

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

CONFERENCE REPORT

PROJECT: Acworth, NH, 16301
Replacement of the NH 123A Bridge over Bowers Brook

DATE OF CONFERENCE: March 26, 2015

LOCATION OF CONFERENCE: Acworth Town Hall, 13 Town Hall Road
Acworth, NH

ATTENDED BY:

Joel McCarty	Commission Chairperson
James McClammer, Jr.	Commission Member
Suzanne Gottling	Commission Member
Robert Landry	NHDOT – Project Manager
Jennifer Reczek	NHDOT – Project Engineer
Kevin Nyhan	NHDOT – Bureau of Environment
Chuck Schmidt	NHDOT – Bureau of Right-of-Way
Nancy Spaulding	NHDOT – Bureau of Right-of-Way
Julie Owen	NHDOT – Bureau of Right-of-Way
Linda Smith	NHDOT – Bureau of Right-of-Way
Don Labelle	NHDOT – Bureau of Right-of-Way
Darren Blood	GM2 Associates
Tom Levins	GM2 Associates
Jennifer Mercer	GM2 Associates

See attached sheets for additional attendees.

Public with questions/comments

Steve Morris, Fire Chief, Acworth Fire and Rescue
Jim Brown, 118 River Road, South Acworth
Judy Aron, 266 Forest Road, South Acworth
Claude Bassinne, 178 River Road, South Acworth
Alex Bassinne, 179 River Road, South Acworth
Wes Cubberley, 400 Cold Pond Road

SUBJECT: Public Hearing for the Replacement for NH Route 123A Bridge

NOTES ON CONFERENCE:

In accordance with RSA 230:14 and the Surface Transportation and Uniform Relocation Assistance Act of 1987, the duly appointed Commission of Joel McCarty (Chairman), James McClammer, Jr and Suzanne Gottling convened a Public Hearing to gather testimony regarding the proposed replacement of the NH Route 123A bridge over Bowers Brook. The Chairman noted the purpose of the hearing is to determine if there is a necessity for the occasion of the layout of the project based on testimony heard and written testimony submitted within ten days of the hearing. The Commission asked the NHDOT to present the proposed layout.

The project will replace the Red List bridge carrying NH Route 123A over Bowers Brook (2014 Bridge Priority List #13). The project will also reconstruct a segment of NH Route 123A approximately 570 feet in length. During construction, the bridge will be closed to vehicular traffic for a period of three weeks and pedestrian traffic will be maintained on a temporary pedestrian bridge.

The NHDOT described the proposed bridge replacement project in detail, described the Right-of-Way process and property owner rights as well as the environmental aspects of the project. The Department noted the project is in the Ten Year Transportation Plan and should there be a finding of necessity for the project it is currently anticipated construction would occur in 2018. The project is funded with 80% Federal funds and appropriate matching funds. The Department concluded by asking the Commission to find necessity for the project layout as presented.

Please see the Hearing Transcript for more detailed information.

Public Questions and Comments:

Comment: Mr. Steve Morris expressed concern with the delayed emergency response time during the closure period for houses on the east side of the bridge. Mr. Morris indicated that with the bridge closed, it will take approximately 11 minutes longer to reach the area near the Village Store than it does with the bridge open.

Response: The Department recognizes that this is a critical issue to resolve. Several options are currently being considered, including stationing emergency response equipment on the east side of the project, allowing for emergency vehicle access on the temporary bridge, or creating agreements with surrounding Towns for coverage during the closure period. As final design progresses, the Department will work with the Town and Fire Chief to reach a solution that is amenable to all parties.

Question: Mr. Jim Brown questioned why this bridge needs to be closed during the replacement when another bridge along NH Route 123A remained open during replacement “a few years back.”

Response: The Department considered three options: phased construction, traditional construction with a vehicular detour and rapid bridge construction with a three-week bridge closure. Phased construction would require the roadway alignment to shift to the South, resulting in greater impacts to the Village Store and houses on the south side of the road. It would also require the bridge to be wider than otherwise necessary in this location to allow for alternating traffic, which would not fit well with the historic character of the South Acworth village area. The Department proposed the traditional bridge construction with a vehicle diversion at past public meetings, but the consensus after the last meeting was to proceed with the rapid bridge construction option.

Question: Ms. Judy Aron questioned whether the pedestrian path would be handicapped accessible and requested more information about the path.

Response: The final design development of the proposed pedestrian path will consider all potential users of the access during the bridge closure. A smooth surface will be provided and it is expected that the path will be ADA compliant.

Comment: Mr. Claude Bassinne alerted the Committee that there had been a gasoline pump at the village store and had concerns that the bridge construction would interfere with the underground storage tank.

Response: At one point there were two underground gasoline storage tanks present in the vicinity of the Village Store. New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) records indicate that the tanks have been removed and testing conducted in 2001 showed no contaminants above the applicable NHDES Ambient Groundwater Quality Standards. Any existing monitoring wells located near the project will be protected during construction.

Comment: Mr. Kenneth Grant commented the he was present when the tank was removed and that it never leaked.

Question: Mr. Alex Bassinne inquired whether the Committee could enter into an agreement with the Towns of Lempster or Unity for the temporary use of their transfer stations, due to the length of the detour.

Response: The Department recognizes the concern and will work with the Town of Acworth during final design to develop a solution.

Question: Mr. Steve Morris asked whether the proposed three week bridge closure period could be shorter with good weather.

Response: The Department has developed a construction schedule that will fit within the three week window and prefers to be conservative with closure estimates. An incentive/disincentive will be included in the contract, which provides a bonus to the contractor if the road is opened before the three week deadline.

Question: Ms. Wes Cubberley asked where the utility poles would be relocated to, particularly with one that obstructs the sign for the Village Store.

Response: Formal utility relocation plans are not developed until after the Hearing, however, the utility companies have indicated that they are looking at solutions that would move the poles to the South of the existing alignment. The poles will be located approximately 8 feet from the edge of pavement. The relocation of the pole and sign near the store can be coordinated during final design.

Submitted by:

/S/ Signature on file

Jennifer Reczek, PE
NH Department of Transportation

Reviewed and Approved by:

/S/ Signature on file

L. Robert Landry, Jr. PE
NH Department of Transportation