

August 12, 2009

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
BUREAU OF HIGHWAY DESIGN

C O N F E R E N C E R E P O R T

PROJECT: Manchester 14048
F.E. Everett Turnpike (I-293)
Rehabilitation and Widening of I-293 Bridges (Br. No. 099/066 and
099/067) over Black Brook, as well as, Improvements to the Exit #6
Northbound On Ramp and the Exit #7 Southbound On Ramp

DATE OF CONFERENCE: August 5th, 2009

LOCATION OF CONFERENCE: 3rd Floor City Hall, Manchester NH

ATTENDED BY: DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Bob Landry (Project Manager)
John Butler (Preliminary Design)
Jon Evans (Bureau of Environment)
C.R. Willeke (Preliminary Design)

See sign-in sheet for public attendance

SUBJECT: Public Officials/Informational Meeting #2

NOTES ON CONFERENCE:

Bob Landry opened the meeting by identifying the location of the project and the members of the Department staff present. C.R. Willeke presented a slide show to describe the project limits and scope of work. The presentation can be viewed on the project's web site via the following address:

www.nh.gov/dot/projects/manchester14048/index.htm

C.R. highlighted the current deficient conditions and proposed improvements:

Deficient Conditions:

- Older Bridges – built in 1956,
- Concrete decks in poor condition,
- Exit #6 Northbound On Ramp has short merge,
- Exit #7 Southbound On Ramp has short merge,
- Shoulder widths and roadway cross slopes are below standards in spot areas,
- Median Guardrail is old and outdated.

Proposed Improvements:

- Connect the twin bridges together in the median (primarily for Traffic Control during construction),
- Widen the downstream (east) side of the bridge 10 feet (related to the Exit #6 improvements),
- Replace the bridge deck, steel girders, and bridge rails,
- Replace the median rail with single face concrete barrier,
- Improve the Exit #7 southbound merge,
- Improve the Exit #6 northbound merge, and
- Add 42" tall concrete barrier to the east edge of pavement, which will reduce sound levels for the abutters

C.R. noted that the recent widening of the I-293 Bridge over Stark Way by the Department's Bridge Maintenance forces provides enough roadway width for an acceleration lane next to the two southbound travel lanes. The acceleration lane will be approximately 550 feet long and end with a 50:1 taper prior to the Black Brook Bridge. This acceleration lane will improve the merging condition for the Exit #7 Southbound On Ramp.

C.R. described the realignment of the Exit #6 Northbound On Ramp that will provide the Department's standard 50:1 taper to lengthen and improve the merge onto the highway northbound. He highlighted the existing northbound taper (approximately 25:1) and the proposed taper on the plan to illustrate the change in the merging condition. C.R. noted that to reduce impacts to the east side of I-293 from the Exit #6 acceleration lane proposal, the Department is reducing the standard ramp shoulder width from 10 feet down to 4 feet, as well as using steeper 1.5:1 fill slopes. In addition, a 42" tall concrete barrier will be used rather than standard guardrail to shield tire noise and reduce sound levels for abutters.

C.R. described the 4 phases of traffic control planned during construction of the project and noted the need to close the Exit #6 Northbound On Ramp during the first and second phase. The Department's time period for the ramp closure is estimated to be approximately 12 months. C.R. mentioned that the Department's initial thoughts during the ramp closure period are to send the Exit # 6 northbound traffic south on I-293 via Exit #6 Southbound to Granite Street (Exit #5). Motorist would have to exit onto Granite Street, go under the I-293 Bridge (single point diamond interchange) and get back onto I-293 north via the Exit #5 northbound on ramp. C.R. then turned the meeting over to Jon Evans to talk about environmental considerations.

Jon Evans indicated that the NH Department of Transportation's Bureau of Environment examines the natural, cultural and socioeconomic impacts associated with all Departmental projects. He indicated that the Department has been and will continue to coordinate with the necessary local, State and Federal agencies. Jon indicated that given the concerns raised at the previous informational meeting the Department has proposed a 42" concrete barrier to be constructed on the eastern edge of pavement to reduce sound levels. He indicated that a noise study prepared for the Department indicated that construction of this concrete barrier would provide a 3 to 5 decibel reduction to the homes within the Stark Lane neighborhood. This decrease represents a noticeable reduction in noise levels. Jon then turned the meeting over to Bob Landry to take public comments and questions.

PUBLIC COMMENTS, QUESTIONS & RESPONSES

Question: Why is there a wider slope impact at the backwater area of Black Brook?
Response: The existing slopes are steeper in this low area near the brook and river.

Question: Will the condominiums still have trees between the highway and the building?
Response: Yes.

Comment: Removing the trees on the higher part of the slope removes the most beneficial noise and view shielding trees.

Question: How effective is the 42" tall concrete barrier?
Response: An estimated 3 to 5 decibel reduction, which is a noticeable reduction in sound.

