

Baltimore's Interstate Highway Project Receives Acceptance

**By William K. Hellmann
and Emil Elinsky**

The 1970s have seen urban Interstate Highways blocked or slowed in many U.S. cities; however, Baltimore has proven that such projects can win political, environmental and community acceptance.

Baltimore's Interstate Program, referred to as the "3-A System" was developed by a multi-disciplinary urban design concept team in the late 1960s. The 32-mile system was developed in response to the fundamental regional planning goals of: Providing access to the Central Business District (CBD) without actually penetrating this sensitive core; providing vital access to the port (the single-most important economic element in the region); and diverting through traffic away from the Central Business District.

The "3-A System" satisfies these goals in the following manner: Access to the CBD from the north is provided via I-83; from the east via I-95 and I-395; and from the west via I-70 and I-170. Access to the port is provided via I-95, I-70 and I-83, while through traffic is diverted away from the CBD via I-95.

Since the Concept Team completed its work in 1970, the city, state, and FHWA have worked together in moving the system towards completion. The results of this effort are obvious. In the past seven years, sections requiring environmental approvals have been reduced by half, while the number of miles opened to traffic or under construction have doubled.

Approximately 40 percent of Baltimore's Interstate System is opened to traffic; about 30 percent is under construction or has cleared the environmental process, while the remaining 30 percent is being processed through the environmental requirements.

The city is actively pursuing the approval of this remaining 30 percent and has *not* deleted any section of its interstate program.

Approximately 360 million dollars of Interstate construction is currently underway in Baltimore City. This figure is expected to increase to approximately 750 million dollars in the next year when the

first contract for the 600 million dollar I-95 Fort McHenry Tunnel is awarded.

Why is Baltimore successful in moving its interstate program forward while other cities are not? There are three major reasons: A Mayor who is dedicated to completing a balanced transportation system which includes an interstate highway system, a mass transit system and improved bus service; the Mayor's mandate that the highway program be responsive to neighborhood concerns; and an excellent working relationship between the city, state and FHWA.

To assure cooperation, proper coordination and timely action, the state and city formed the Interstate Division for Baltimore City. This joint city/state agency is responsible for completing the Interstate Program within Baltimore City.

Its director is appointed by the State Highway Administrator, with the concurrence of the city. He reports to a city/state Policy Board made up of city and state officials.

Project planning is conducted by the Interstate Division. Following extensive coordination with affected communities and public and private organizations, recommendations regarding alternative selection are developed by the Interstate Division then reviewed and approved by the Mayor's Transportation Coordinating Committee. The Mayor's committee is composed of the City's Transportation Coordinator and department heads who are involved in the highway program.

The committee includes the heads of Finance, Recreation and Parks, Transit and Traffic, Housing and Community Development, Planning and Public Works.

This multi-disciplinary committee reviews Interstate Division recommendations from all perspectives, not merely transportation, and provides the Mayor with its recommendations. These are normally a compromise, which addresses as many of the concerns as possible, and results in decisions that are in the best overall interest of Baltimore and its citizens. Once approved by the Mayor, the

matter is forwarded to the city/state policy Advisory Board for its concurrence prior to submission to the FHWA. The Interstate Division keeps FHWA apprised of its progress throughout the planning process.

Initial planning work by the Interstate Division includes identifying community groups and others affected by a proposed project. The highway planners meet individually with each of the community organizations to discuss the proposed project. It is suggested that the communities appoint a small task force to work with the highway planners. At each stage of the planning process, informal presentations are made to each community task force. All presentations are conducted at the convenience of the community to insure maximum attendance.

The informal presentations include the need for the project along with the proposed alternatives, the advantages and disadvantages. Models, along with perspective drawings and highway plans are used to illustrate the various alternatives. The models are often constructed with lift-out sections to illustrate different alternatives; their construction sequence and methods. At each of the working sessions, a community can concentrate on the specific section of the project directly affecting it or on the total project. Ample time is spent discussing the problems identified by the Interstate Division or the community and possible solutions to the problems.

