

August 26, 2015

**STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
BUREAU OF HIGHWAY DESIGN**

**CONFERENCE REPORT**

**PROJECT:** Walpole-Charlestown 14747  
Reconstruct NH Route 12 from Main Street in North Walpole north,  
approximately 3 miles, to NH Route 12A in South Charlestown

**DATE OF CONFERENCE:** August 11, 2015

**LOCATION OF CONFERENCE:** Silsby Library Community Room, Charlestown

**ATTENDED BY:**

See attached sign in sheet

**SUBJECT:** Public Advisory Committee Meeting

**NOTES ON CONFERENCE:**

This Public Advisory Committee Meeting was held to provide an update on the project status. After introductions, Nate Miller briefed the attendees on the current project breakout and funding totals in the Department's Ten-Year Plan (TYP): \$13M for the initial earthwork contract (14747A) and force account for the railroad relocation, and \$9.18M for the second contract that involves the relocation of NH Route 12. He noted that a meeting with the NHDOT Commissioner's office was scheduled for August 14, 2015 to review TYP projects for the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission (UVLSRPC).

P. Salo, NHDOT, provided a very brief description of the project and major design elements. The project will reconstruct approximately 2.8 miles of NH Route 12 with the majority of the roadway being shifted easterly, away from the Connecticut River. He stated that the updated design is approximately 65-70% complete and is very similar to the design presented at the Public Hearing, and has not changed significantly since the last meeting where the design was approximately 60% complete. P. Salo noted that the Department remains in negotiations with the railroad to relocate the easterly side track to Vermont, and has drafted a force account agreement for the relocation that requires review with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Project design elements/ issues that have advanced since the last meeting include the following:

1. Right-of-Way acquisitions
  - a) The Department acquired the Augustinowicz parcel in August 2015. As a result, the 300'-long retaining wall that was proposed adjacent to the

railroad will be eliminated from the contract and replaced with an earth backslope. The existing house and garage will be demolished.

- b) Department staff met recently with owners from Len Tex and discussed design modifications to better accommodate the existing site improvements.
2. An additional emergency pull-off area along NH Route 12 has been added in the northbound direction at approximately Sta. 1090. This consists of an 8'-wide paved shoulder (100' in length) with appropriate pavement tapers on the approach and departure ends.
  3. Water Quality Improvements
    - a) As discussed at the July 2014 meeting, a vegetated treatment swale is proposed on the west side of NH Route 12, just south of the NH Route 12A overpass. The overall water quality design also incorporates flattened slopes to promote the infiltration of stormwater runoff.
    - b) The design of an additional treatment swale was evaluated at the drainage outlet (Sta. 5049). It was determined that there was insufficient distance from the pipe outlet to the top of the river bank to provide formal treatment without additional and significant right-of-way impacts.
      - i. Discussion: Jim McClammer questioned the level of water quality improvements, considering the additional pavement (impervious) area resulting from the roadway widening. P. Salo noted that the Department has incorporated water quality treatment recommendations from the State and Federal environmental resource agencies, as a result of coordination meetings that occurred throughout the design process (e.g. flattened slopes to promote stormwater infiltration).
  4. Utilities
    - a) Aerial pole relocations have been received and are proposed along the west side of NH Route 12. The Department is also coordinating with US Sprint to relocate the underground fiber optic communications line that exists within the railroad corridor. Sprint has indicated that they will temporarily relocate to an overhead facility during construction.
      - i. Discussion: Aare Ilves asked why the pole relocations are proposed along the west side of the roadway vs. the east side. Department staff noted the limited space between the roadway and the railroad, particularly with respect to the deflection characteristics of the proposed guardrail, and the location of the drainage ditch between the facilities that provides water quality treatment.
  5. Environmental Issues

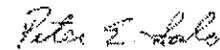
## a) Northern Long-Eared Bat

- i. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) recently designated the Northern Long-Eared Bat as a threatened species. As a result, an acoustical survey will need to be conducted to determine if this particular bat species is present within the project limits. If bats are present, it is likely that any tree clearing for the construction projects will need to occur during the inactive season (November 1<sup>st</sup> -April 14<sup>th</sup>).
- ii. The two construction projects will impact an estimated 2.6 acres of wetlands that will require a formal wetlands application to the NH Department of Environmental Services (NHDES).
- iii. A hydrologic and hydraulic study was completed to determine if the roadway and railroad improvements will result in impacts to the existing Connecticut River floodplain. The study revealed that there is no change to the 100-yr base flood elevation and formal flood map revisions are not required. The Department is coordinating with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) relative to submittal requirements for the study.
  - Discussion: Jim McClammer noted that the United States Geological Service (USGS), in conjunction with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), will conduct Light Detection and Ranging (LIDAR) mapping that will improve the accuracy of existing maps (e.g. topographical and flood insurance). An aerial flight to collect initial data is anticipated this fall.
- iv. P. Salo noted that the Department met with NH Fish and Game (NHF&G) staff to discuss the possibility of constructing a more formal recreational area and (car top) boat launch along the Connecticut River at roadway Sta. 3092. NHF&G staff subsequently indicated that they did not have the resources to take on management responsibilities for an improved access point. However, the Department will include the construction of a crushed gravel driveway into the existing field with the NH Route 12 roadway contract. The roadway improvements will not preclude the development of a more formal recreational area in the future.
  - Discussion: After some discussion regarding the proximity and condition of existing boat launch areas along the river, Dave Edkins suggested contacting the (Charlestown) Rod and Gun Club to see if they had an interest in maintaining a recreational area if constructed at this location.

The following, additional discussion occurred during the meeting:

6. In response to questions from Aare Ilves and Dick Holmes, D. Lyford noted that the design speed for NH Route 12 is 50 mph, and that the roadway construction is anticipated for calendar years 2018 and 2019. The relocation of the railroad siding is anticipated to begin in spring 2016, and will be completed before the NHDOT railroad relocation project begins.
7. Sharon Francis asked if there were alternative designs for roadway treatments (e.g. guardrail) that would improve the aesthetic nature of the NH Route 12 scenic byway. P. Salo stated that the Department discontinued the use of rustic looking guardrail, which had been a standard in the Franconia Notch area for many years, due to corrosion and maintenance issues. He was unaware of other aesthetic designs specifically attributable to scenic byways.
8. In response to questions about the potential impact of the siding removal on businesses south of Len Tex, D. Lyford explained that only the side track to the east of the existing main track will be relocated. The two side tracks to the west of the rail line will remain. The Department will provide funding to the railroad to construct a length of side track in Vermont equivalent to the length removed in NH.
9. Mary Holmes asked if NH Route 12 will be entirely reconstructed. D. Lyford stated that the roadway will be excavated full-width and replaced with new structural materials and pavement.
10. Jim McClammer asked if there will be long term roadway impacts associated with the railroad relocation. D. Lyford stated that the railroad construction should not have a major impact on the NH Route 12 traffic. There will be construction trucks periodically accessing and exiting the site, and controlled blasting for rock excavation on the east side of the railroad.
11. Nate Miller suggested drafting an informational project article for the local newspaper next spring, before the first contract advertises for construction bids, followed by another Public Advisory Committee meeting.

Submitted by:



Peter E. Salo, P.E.

PES/pes

cc: D. Lyford  
Correspondence File

Public Advisory Committee Meeting

PROJECT: Walpole-Charlestown 14747

DATE: August 11, 2015

LOCATION: Charlestown, N.H.

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