

Alton-Gilford 40634

NH Route 11 Planning Study – Corridor Advisory Committee Meeting #1

October 27, 2021

Meeting Minutes

Project Representatives in Attendance:

Tobey Reynolds, NHDOT
Trent Zanes, NHDOT
Hans Weber, NHDOT

Darren Blood, GM2
Jen Mercer, GM2

Jeff Santacruce, Weston & Sampson
Connor Golden, Weston & Sampson

Reuben Wentworth, Alton Selectman
Russ Wilder, Alton Conservation Commission Member
Drew Carter, Alton Planning Board Chairman

Meghan Theriault, Gilford DPW Director

Dean Trefethen, Laconia Planning Director

Jeff Hayes, Lakes Region Planning Commission Executive Director

The meeting was led by Tobey Reynolds using the PowerPoint presentation and attached agenda as a guide and included the following discussion:

1. Tobey began the meeting with introductions and then the role of the Corridor Advisory Committee (CAC) was defined. Tobey pointed out that this is an advisory role and there will be no voting on discussion items. The intent is for the CAC members to gather feedback from their respective communities and bring that back to the CAC for discussion and consideration.
2. Tobey continued by discussing the public involvement that will be needed for this study. He briefly reviewed the Public Participation Plan that can be found on NHDOT's website and provided the group with the link to access that. Right now that is the only information on this project currently posted, but other information will be uploaded when it becomes available, such as Conference Reports, a plan with the limits of the project, and contact information.

3. Tobey continued with the project description. The project consists of a 4.2 mile stretch of NH Route 11 from east Ellacoya State Park in Gilford to east of Minge Cove Road in Alton. It is a mostly residential corridor with some mixed-use commercial facilities also present. It is the primary route for those traveling between Laconia and the Seacoast. The traffic is also seasonally impacted. There is an increase in traffic in the summer and smaller increases in the fall and winter. A typical day along this corridor has no true peak hour in the AM or PM, rather the traffic tends to start low in the morning and make its way up to a high point sometime in the afternoon before heading back down into the later hours of the evening, creating almost a bell curve of traffic volumes.
4. Tobey spoke about the project purpose, which is to improve the operations and safety along the corridor, within its existing alignment and at the intersections. These improvements could be increasing pedestrian and/or bicycle accessibility, improving intersection and stopping sight distance, updating roadway geometry, and/or changing intersection geometry. Tobey stated that over 10 years ago there was an effort to revive the bypass alternative, but that has since dwindled. He reiterated that the goal of this project is to study improvements to the existing roadway and the goals of the CAC is to gather feedback from local officials on corridor-wide and intersection specific issues, develop potential solutions, and to prioritize areas for short-term, mid-term, and long-term improvement projects.
5. Jeff Hayes voiced his concerns that the Committee should be involved in the purpose and goals of the study. He also wanted everyone to be aware of the history of the project. He stated that around 2007 the Route 11 Bypass was a much larger project that included a portion of this corridor that was included in the 10-year plan. In 2009, the 10-year plan was fiscally constrained. There was push-back on going through with this project due to the costs and impacts. He stated that selectmen from both Alton & Gilford wanted the bypass as the preferred alternative, and even wrote letters to the DOT, but were okay with temporary improvements to the corridor. He stated that in 2014, the DOT said the estimated construction cost of the bypass was too large to be justified, so the project went from the construction of a bypass to a corridor or planning study, with a phased approach to improvements. He also stated that he was not exactly sure what the bypass alignment was, but to him it seemed that over time the bypass became a less reasonable solution to the "Route 11 Problem" due to the cost and other priorities the State had.
6. Tobey stated that there have been some residential developments built in areas that the bypass was studied and therefore the bypass alternative would be more challenging than before.
7. Jeff Hayes said that we jumped over the step where we talk about the goals of the project. He believes that it is the Committee's responsibility to talk about the bypass, and that the project is part of a greater whole.
8. Darren stated that this study could consider the bypass a long-term alternative but was not intended to be the focus of this study.

