
MEMORANDUM

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SUBJECT: SOCIAL CAPITAL IMPACTS OF THE I-93 EXPANSION PROJECT

DATE: 12/11/2002

We write out of concern for the anticipated “social capital” impacts of the proposed expansion of Interstate 93 on communities throughout southern New Hampshire. While much of your focus will be on the obvious physical consequences of the project, we urge you to pay particular attention to the predictable social impacts on communities.

New Hampshire is a unique environment. Our social and political structure is rooted in the traditions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. We live predominantly in small cities and towns, steeped in the traditions of local control and community involvement. We have a high sense of local identity, strong systems or networks of local support, and a strong culture of volunteerism. As a consequence of the very substantial body of research emerging over the past ten years in this country and around the world, we now have a far more data-based understanding of the importance of Social Capital, and the consequences for Social Capital of a project like the I-93 widening. These data confirm our personal experiences during the past two decades, as we have witnessed first hand the subtle changes resulting from the transition from a local workforce to a commuting or migrant workforce.

There is a direct inverse correlation between the time required to commute to a place of work and the time available to commit to local school and community activities. While the widening of I93 will facilitate the flow of traffic and encourage the migration of labor, it will also weaken the social bonds of the communities that house and support the workforce. It is this vital social structure that supports public education, provides voluntary social services, and creates a safe environment and high quality of life.

We urge you to give careful consideration to these “social impacts”, and to provide reasonable funding to study and remediate these impacts upon our communities.

Abstract

The data presented in the Delphi Report and the draft EIS, as well as the region's historical development trends, indicate that the expansion of I-93 will cause significant population growth, changes in commuting patterns, and closer connections to the Boston metropolitan area. This memo describes the substantial impacts these changes could impose on social capital in southern New Hampshire communities. Although some impacts may be positive, the sheer magnitude of change calls for careful, comprehensive planning on the part of effected communities, with funding provided for technical assistance and mitigation specifically related to identification, support and preservation of social capital.

Introduction

As the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) indicates, the Interstate 93 expansion is likely to result in significant population growth, changes in commuting patterns, and closer ties to the Boston metropolitan area.¹ Although the EIS discusses the socioeconomic impacts of the project, it does not incorporate adequate analysis of communities' interpersonal networks and norms, known as "social capital." Social capital is a vital resource that helps communities to sustain desirable levels of public health, safety, and prosperity.² Several laws and regulations require consideration of impacts related to social capital and recommend mitigation in cases where negative impacts cannot be avoided. This memo explains the importance of social capital impacts, justifies their inclusion in the EIS process, presents data on potential social capital impacts of the I-93 expansion, and recommends mitigation measures.

The draft EIS notes that the construction of I-93 in 1961 "was the single most influential event in the twentieth century development of the region," resulting in the transformation of rural towns into "bedroom communities."³ Likewise, the current I-93 expansion is likely to significantly impact southern New Hampshire's social fabric in a variety of ways. We urge the appropriate decision-makers to acknowledge the social capital impacts of the project and address them by providing mitigation funds and social capital-related technical assistance to all of the effected communities.

Defining Social Capital Impacts

Social capital consists of networks and norms that facilitate collective action. The dimensions of social capital include horizontal kinship or professional ties, as well as vertical ties that facilitate

¹ VHB/Vanesse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. "Interstate 93 Improvements Salem to Manchester," Draft Environmental Impact Statement. September 2002. 4-148 - 4-149.

² Putnam, Robert. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster. 2000. 18-19.

³ Draft Environmental Impact Statement, September 2002. 3-161.

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interactions with authorities.⁴ Where social capital is abundant, a common sense of trust allows community members to share resources and cooperate productively. Analogous to financial or human capital, the concept of social capital recognizes that interpersonal networks are a valuable resource that enables communities and individuals to prosper.

