

## Alton-Gilford 40634

### NH Route 11 Planning Study – Corridor Advisory Committee Meeting #2

December 8, 2021

#### Meeting Minutes

##### **Project Representatives in Attendance:**

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

Darren Blood, GM2  
Jen Mercer, GM2

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

Jeff Hayes, Lakes Region Planning Commission Executive Director

Kevin Hayes, Gilford Selectman (Remote)

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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 by stating that he wanted to pick up where the last meeting left off. He wanted to look at the overall scope of the project as well as the history of the project.
2. Tobey went over the history of the project by going through the handout that listed the chronological order of the project history. This information was compiled from Don Lyford's project file, Ten Year Plan (TYP) files, and by discussing with other DOT staff familiar with the project. In the 1960's, there were two sections of NH-11 improved to have 12' lanes, 10' shoulders, and a 60mph design speed. These two sections bookend the current section being studied under this project. In the early 1990's, there was a project to develop improvements to this same section being studied. As a result of public input, a bypass was reviewed and two bypass corridors were studied. Throughout the late 90's and early 2000's, the project was included in several subsequent Ten Year Plans. Eventually in 2009, the project was eliminated.

There is no record of why the project got eliminated, but it likely pertained to the funding required for a bypass.

In 2015, the Lakes Region Planning Commission submitted an application for consideration in the 2017-2026 Ten Year Plan to *“Reconstruct/rehabilitate approximately 4.2 miles of a section of Route 11 from Minge Cove in Alton to Lake Shore Park Road just east of Ellacoya State Park in Gilford to have 12’ wide travel lanes and 4’ wide shoulders to match those on either end of the proposed project area. The reconstructed/ rehabilitated roadway would provide for improved traffic flow, improved safety and improved use for pedestrians and bicyclists.”* This application led us to the current planning study project to “identify priority needs from east of Minge Cove Road to east of Ellacoya State Park”. Tobey reiterated that the intent of this study is to look at improvements along the existing alignment.

3. Tobey opened up the discussion, asking if anyone was able to talk to folks in their town to see what they thought the improvements could be. There was no additional input from the CAC on this topic.
4. Kevin Hayes asked if the bypass was completely off the table. Tobey responded that the current study is to look at the existing Route 11 and improvements that can be made. A bypass study would be a completely different study, but could still potentially happen in the future.
5. Russ Wilder stated that he agreed with Tobey that this study was about improving the existing Route 11 corridor, but that the history of the project and the bypass should be included in the report.
6. Jeff Hayes stated that we are doing a study now because we need better estimates to figure out how much improvements will cost. Tobey agreed that a goal is to come up with estimates for each improvement. For example, an estimate for each intersection that will be improved.
7. Jeff then stated that the history that was compiled does not really show why the bypass was eliminated from the Ten Year Plan in 2009. He stated that there is still property being held by the State for the bypass. He does not like the idea of making improvements to the existing Route 11 corridor and then having the bypass be a potential future project.
8. Meghan Theriault stated that the difference in cost between short/intermediate term improvements and the bypass is roughly \$5 million vs \$40 million, respectively. For now, we should be focusing on the short/intermediate term repairs. If, after these improvements are complete, we feel that we still need a bypass, we apply for it then. If we push the bypass now, we may never get the intermediate improvements. The

bypass is too big of a scope, and she would rather focus on the more feasible work to be done now.

9. Jeff brought up that the State has land holdings originally purchased for the bypass. Meghan asked if releasing the owned land would be a part of this project's scope? Tobey stated that there is surplus land held by NHDOT throughout the state that has been purchased for various reasons. Often at the completion of a project there are chunks of land and sometimes whole parcels that were not needed to complete the project. These can be purchased from the State at fair market value if the Department determines there is no longer a need for these parcels.
10. Jeff then stated that he is not personally pushing for the bypass and felt the minutes from the last meeting did not make that clear.
11. Kevin stated that we needed to make improvements to Route 11 and he doesn't think a bypass would be approved through the current process.
12. Tobey then stated that we all seem to agree that the bypass will not be the focus of this study. We also acknowledge in the report that if the bypass is ever built, there may be improvements recommended to Route 11 that may become obsolete. For example, if there are improvements made at the intersection of Route 11 at Cherry Valley Road (NH Route 11A) and West Alton Marina, these improvements may become obsolete because a bypass could drastically change the traffic volumes at this intersection.
13. Reuben Wentworth stated that his main concerns are at both ends of the project where there are significant grade/alignment changes and the most accidents. He also stated that improving the drainage in many locations should not be ignored.
14. Tobey then moved on to the next phase of the meeting, which was interactive with the whole committee to develop a purpose of the study. He felt that Jeff Hayes had made a good point at the previous meeting that the committee should be involved in developing the purpose and goals of the committee. Tobey asked a general question to all the committee members about what they think should and shouldn't be done when considering improvements to the corridor.
  - a. Meghan stated that her main concern was vehicles turning onto/off of Route 11. Her priority would be to address the short-term turning movement and sight distance issues before moving on to the bigger issues.
  - b. Russ asked what the design speed is for the corridor. Currently, the existing posted speed is 40mph, with a seasonal downposting to 35mph for a section of the corridor in Gilford.