The community task force and the highway planners report back to the full community organization as required during the planning process. In this way, the community is kept constantly aware of progress. As a result of these informal working sessions, well thought out suggestions and comments have been received at the formal public hearings.

Each formal public hearing is preceded by an informational session held in each of the affected communities. These informational sessions summarize the results of the working sessions and include a presentation of the project planning to date, alternatives under consideration and the

impacts related to the alternatives. The presentation is of the multi-media type and utilizes three rear projection screens, nine to 16 slide projectors, and a recorded sound track. Slides are made of aerial photographs, models, perspective drawings and plans to visually and graphically depict the information being presented.

For example, when illustrating a particular alternative to a community, an aerial view is shown on the left screen, a model photograph of the alternative on the center screen and a perspective of the alternative on the right screen. This technique communicates the data in a simple and direct way. The multi-media presentation is followed by an informal question and answer session, usually held while the group is gathered around the model. The use of the model and perspective drawings have been invaluable in working with the communities.

The formal public hearings are held at a location that is near the proposed highway. The same multi-media presentation is given, but in this instance, it is followed by testimony for the record.

There is a complete effort by the Interstate Division to work with those affected. Noted concerns are given serious consideration and have resulted in major changes to the 3-A System in recent years. These changes include: Near Fort McHenry, Birthplace of our National Anthem, a proposed suspension bridge carrying I-95 over the harbor was placed around and to the south of the historic site; Interstate Route 395 was shifted and removed completely from an 18th century community—the Federal Hill Historic District; and to eliminate impact on the Fells Point area—an historic 18th century waterfront community, Interstate Route 83 was shifted southerly.

The City's willingness to make major adjustments to the "3-A System"—to protect the neighborhoods and their quality of life, has given the planning process credibility within the communities.

The following are examples illustrating Baltimore's approach to highway planning. Two of the examples concern the City Boulevard, an urban systems project, planned as an at-grade collector/distributor between I-395 and I-170 and the major east-west streets in the downtown area. The third example concerns I-395, a spur from I-95 that will provide access to the Central Business District. Both projects

are currently under construction and involved many working sessions with communities, public and private organizations and the State Historical Preservation Officer (SHPO)—thus assuring protection of affected communities, planned and continued development and the 35 historic sites identified in the project corridor.

One historical community is Ridgely's Delight, located at the southwestern edge of the Central Business District. It's composed of row homes mixed with larger buildings containing warehouses and light industry. Before adoption of the "3-A System" concept, uncertainty regarding highway construction in the area contributed to the decline of the community. Many of the houses had become vacant. To begin to revitalize the neighborhood, the City's Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) established Ridgely's Delight as an urban renewal area. Cooperation between HCD, the Community and the Interstate Division was exceptional.

Numerous "working sessions" resulted in shifting the boulevard away from the community and providing a landscaped buffer between the boulevard and the community. A two-acre park is being constructed on land adjacent to the community. This excess land was the result of a change in scope from an interstate to boulevard facility. This park includes landscaped berms with shrubs, ground cover and trees, a large open area for community activities, pedestrian walkways, brick screen walls, lighting and benches and other amenities consistent with the neighborhood.

Along with the highway planning effort, HDC worked with the community to rehabilitate the area. Many homes have now been renovated by their owners. The city has made improvements in the area and has encouraged others to invest in the neighborhood. A private developer is renovating and selling vacant houses to meet the increasing housing demand. The de-

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veloper, the community and HCD worked closely with the Interstate Division to develop procedures and schedules to minimize construction impacts.

Another neighborhood along the City Boulevard is the Historic Barre Circle Community. Most of this community was acquired for an interstate project proposed in the corridor in the early 1960s. Nearly all of the structures became vacant and all but 150 of the structures were demolished prior to the city's adoption in 1969 of the "3-A System."

At about the same time the boulevard concept was adopted, homesteading projects were becoming successful in other areas of the city. Homesteading in Baltimore is a program whereby private individuals are sold vacant houses for a dollar, provided they renovate the houses to meet the local building code within six months and live in them for an additional eighteen months.