A wealth of evidence demonstrates that social capital enhances child development, public health, safety, economic prosperity, and happiness. Even when controlled for a broad range of demographic and social characteristics, the data demonstrate the following correlations:

- Child Development
 - States with high social capital have lower rates of infant mortality, juvenile delinquency, teenage pregnancy, and youth suicide.
 - In places with abundant social capital, children score higher on standardized tests.⁵
- Public Health
 - Individuals with social networks are less likely to suffer physical and psychological ailments, including colds, heart attacks, strokes, cancer, and depression.⁶
- Safety
 - Communities with strong social capital—where residents know neighbors’ names and cooperatively look out for local children—have lower crime rates.
 - States with high social capital are less violent, whether in terms of readiness for a fistfight or homicide rates.⁷
- Prosperity
 - Areas with high social capital are better able to maintain homeowner value.⁸
- Happiness
 - The best predictor of contentment is meaningful connections to other people.
 - Regular engagement with others, whether through religious service attendance, volunteering, or entertaining friends, is as likely to make you as happy as doubling your income.⁹

As these examples indicate, social capital is a valuable public, as well as private, good. By carefully considering social capital impacts in their decision-making processes, policymakers have the opportunity to preserve and strengthen social capital. Therefore, policies that degrade or damage social capital should be avoided.

⁴ Woolcock, Michael. “Social capital and economic development: toward a theoretical synthesis and policy framework,” *Theory and Society*. 27(2). 1998. 151-208.

⁵ Bronfenbrenner, Urie, Moen, Phyllis, and Garbarino, James. “Child, Family, and Community,” in Ross D. Parke, ed. *Review of Child Development Research*, vol. 7. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1984.

⁶ Kawachi, Ichiro, Kennedy, Bruce, and Lochner, Kimberly. “Long Live Community: Social Capital as Public Health,” *The American Prospect*. November-December 1997. 56-59.

⁷ Sampson, Robert J. “The Community,” in *Crime*, James Q. Wilson and Joan Petersilia, eds. San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Policy Studies Press. 1995. 193-216; and Jacobs, Jane. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. New York: Random House. 1961.

⁸ Temkin, Kenneth and Rohe, William. “Social Capital and Neighborhood Stability: An Empirical Investigation,” *Housing Policy Debate*. 9(1). 1998. 61-88.

⁹ Putnam, 2000. See also Argyle, Michael. *The Psychology of Happiness*. London: Methuen. 1987; and Deiner, Ed. “Subjective Well-being,” *Psychological Bulletin*. 95. 1984. 542-575.

Social Capital and the Environmental Impact Statement Process

Social impacts, “whether direct, indirect, or cumulative” are among the adverse effects that the National Environmental Policy Act intends to minimize.¹⁰ The U.S. Government’s official “Guidelines and Principles for Social Impact Assessment” encourage examination of a broad range of indicators related to social capital, including, “community and institutional structures, trust in political and social institutions, density of acquaintanceship, and family and friendship networks.”¹¹

Several laws and regulations relate specifically to the analysis of social capital impacts in transportation projects. The Federal Aid Highway Act of 1970 requires that the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) fully consider a broad range of social factors, including “community cohesion.”¹² To fulfill this obligation, the FHWA advocates conducting a “Community Impact Assessment” that specifically evaluates “community cohesion and interaction” for all proposed transport projects.¹³

Social Capital and the I-93 Draft Environmental Impact Statement

The I-93 draft EIS includes analysis of population growth, housing, employment, and wages, but fails to consider the project’s social capital impacts or to justify their exclusion. Even in cases where a class of impacts is uncertain or insignificant, the FHWA Technical Advisory on preparing environmental assessments mandates full consideration of the impacts, including a justification if they are considered insignificant. The Advisory specifies that “social, economic, and environmental issues must be considered equally with engineering, safety, and mobility issues in reaching project decisions.”¹⁴

In the I-93 draft EIS, however, social and economic impacts are considered secondary except in cases where the project results in relocations of homes or businesses. As defined in the EIS, secondary effects are “later in time or removed in distance,” while cumulative effects “result from the incremental consequences of an action.”¹⁵ The I-93 draft EIS chooses to define the project’s “direct effects” narrowly, thus excluding impacts such as population growth and changes in community character from full consideration and mitigation measures.