- i. Tobey asked the committee what they believed an acceptable design speed would be.
  - ii. Russ stated that 50mph would be too fast, but maybe sticking to 40mph would be acceptable. He also liked the idea of having a roundabout as a “gateway intersection” at each end of the corridor so that drivers would know that they are entering a lower speed area. Russ thinks safety issues and what the future use of the road will be are important in determining the design speed.
  - iii. Tobey then stated that lowering the posted speed to 35mph would not drastically increase the travel time through the corridor but could improve safety.
- c. Russ then continued stating that there are a number of businesses along the corridor, and that it is a semi-commercial area.
- d. Jeff then stated that the corridor is still a designated scenic byway and asked if there are any other viewsheds that could be opened?
  - i. Reuben stated that at the existing outlook, all the trees that can be cut have been cut. The rest that are currently blocking the view are on private property and cannot be touched.
- e. Meghan then stated that her priorities in order would be: 1. Vehicles 2. Bicycles 3. Pedestrians. She also stated that she thinks a good design speed would be 40mph or lower and noted that the area is still very residential.
- f. Russ stated that in the future there could be more restaurants.
  - i. Reuben stated that with the current zoning there would need to be a special exception to open a restaurant/business on the corridor.
- g. Russ stated that the existing 40mph speed limit seems to work.
- h. Tobey stated that a bike lane shoulder is feasible through most of the corridor but there are spots that are extremely constrained. He asked what the committee’s thoughts on just providing bike lanes where we can?
  - i. Meghan and Reuben both stated that they are open to that.

- i. Tobey then continued asking if they are open to the idea of allowing bikes in the travel way. There could be signs and/or “sharrows” that could be used to show the cyclists that they can travel in the roadway and while also alerting drivers to the fact that there may be bicycles they need to yield to in those areas.
  - i. Meghan said she is open to that idea. She added that providing bicycle facilities is more feasible than providing pedestrian facilities along Route 11.
- j. Reuben asked what the Right of Way is in Gilford to Ames Farm?
  - i. Tobey stated that we do not know all the Right of Way information. He added on that on many of the old “carriage” roads that have developed into bigger corridors the state does not own the Right of Way, but often owns the right to maintain. This is referred to as Prescriptive Right of Way and Tobey thinks this is likely what NHDOT has for rights in this corridor.
  - ii. Russ then stated that there was normally a 66’ Right of Way for the railroads. The old railroad bed is adjacent to the corridor at some points. He was curious if we could use any of the old railroad Right of Way. He also asked where exactly is the old railroad bed and what is the original Right of Way?
  - iii. Drew then stated that he was struggling with the fact that we do not know the existing Right of Way. He asked how we can move forward without knowing it?
  - iv. Tobey stated that they have the survey and Right of Way information from the old project, and that would give a pretty good idea of what the existing Right of Way is.
  - v. Meghan added on that we need the working Right of Way to have an idea of what is there.
- k. Tobey then asked what the committee felt were acceptable property impacts. Are isolated impacts acceptable? Full parcel takings acceptable? Should we try to minimize all impacts?

- i. Reuben stated that minimal impacts should be the goal. He also added again that his biggest concerns are the two approaches to the corridor and that Smith Point Road is a dangerous intersection.
  - ii. Meghan added on that ideally property impacts are minimized, but sometimes a good solution requires a major taking. She continued on stating that changes to the horizontal alignment as well as flattening out the dips and humps in the vertical alignment could improve sight lines. Tree and bushes can also be trimmed/cut to improve sight lines.
  - iii. Tobey then stated that it seems like minimizing property impacts as much as practical should be the goal of the project. Tobey stated that providing retaining walls instead of slopes could be done. This would be more expensive to construct but would limit the property impacts.
- l. Tobey then asked if there were any areas where a permanent lower speed would make sense? There was then a discussion about where the seasonal downpost is in Gilford. It was determined it is from just west of the town line at Riley Road heading westbound to just west of Ellacoya Barn and Grille heading eastbound.
  - i. Meghan stated that the committee would need to look at traffic volumes as well as existing roadway widths to determine where a lower speed limit would make sense.
  - ii. Russ stated that he believed that the area of the West Alton Fire Station with the blinking yellow light would be a good area for a lower speed limit and potentially a roundabout.
- m. Reuben stated the existing fire station cannot be torn down. It is the property of the town that was given by the Fireman's Association many years ago.
- n. Russ then stated that if there is a roundabout at the intersection of Route 11 at Cherry Valley Road (NH Route 11A) and West Alton Marina there would be wetland impacts and acquisitions needed.
- o. Tobey asked the committee what they felt needed to be done about the riding surface.
  - i. Russ stated that adding drainage would improve the existing frost heaving.