9. Jeff Hayes believes the bypass should be the focus of the study. He wants to present the information he has been given to date, which is the preference for a bypass. He is not comfortable sitting at the meeting and not bringing up the bypass.
10. Tobey stated that as part of this study, the engineering team has been assembled to consider alternatives that fit within the existing corridor.
11. Russ Wilder stated that NH Route 11 is an important corridor with large vehicles. He doesn't want to see large trucks go through a "neighborhood" and thinks safety should be the number one priority. He believes the public will want to see the bypass as an option, and the public will think that we did not do our job if we don't at least look at the bypass.
12. Drew Carter asked how we got to just having the improvement option and not even looking at the bypass? Tobey responded that it was his understanding that the bypass was no longer an option, so we were looking at what can be done to improve safety of the corridor.
13. Tobey asks what do the communities want? Should we keep it rural? Do we widen and then the speeds will increase? If we are not doing the bypass then what can we do to improve the corridor now?
14. Drew states that the improvements are dependent on if there will ever be a bypass or not.
15. Jeff Hayes then stated that traffic is an issue and that he does not know how the road will be widened with the constraints of the houses and lake in close proximity to the road. Widening will also have an environmental impact on the lake. However, there are a lot of benefits of building a bypass, including millions in development potential. Jeff also noted that topography would be an issue with the construction of a new bypass. He then continued stating that NH Route 11 is a scenic byway, and currently has an overgrown lookout, which looks at nothing. The existing topography that the bypass would be constructed on would provide the opportunity to make a really nice lookout overlooking Lake Winnepesaukee and the landscape beyond it. He conceded that it would take all of the Lakes Regions' \$5 million funding allocation every 2 years for at least 10 years to pay for it, which would mean no other projects would get done during that time.
16. Tobey asked about the traffic on the corridor. Reuben stated that traffic flow needs to be improved. He would like to see the road widened to improve traffic flow and fix the NH Route 11A intersection. He said he does not want to see a bypass built due to the negative impact it could have on local businesses. He also stated that many users of this corridor are traveling from different Maine points to Laconia daily and utilize this corridor to do so. Reuben mentioned the improvements to West Alton Marina and a planned campground at Mauhaut Shores would only increase traffic more.
17. Dean agreed with Reuben on the need to improve the existing sections versus building a bypass, adding on that downtown Laconia is still recovering from the Laconia Bypass that was built in the 1970s. He stated that the Laconia Bypass just ended up creating

bottlenecks at both ends of the bypass because construction of the actual bypass was never finished.

18. Dean also stated that he realizes that there are always issues with funding as there never seems to be enough money for roads and bridges. He does not want to spend all the state allocated funding on the bypass and improve nothing else in the area.
19. Dean stated that he is a regular driver of this corridor and in his opinion Friday afternoons is when westbound traffic congestion peaks. He stated that he is typically driving eastbound at this time but can be stuck behind a slow driver and not have any opportunity to pass due to the fact that traffic in the other direction is so heavy and there are not many passing zones in the corridor. He added that improvements need to be focused on sections of the corridor that cause people to unnecessarily slow down.
20. Dean also stated that he believes the area near Ames Farm will be problematic for widening the corridor.
21. Dean also asked if anything was going to be done about the base material of the roadway as the area is prone to frost heaves. Tobey responded that any improvements that become a reconstruction project would consider the structure of the roadway.
22. Reuben stated that he sees this project as being similar to Route 28 in Barnstead, where improvements were done one mile at a time so to speak. He just hopes that the section would not be as wide as that. Tobey explained that the Barnstead projects constructed an 11' travelled way and a 5' shoulder. This roadway width is what the Department would consider a minimum to accommodate bicycles and provide an adequate safety shoulder. However, the speeds in the Barnstead section (50 mph) are higher than the speeds in this section of Route 11, therefore the design criteria would allow for more of a rolling roadway. Also, Route 11 has a lot more access points/residences with buildings closer to the road on Route 11 and therefore the improvements would not feel as wide.
23. Russ stated that from a planning perspective, the committee needs to document why the bypass option is not being evaluated. He suggested that a chapter in the report could be dedicated to the history of the bypass and why it was dismissed as a viable option due to challenges such as costs, R.O.W., and negative natural resource impacts.
24. Tobey noted that the intent was for this project/study to take about 12 – 18 months. He wants to discuss the bypass in detail and wrap it up so we can move forward. He will discuss the bypass with other NHDOT staff and see if they can provide more information about it and why it was archived. Tobey would like other committee members to go back and talk to others in their communities and see what they think of the bypass.
25. Russ asked if there were any previous studies done on the bypass. Jeff Hayes said he would need to check.