In contrast to this narrow definition, a FHWA position paper recommends that decision-makers mitigate for secondary impacts based on their degree of confidence about the relation of the

¹⁰ Council on Environmental Quality Regulation 40 C.F.R. § 1508.8 and 40 C.F.R. § 1500.2(e).

¹¹ “Guidelines and Principles For Social Impact Assessment.” Interorganizational Committee on Social Impact Assessment. May 1994. <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/social_impact_guide.htm#sectIII>.

¹² Federal Highway Act of 1970. 23 U.S.C. 109 (h).

¹³ “Community Impact Assessment: A Quick Reference for Transportation,” Office of Environment and Planning, Federal Highway Administration. September 1996.

¹⁴ “Guidance for Preparing and Processing Environmental and Section 4(f) Documents.” T6640.8A. Federal Highway Administration. October 30, 1987.

¹⁵ Draft Environmental Impact Statement. 4-147. Quoting from the FHWA position paper “Secondary and Cumulative Impact Assessment in the Highway Development Process.”

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impacts to the project.¹⁶ A publication of the Council on Environmental Quality agrees, encouraging mitigation of cumulative effects and citing an example of a highway project that employed this approach.¹⁷

Evidence from the Delphi Report and the Department of Transport's own analysis clearly indicates that the expansion of I-93 will cause population growth and changes in commuting patterns. Moreover, these changes will occur beyond the five towns designated to receive mitigation funds. For these reasons, we urge a more thorough consideration of social impacts, particularly as they relate to and affect the valuable resource of social capital.

Social Capital Impacts of the I-93 Expansion

The I-93 project is likely to impact the social capital of southern New Hampshire communities by altering commuting patterns, introducing new residents, and more closely linking southern New Hampshire to the Boston metropolitan area. From a social capital point of view, the proposed project could have some positive impacts, as well as negative impacts. With proper planning, effected communities could accentuate the benefits of the project and develop strategies to alleviate negative impacts.

New Hampshire currently possesses high levels of social capital, as indicated by a nationwide survey of nearly 30,000 people in 40 geographic areas conducted in the year 2000.¹⁸ In addition to high levels of civic engagement and social connectivity, the study found that unlike other states, New Hampshire residents of all incomes and education levels are uniquely predisposed to participate in their communities.¹⁹

Commuting and Social Capital Impacts

For 40,000 N.H. commuters already working in Massachusetts, the widening could enhance social capital by allowing a faster and safer commute. Moreover, easing congestion on I-93 is likely to eliminate the overflow on to other New Hampshire roads, allowing all residents to spend less time in their cars. Thus, in the short-term, the widening could enable commuters to devote more time to their communities. In the long-term, however, the influx of new commuters could increase the average commute time as more residents travel further to work. The following research findings explain the significance of commuting to social capital.

¹⁶ "Secondary and Cumulative Impact Assessment in the Highway Development Process," Federal Highway Administration position paper. 1992.

¹⁷ "Considering Cumulative Effects Under the National Environmental Policy Act," Council on Environmental Quality. January 1997. <<http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/ccenepa/ccenepa.htm>>. 45.

¹⁸ A coalition of community foundations, other funders, and the Saguro Seminar of the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University sponsored the Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey. The New Hampshire Charitable Foundation (NHCF) funded the N.H. portion of the survey. For additional information, see the survey website at <<http://www.cfsv.org/communitysurvey/>>.

¹⁹ Lewin, Tamar. "One State Finds Secret to Strong Civic Bonds," *The New York Times*. August 26, 2001. 1.