- ii. Meghan added on that there is icing at Riley Road and we should definitely look at drainage.
  - iii. Russ added that from Owl's Nest down there are frost heaves.
  - iv. Tobey then stated that a full pavement structure reconstruction, not just an overlay, would be necessary to address the heaving.
- p. Reuben asked what the construction schedule would be? Would it be a mile at a time completed over several years?
  - i. Tobey stated yes that would be very possible.
  - ii. Meghan asked if it could be more of a "let's fix all the culverts this year" and make other improvements throughout the corridor the next?
  - iii. Tobey stated that that type of phasing could be possible, but the entire design would need to be done first so the new culverts account for the wider roadway that would be constructed in the following years.
- 15. Hans Weber was writing all this input down on a couple of large pieces of paper on an easel. Tobey stated that the DOT team would come up with a few sentences from the comments to describe the purpose of the committee. Once this is drafted it will be send out to the committee for review and comment.
- 16. Jeff then brought up the fact that this corridor is a regional connector. There are not many other routes between Laconia and the Seacoast. We need to keep this in mind when developing the purpose.
- 17. Tobey asked the group if they had any specific concerns throughout the corridor from field reviews or speaking to people in their towns.
  - a. Meghan stated that the Intersection of Route 11 at Cherry Valley Road (NH Route 11A) and West Alton Marina is a great place for a roundabout. She said that currently the sight distance from West Alton Marina is bad. The billboard and the house there are sight distance issues.
  - b. Russ then stated that the alignment of Route 11 near Minge Cove Road effects Cherry Valley Road. If Route 11 in that area is re-aligned, it could improve sight distance at Cherry Valley Road.

18. Meghan then continued with other issues she noted from a field review. She stated that in general it is hard to see entrances because there are so many access points to the Route 11 and many of the smaller town roads have bad street name sign placement or no sign at all. There is also no lighting at the intersections. She then listed more issues she observed at each individual intersection. They are outlined below:
- a. Lake Shore Park Road – The throat of the road is very wide. Narrowing this down could improve safety as it gives drivers a clear spot where they should stop to look before entering Route 11. This would limit them from pulling too far to the right to make a right turn but needing to turn around and look over their left shoulder for oncoming traffic.
  - b. Smith Point Road – There is not much that can be done to improve sight distance with the existing white house that is close to Route 11.
  - c. Anniversary Hill Road – The road is very hard to pull out of. This could be improved by changing the sign placement, removing trees, and modifying Route 11 alignment.
  - d. Rollins Road – The road has limited sight distance due to a vertical crest curve on Route 11.
  - e. Terrace Hill Road – There is limited sight distance due to an existing white fence adjacent to Route 11.
  - f. Sleepy View Road – The curve is a safety issue there and icing is also a problem.
  - g. Acorn Drive – There is a large tree blocking sight distance.
  - h. Elm Street – Sight distance issues as well as missing street sign.
19. Russ asked if it would be possible to ask the town DPW's to make small changes at these intersections. He stated that many times when just driving past these roads it is hard to tell if there are issues, and if no one complains or brings it up to them, then they may not know improvements are needed.
20. Tobey wrapped up the meeting by stating that they would likely push the next meeting to early February due to the end of year holidays.

Action Items:

- The DOT will review the Right of Way information they have and show it on the aerial of the corridor.
- The DOT will review all of the Committee's suggestion for the Committee's purpose and create a Purpose Statement for the rest of the Committee to review.



# **AGENDA**

**NH Route 11 Alton - Gilford**

**State Project No. 40634**

**Corridor Advisory Committee (CAC) Meeting #2**

December 8, 2021

3:00 PM to 4:30 PM

- 1. Project History**
- 2. Project Purpose/Goals**
- 3. Existing Site Overview (if time allows)**
- 4. Project/Meeting Schedule/Meeting #3 Topics**
- 5. Questions**

Adjourn at 4:30 PM