

# An Open Letter to the Residents of the Route 302 Corridor and Lakes Region

February 19, 2008

MaineDOT held a public meeting in Naples on January 30<sup>th</sup> to explore replacement options for the Naples Bay Bridge. More than 125 people attended. This letter is to let you know what we heard and how we intend to proceed. At the meeting, MaineDOT outlined four options:

1. a **NEW, HIGHER-LEVEL, FIXED-SPAN BRIDGE** with a 12-foot (minimum) boat clearance (enough for almost all boats except the Songo River Queen and some sailboats) at an estimated cost of **\$6 MILLION**, with low ongoing maintenance expenses;
2. a **NEW SWING BRIDGE** at an estimated cost of **\$14.5 MILLION**, with higher ongoing expenses
3. the previously proposed **NEW LIFT-SPAN BRIDGE** at an estimated cost of **\$18 MILLION**, also with higher ongoing expenses; and
4. a **REHABILITATION OF THE OLD BRIDGE** to extend its life of about 20 years, at an estimated cost of at least **\$8 MILLION**, with even higher ongoing expenses.

*From a strictly transportation perspective, the new higher fixed-span bridge has clear advantages.* Option #1 would cost a fraction of the moveable bridges, reduce ongoing expenses, last about 80 years, eliminate backups of Route 302 traffic due to bridge openings, and serve almost all boat traffic. The moveable bridges (options #2 and #3) are much more expensive to design, build and maintain. And, the rehabilitation option is a poor long-term financial choice; it simply expends money to defer a tough decision.

*However, we heard that this is much more than a transportation decision.* We heard about how this decision has enormous cultural, economic, and historical implications; about the unique and rich heritage of the marine corridor of Long Lake, Brandy Pond, the Locks, and Sebago Lake; about the regional and national draw of the Songo River Queen; and about dramatic economic impacts a fixed span would have on marinas, sailors, tourism, and waterfront real-estate values. The great majority of the 125+ attendees favored a swing-span option.

*Therefore, we will slow down, conduct more design and analysis, and seek more input from the region.*

- We have again asked MaineDOT bridge maintenance staff to keep the old bridge going for an additional year, to give us all time to consider the options.
- We will perform design work on both the fixed span (Option #1) and a new swing span (Option #2) to better refine cost estimates. (Options #3 and #4 just don't make long-term financial sense.)
- We will engage an independent consulting firm to perform a regional economic impact study to help evaluate costs and benefits.
- We will communicate with officials of the nine towns bordering the impacted waterways (Bridgton, Casco, Frye Island, Harrison, Naples, Raymond, Sebago, Standish, and Windham) to seek their views on the impact and value of this decision.

This is a tough call. The meeting attendees clearly supported a swing-span option. On the other hand, MaineDOT must weigh regional input and the increasing bridge needs of our entire state. And, we need to act before the old bridge stops functioning. Therefore, we need your input this year, so we can make a decision and start construction in 2009. If you have comments or questions, please feel free to call the MaineDOT capital Bridge Program, at 624-3490, or e-mail us at [Naples.Bridge@maine.gov](mailto:Naples.Bridge@maine.gov).

Sincerely,



Bruce A. Van Note  
Deputy Commissioner, MaineDOT