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- Commuters spend large amounts of time in their cars – time which could otherwise be spent interacting with family, friends, or neighbors. In fact, each additional 10 minutes spent behind the wheel is correlated with a 10 percent reduction in all types of civic involvement, including volunteering, participating in public meetings, and attending religious services.
- Commuters have work-based networks that compete with place-based networks. Non-commuting residents have fewer competing affiliations and are more likely to participate in the life of the community.
- Other than education level, commuting time is the strongest demographic predictor of civic involvement.²⁰

Population Growth and Social Capital Impacts

According to the Delphi Report, the expansion of I-93 is expected to accelerate growth in corridor communities by an additional 23 percent over the next twenty years. Newcomers to New Hampshire tend to be highly educated, which predisposes them to contribute actively to community life. Generally, however, residential mobility tends to weaken social capital, by reducing the proportion of townspeople with long-term ties to the community. In New Hampshire, this impact could be offset by the high educational attainment of new residents. To capture these benefits, effected towns need to find ways to integrate new community members.

If new residents attracted by the widening of I-93 are similar to the newcomers of the past decade, they are likely to be highly educated. Recent in-migrants are 2.5 times as likely to have college degrees than New Hampshire natives.²¹

- People with college degrees are twice as likely to volunteer or to give blood as people without degrees beyond high school.²²
- Those with four years of education beyond high school report 30 percent more interest in politics and 40 percent more attendance at organizational meetings.²³

In general, however, newcomers and communities with high levels of residential mobility have lower levels of social capital.

- Residents who are not firmly rooted in a community are less likely to be involved in the community. Those who anticipate moving away within five years are 20-25 percent less likely to volunteer, work on community projects, or attend religious services or club meetings.

²⁰ Putnam 2000, 213-214.

²¹ Gittell, Ross. "New Hampshire Higher Education and the Economy," unpublished presentation. 18 May 2001. <<http://www.keene.edu/intranet/citc/gitchellpresentation.pdf>>

²² Independent Sector. *Giving and Volunteering in the United States*. Washington: Independent Sector. 1996.

²³ Stehlik-Barry, Kenneth. *Education and Democratic Citizenship in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1996.

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- Residents of high-mobility communities find their neighborhoods less friendly. In such places, both newcomers and old-timers have fewer connections with their neighbors.²⁴

Community Character

Population growth due to the I-93 widening could change the rural character of communities by accelerating the pace at which the Boston metropolitan area extends north. Closer connections to the metropolitan area may bring exciting cultural and economic opportunities. With proper planning, residents can retain access to these opportunities while avoiding the following potential drawbacks of changes in community character.

- Compared to residents of other communities, metropolitan residents:
 - Belong to 10-15 percent fewer groups
 - Participate in 10-15 percent fewer club meetings
 - Attend religious services 10-20 percent less often²⁵
- Small town residents are more likely than metropolitan residents to:
 - Provide informal assistance to strangers
 - Volunteer
 - Make charitable donations
 - Give blood²⁶
- People in small towns are more trusting than people in more populated regions. In small towns:
 - Crime rates are two to three times lower than in cities.²⁷
 - Residents are three times less likely to approve of cheating on taxes, insurance claims, and the like.²⁸

Mitigating Social Capital Impacts

The data presented in the Delphi Report and the draft EIS, along with the region's historical development trends, indicate that the expansion of I-93 will cause changes in commuting patterns, significant population growth, and closer connections to the Boston metropolitan area.

²⁴ Regarding mobility and civic involvement, see Verba, Sidney, Schlozman, Kay Lehman, and Brady, Henry E. *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*. Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press. 1996.

²⁵ Putnam 2000, 205-206.

²⁶ Korte, Charles and Kerr, Nancy. "Responses to Altruistic Opportunities in Urban and Nonurban Settings," *Journal of Social Psychology*. April 1975. 183-184; House, James S. and Wolf, Sharon, "Effects of Urban Residence on Interpersonal Trust and Helping Behavior," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 36. 1978. 1029-1043; Piliavin, Jane Allyn. "Why do They Give the Gift of Life?" *Transfusion*. June 1990. 444-459. Wolpert, Julian. *Patterns of Generosity in America: Who's Holding the Safety Net?* New York: 20th Century Fund Press. 1993.