26. Jeff Hayes stated that the bypass is still in people's minds as an option. He said property was bought for it. Trent and Tobey will provide as much information as they can about it, research the NHDOT archives, and bring this to the next meeting.
27. Darren mentioned that a bypass option would be similar in scale and cost to the southern segment of the Conway bypass, but costs would have to be inflated since that was designed in the 2000's.
28. The current safety data along the corridor was discussed. Tobey stated that the history we have are only those crashes that are reported incidents, which they receive from the DMV. In total, there were 146 crashes in a 10-year period. From 2010 to 2017, there were 29 intersection crashes. 14 of these intersection crashes were at the intersection of Cherry Valley Road (NH Route 11A).
29. Jeff Santacrucce reviewed some of the speed data that was collected along the corridor. In total there are about 18,000 cars/day along the corridor. Jeff stated the speeds of vehicles at different locations. At Angle Sea Ln, the 85% speed, which is a speed that is commonly used in determining the posted speed limit, is about 42 MPH eastbound and 47 MPH westbound. Just west of Elm St, the 85% speed is 39 MPH eastbound and 44 MPH westbound. East of Country Way in Gilford, the 85th percentile speed is 47mph eastbound and 45mph westbound. Of all the vehicles traveling this corridor, about 73% of them are at "pace" meaning they are within 5 MPH of the speed limit.
30. Jeff Santacrucce also stated that there is a location along the corridor with a seasonal down posted speed limit. It was noted that these signs were purchased and are maintained by the Town of Gilford.
31. Corridor wide needs were discussed. It was noted that people complain that they cannot get onto Route 11 from Mauhaut Shores and that the Ellacoya Restaurant allows patrons to park cars on both sides of the road making it difficult to travel through that area. Russ mentioned that the warning light at the West Alton Fire Station is there because that is a bad corner and should be looked at. He also stated that he believed bicycle accessibility and water quality of runoff into the lake were most important. Tobey stated that water running off any new roadway surface would need to be treated in some way, and that would be addressed during the design of a future project. Meghan asked if water could be treated at a site outside of the scope of work. Tobey stated that this is a possibility. For this to be considered the water being treated would need to be within the same watershed. Because the watershed in this area is so large, it is reasonable to think that the treatment could be done outside of the project limits.
32. Meghan stated that she believed bicycle needs are more realistic than pedestrian needs. She stated that a sidewalk does not make much sense, but wider shoulders for bicycles and cars to pull over for emergency vehicles would be good. She suggested that there may be locations where Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFB's) or Pedestrian Hybrid Beacons (PHB's) might be considered. She will go look at each of the intersections along the corridor and make notes to discuss at the next meeting. Reuben

reiterated that sidewalks did not make sense since there are no businesses in Alton for people to walk to. He supports wider shoulders for bicycles.

33. Russ asked if there would be any consideration to taking land through the West Alton Marina and realigning the road there. Tobey responded that realigning is within the scope of the project could be considered.
34. Rueben stated that when he plowed for the state in the late 1970s, most of the safety issues that occurred were near Ellacoya State Park.
35. Meghan asked if there are known icing issues along the corridor in the winter, if tree trimming should be considered so more sunlight can get in and melt the ice.
36. Meghan suggested that perhaps a roundabout could be built at the intersection of Route 11A/Cherry Valley Road & West Alton Marina. Tobey responded that a roundabout might be feasible since there is no warrant needed to propose a roundabout, unlike with signalized intersections. There is not any true peak hour for the corridor, which would also help the roundabouts functionality. The roundabout could also serve as a “gateway” to let drivers know they are entering a lower speed area.
37. West Alton Marina has several hundred boats being stored there and more than 100 more launched on an average weekend day in the summer, with additional slips being constructed. The intersection needs to be able to handle boats being trailered in, as well as additional vehicles with friends and family that will be riding on these boats.
38. The anticipated project schedule was discussed and the next meetings were scheduled for the committee. They will be on the 2nd Wednesday of the month, at least for the next two months, due to the LRPC meetings on the 1st Wednesday. Tobey noted that there would be some delay in the project schedule if the bypass is pursued as this is a complete change in the anticipated scope of the study.

Action Items:

- The DOT will review the archived information they have on the bypass to figure out where the design was at and any additional history of the project. This will be discussed at the second meeting if not earlier.
- Jeff Hayes wants us to write the history of the bypass chapter of the report as soon as possible so we can move on.
- Town representatives need to reach out to folks in their communities and users of the corridor and figure out the problematic areas along the corridor, and what the public believes needs to be the focus of improvements.

AGENDA

NH Route 11 Alton - Gilford

State Project No. 40634

Corridor Advisory Committee (CAC) Meeting #1

October 27, 2021

3:00 PM to 4:30 PM

- 1. Introductions**
- 2. Corridor Advisory Committee**
- 3. Project Description**
- 4. Project Purpose/Goals**
- 5. Safety Data**
- 6. Existing Site Overview**
- 7. Project/Meeting Schedule**
- 8. Questions**

Adjourn at 4:30 PM