bridge Rd./Worcester St. to the south.

To comply with the National Environmental Policy Act, which is required for federal funding, the study team will consider all of these concepts during the initial screening phase. You will have the opportunity to review and comment on them at the October Open House. Later this year, the most promising of the concepts will be developed into preliminary alternatives, which will be presented next spring.

Environmental Protections and Challenges

Much of the natural beauty and wildlife that makes Ocean City distinctive is protected under state and federal environmental laws and regulations. These protections will strongly influence what the project team will and won't be able to do.

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In the US 50 Crossing study area, the following environmental features have protected status:

- Parks
- Tidal and non-tidal wetlands
- The existing bridge and several other properties that are considered “historic”
- The threatened and endangered water bird colony on Skimmer’s Island
- The “important habitat” for summer flounder in Sinepuxent Bay
- The possible presence of endangered marine turtles in Sinepuxent Bay
- Possibly others

The project team is required to try to avoid these sensitive resources. If we cannot avoid them, we must minimize any negative impacts made to them.

About the Study...

The US 50 bridge over Sinepuxent Bay was built in 1942. The existing bridge, popularly known as the Harry W. Kelley Memorial Bridge, has an operating life expectancy of 15-40 years, depending on the amount of repair work done in the future. The bridge has been placed on Maryland’s Historic Bridge Inventory and is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

The purpose of this study is to develop a transportation solution that improves upon the structural, operational and safety deficiencies associated with the existing bridge.

The study will address how to better accommodate the variety of users of the crossing, including car and truck drivers, pedestrians, fishermen, boaters, cyclists, and public transit passengers. Also identified is the need to establish a more attractive and aesthetic gateway representative of a major coastal resort.

Schedule

Develop Preliminary Alternatives	<i>Fall/Winter 2005</i>
Alternates Public Workshop	<i>Spring 2006</i>
Location/ Design Public Hearing	<i>Winter 2007/2008</i>
Location/ Design Approval	<i>Spring 2009</i>

Contacts

For more information or to be included on the project mailing list, please contact:

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In addition, an overview of this and other SHA projects, including upcoming activities, can be found on the SHA’s website at www.marylandroads.com. Simply click on “Projects and Events” to locate the project planning fact sheets.

Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr., Governor
Michael S. Steele, Lieutenant Governor
Robert L. Flanagan, Secretary
Neil J. Pedersen, Administrator