²⁷ Federal Bureau of Investigation Uniform Crime Reports. < <http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/97cius.htm> >

²⁸ Blumberg, Paul. *The Predatory Society: Deception in the American Marketplace*. New York: Oxford University Press. 1989. 163.

As this memo describes, these changes could significantly impact social capital in southern New Hampshire. Although some impacts may be positive, the sheer magnitude of change calls for careful planning on the part of effected communities.

To address the social capital impacts of the I-93 widening, communities will need support to systematically adapt their governance systems to meet the pressures generated by the I-93 widening. While this need for transformation refers most directly to the formal systems of local governance – school boards, selectmen, planning boards, conservation commissions, zoning and boards of adjustment - the changes introduced by the highway expansion will also impact the far larger network of civic agencies and associations. These organizations are central to the lives of New Hampshire communities and constitute one of the state’s great strengths, which some have called “the Real New Hampshire Advantage.”

Although some towns in the corridor have completed master plans, others lack the resources and planning expertise to undertake such a project. Moreover, all could benefit from guidance related specifically to social capital impacts. Because social capital is deeply contextual, towns will necessarily adopt different strategies to preserve and strengthen their unique social norms and networks. This section describes the sort of technical assistance we recommend and offers some examples of initiatives that could preserve and strengthen social capital.

Technical Assistance

The National Environmental Policy Act, which mandates an interdisciplinary approach to impact evaluation, recognizes the importance of using social science experts to evaluate social impacts.²⁹ Likewise, technical assistance that focuses on social capital impacts should employ experts in this field, such as community organizers and planners with specific related knowledge of how to adapt systems to build social capital.

Fortunately, New Hampshire has a larger pool of such expertise than virtually any other state, centered at the University of New Hampshire Institute of Social and Political Science, the New Hampshire Center for Public Policy Research, and the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation. Over the past year, a cadre of 35 New Hampshire leaders participated in a six- month, intensive Social Capital Learning Circle to address how this work might be done.

Although technical expertise is essential, assistance related to social capital must not be solely expert-driven. A major element of technical assistance should involve participatory community

²⁹ The Act mandates that Federal Agencies “utilize a systematic, interdisciplinary approach which will insure the integrated use of the natural and social sciences, and the environmental design arts in planning and in decisionmaking which may have an impact on man's environment.” National Environmental Policy Act. Section 102 [42 USC § 4332].

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planning. A review of the social capital measurement and social impact assessment methodologies suggest the following general stages for social capital planning processes.³⁰

1. *Definition of Community Bounds and Stakeholders:* To focus the discussion, participants determine the scale and content of the community in question.
2. *Baseline Assessment:* The community defines where its social capital currently resides. This work can be aided greatly with the help of a recently developed tool, the Social Capital Benchmark Survey Short Form, a questionnaire developed by the nation's leading social capital experts. The brief survey enables communities to assess the overall strength of local social capital. In fact, senior federal government officials are considering a similar pilot program to measure social capital nationwide.
3. *Identification of Impacts:* Participants identify the specific, likely impacts of highway expansion over time.
4. *Mitigation of Impacts:* To minimize damage to social capital, participants generate plausible mitigation measures in cooperation with local and state policymakers.
5. *Monitoring and Evaluation:* Finally, the community designs a monitoring and evaluation plan, which ensures that mitigation measures are implemented, assesses the accuracy of the impact assessment, and learns from the results.³¹

Examples of Social Capital Mitigation Measures

The mitigation measures developed through technical assistance and community planning processes should address the primary sources of social capital impact identified in this memo:

- Commuting
- Population Growth
- Community Character

Ideally, towns will have funds at their disposal to implement social capital mitigation measures. In the absence of implementation funding, however, technical assistance is an important first step toward identifying concerns and possible solutions. Some of the mitigation measures described below would require limited increases in capital or operating costs, but produce important benefits. Because social capital mobilizes communities in cooperative enterprises, public investments would be leveraged by the “sweat equity” of the local participants.