Barre Circle was designated as a homesteading project. Once houses were awarded, a community organization and site plan committee were formed. The highway planners worked with both of these groups to determine what was necessary to blend the boulevard with the neighborhood and to complement the efforts of the homesteaders. The Interstate Division provided assistance, examining uses for excess highway parcels in the neighborhood and presenting concepts for the boulevard to prospective homesteaders. The city developed a program of reconstruction for the area, including street repaving, utility reconstruction, new sidewalk construction, landscaping and lighting.

It was necessary to meet separately with each individual Barre Circle Homesteader whose property was adjacent to the boulevard. This was done to insure that boulevard construction was consistent with the renovations anticipated by the homesteaders. This cooperation led to a new and mutual respect between the homesteaders and the highway planners.

As a result of these coordination efforts, the boulevard will include large landscaped areas, new brick sidewalks, brick screen walls, trees and lighting. Wood screen walls will be provided at the boulevard right-of-way line along the rear of all homesteading properties. These walls provide privacy and serenity in the rear yards and help the neighborhood present

a clean uncluttered edge to the boulevard.

The homesteading project is now well underway. Of the first 50 houses offered, half have been renovated and are now occupied. An average of fifty thousand dollars was spent by each homesteader for renovation of his or her property. Renovation work is underway on the second phase involving another 50 houses and most houses in the third phase have been awarded. There is no shortage of prospective homesteaders interested in the Barre Circle project. Many consider the boulevard to be an asset to their new neighborhood.

Both Ridgely's Delight and Barre Circle are excellent examples of proper coordination between highway planning and urban renewal efforts. This total environmental approach results in both a needed transportation facility and rehabilitation of an area that for years suffered from the indecision over highway plans.

I-395 is a striking example of the benefits of Baltimore's efforts to coordinate highway planning with all affected parties. The final location of I-395 was the result of coordination with the B&O Railroad, the historic Otterbein Homesteading Community, the SHPO, several city agencies and the general public.

An early proposal placed I-395 near Sharp Street, adjacent to the historic Otterbein Community. Although it would have been possible to screen the community with landscaping and a noise barrier, it became evident from meetings with the community that shifting I-395 to the west and away from the community was desirable.

At the same time, the B&O Railroad, owner of the large tract of land west of the Otterbein Community expressed fears that the location of I-395 would bisect their property and ruin its potential for development. Numerous working sessions with the Otterbein Community and the Railroad resulted in development of an alternative where I-395 was placed at-grade over the Railroad's mainline track, which was enclosed in a tunnel. Although this double-decking of transportation facilities increased project costs, it retained the maximum development potential of the railroad site and at the same time, further reduced impact on the historic Otterbein Community. The Federal Reserve Bank is about to begin construction on the eight acre site. This development will make a

positive contribution to the economic base of the city.

In summary, the Interstate Division has made a concerted effort to obtain public input for "3-A System" projects. Through "informal working" sessions, an excellent relationship has been developed with those affected. Using models, perspectives, and the multi-media approach, the Interstate Division has been successful in presenting project data in a clear, concise manner. This has resulted in constructive comments from those affected.

But perhaps the single-most important element is that the city, the state and the Federal Highway Administration have been responsive to the concerns of those affected by the "3-A System." This responsiveness has given the highway planning process credibility and resulted in political, environmental and community acceptance of the program. In this way, Baltimore is planning and building an interstate highway system which provides social, aesthetic and economic dividends, while providing efficient transportation.

Big Containerport Set For Port Of Boston

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BOSTON—The Massachusetts Port Authority has launched a new 47-acre, \$80-million containerport project in South Boston which will be "the cornerstone for the rebirth of the Port of Boston," according to Massport Executive Director David W. Davis. The Massport Marine Terminal will be built over a 10-year period on reclaimed land in South Boston. When fully completed, it will handle 80,000 containers a year, more than doubling container capacity in the Port of Boston.

The terminal is the first major seaport development project in the Port of Boston in a decade. Boston, the nation's oldest working port, is now the fifth busiest U.S. port on the North Atlantic. A record amount of cargo moved through Massport's existing facilities this past year. Those facilities—Castle Island Container Terminal and Moran Container Terminal—are also being upgraded.