Comment: The condominium property values will be decreased by the tree removal.

Comment: The environmental impacts to Black Brook and the backwater area are not acceptable. The peninsula area near the backwater was designated by NHDES as a "sensitive area".
Response: The Department has coordinated with the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES), as well as other resource agencies including the Army Corp of Engineers, US Fish and Wildlife, and the EPA regarding impacts related to this project and will continue to do so as the project develops.

Comment: The condominium covenants prevent the use of the peninsula / backwater area due to its environmental sensitivity.

Question: Are there accident statistics for ramp taper rates of 25:1 versus 50:1?
Response: We are not aware of statistics for crashes relative to various taper rates. The crash data we have on file indicates 6 accidents occurred on the Exit #6 Northbound On Ramp between January 1993 and December 2002.

Comment: A few people commented that they do not have any problem using the existing Exit 6 northbound on-ramp. They felt that it does not need to be modified.

Comment: The Exit #6 interchange is the real problem.
Response: Reconstructing Exit #6 and Exit #7 are in the turnpike model for future reconstruction, but realistically they are many years away from occurring.

Question: Why use 42" tall barrier?
Response: Primarily for plowing. The snow can be rolled over the top of the 42" tall barrier. However, the barrier still presents drainage challenges compared to standard beam guardrail and may require a closed drainage system to better handle storm water runoff and snow melt.

Question: Will there be areas to treat the water prior to entering Black Brook?
Response: The Department is looking at possible treatment areas on the west side of the highway; however existing wetlands along the project area make finding available treatment areas more difficult.

Question: Is the primary purpose for the project the bridge?
Response: Yes, and the ramps are included because they are elements of the turnpike system we think need to be improved and are feasible to include as part of the project.

Comment: The underside of the Stark Way Bridge should be inspected due to its poor condition
Response: We will pass this information on to our bridge inspectors.

Question: Is there a road noise reducing asphalt mix that can be used on this project?
Response: There are some experimental noise reducing asphalt mixes; however the durability of these types of pavement mixes is questionable especially in a northern climate like New Hampshire.

Question: How do I stop this project?
Response: Contact your local and state political representatives to voice your concerns. We will also provided your feedback to the NHDOT Commissioner.

Question: Are there future highway expansion plans?
Response: The Exit #5 area has been set up for an additional lane in each direction, but expansion plans would be in the very long-term picture.

Question: When will the project be built?
Response: The advertising date for construction bids is currently scheduled for August 2010. If the advertising date were held, then construction operations would start in June of 2011 and be completed by the fall of 2012 or the spring of 2013.

Question: Will water going into Black Brook be cleaner?
Response: Hopefully cleaner or possibly the same as existing.

Question: What are the limits of the concrete barrier on the east side of the highway?

Response: From the beginning of work on the Exit #6 On Ramp to the end of the work on the north side including the Stark Way bridge (approximately the limits of the project).

Question: Were any traffic distribution studies done for the exit #6 ramp closure?

Response: No specific distribution studies were completed. With the recent opening of the Exit #5 interchange improvements, motorists are changing the way they access the Turnpike. The thought is that people will utilize Exit #5 more than before now that it has been improved.

Question: Can you flag the east side tree clearing line so people can better visualize the extent of tree clearing?

Response: Yes

Comment: The Exit #6 Northbound Off Ramp queue is a bigger safety issue than the ramp improvements being discussed tonight.

Question: The existing trees help shield the neighborhood from noise. This project involves removing some of the existing trees to the east of the roadway. Could tree plantings be provided to replace those removed?

Response: The current stand of trees between the highway and the east side abutters is not dense or thick enough to provide a measurable sound reduction. Recognizing the visual impacts associated with vegetation removal, the Department will examine the possibility of providing plantings. The Department's Roadside Development section will need to review the area to ensure that plantings can be placed and will survive on such a steep slope.

Question: Can the northbound lanes and ramp improvements be shifted westerly to avoid the impacts to the east side of the highway?

Response: If the northbound lanes are shifted westerly, the median and southbound lanes would also need to be shifted westerly because we would not want to reduce the width of the median. This would essentially mean shifting the entire mainline alignment. We will take a look at the idea; however, this would likely lengthen the project and cost considerably more due to shifting the infrastructure. After review this option was determined unfeasible due to the additional cost and additional impacts on the west side to allow additional distance for the current merge alignment.

SUBMITTED BY:

C.R. Willeke, P.E.
Preliminary Design Engineer

Attachment – 8/5/09 Sign In Sheets (3)

cc: W. Cass – Project Development
M. Richardson – Bridge Design
C. Waszczuk - Turnpikes
R. Landry – Project Manager
W. Lambert – Traffic Bureau
M. Dugas – Preliminary Design
D. Smith – Final Design
J. Evans – Environment
14048 Project File

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