- Commuting

³⁰ The following is adapted from Williamson, Abigail. “Social Capital Impact Assessment: Revealing the Value in Social Networks,” unpublished manuscript. 22 May, 2002.

³¹ This process is compiled and refined from the following sources: Kramer and Williams 2000; Lenny Siegel. “The Community Impact Statement: An Exercise in Community Empowerment.” Center for Public Environmental Oversight. <http://www.cpeo.org/pubs/cisexe.html>. July 1999; Krishna and Shrader, 1999; World Bank. “Managing the Social Dimensions of Transport: The Role of Social Assessment.” Social Development Department / Transport Division. November 1999.

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Community planning should aim to reduce solitary commuting time. Measures should bridge the work-community divide so that residents spend less time away from their families and neighborhoods. This goal can be accomplished in several ways.

- Reward local employers who actively recruit town residents.
- Develop public transportation and ride-sharing options.
- Offer incentives to encourage telecommuting.

➤ Population Growth

To respond to population growth, towns need to be prepared to integrate new residents, and to adapt governance institutions so that they are accessible and responsive to a larger population, including many unfamiliar with the processes by which New Hampshire communities govern themselves. Moreover, to reduce out migration, towns should work to ensure that long-term residents are able to stay.

- Foster connections within expanded institutions. For instance, reorganize schools into smaller “school within a school” units, based on substantial evidence that smaller school units are directly correlated with higher social capital.³²
- Develop town directories and e-mail lists, which enable residents to connect. This proposal is particularly promising considering that New Hampshire has the highest percentage of homes on-line of any state in the country.³³
- Establish community welcoming and orientation committees to engage new residents.
- Sponsor neighborhood improvement projects and community events where neighbors can form ties.
- Ensure that long-term residents are not forced out through gentrification.

➤ Community Character

Towns must also respond to the expansion of the Boston metropolitan area by implementing measures that preserve the distinctive qualities of small town life.

- Help local governance bodies to adapt procedures and operations to engage a larger community that is less familiar with local practices and has less time in the community due to commuting.

³² See Meier, Deborah. (February 2002). "Just Let Us Be The Genesis of a Small Public School," *Educational Leadership* 59(5), pp. 76-79.; Raywid, Mary Anne. (1996) "Downsizing Schools in Big Cities." *ERIC Digest*.; Vander Ark, Tom. (February 2002). "The Case for Small High Schools," *Educational Leadership* 59(5), pp. 55-59.; Wagner, Tony. (December 5, 2001). "The Case for 'New Village' Schools," *Education Week*.; Christma, Jolly Bruce, Jody Cohen and Pat MacPherson. (March 1996). *Growing Smaller: Three Tasks of High School Restructuring*. Philadelphia., PA: Research for Action.; and Greenleaf, C. L. (1995). "You feel like you belong: Student perspectives on becoming a community of learners." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco. 1995.

³³ Eisenach, Jeffrey A., Frommer, Robert P., Lenard, Thomas M. "Digital New Hampshire: An Economic Fact Book." Washington, DC: The Progress & Freedom Foundation. 1999.

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- Deter sprawl by planning and land use decisions, and by providing economic incentives to sustain “main street” businesses, building on the success of Operation Main Street now working in 18 New Hampshire communities.
- Maintain and strengthen distinctive town traditions to instill a shared local identity.
- Build the constituency for social capital through required service learning in schools, including through such successful programs as “Kids Voting.”
- Establish or improve venues for gatherings and entertainment (community centers, cultural halls, parks, etc.) so that residents have local leisure options.

The draft EIS concludes, “the potential ramifications of [cumulative] impacts will not necessarily be negative but will depend upon state and local governments’ comprehensive planning and response.”³⁴ This claim is equally true for social capital impacts. To ensure that communities are prepared for changes related to the I-93 expansion, we urge the Department of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration, and the other relevant decision-makers to provide funding and technical assistance to all effected towns for comprehensive community planning, including measures to preserve and strengthen social capital.

³⁴ Draft Environmental Impact Statement. October 2002. 4-149.

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