

September 15, 2009

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

CONFERENCE REPORT

PROJECT: CHESTERFIELD
STP-X-000S(448)
13597
NH 63 Safety Improvements

DATE OF CONFERENCE: August 19, 2009

LOCATION OF CONFERENCE: Chesterfield Old Town Hall

ATTENDED BY:	<u>NH DOT</u>	<u>Town of Chesterfield</u>
	D. Lyford	Jon McKeon – Selectmen Chairman
	M. Dugas	Robert Brockman - Selectman
	N. Spaulding	Cliff Emery – Selectman
	C. Goodmen	Rick Carrier – Town Administrator
	D. Graham	Carol Ross – Selectman’s Secretary

Attendance list is attached

SUBJECT: Summer Town Meeting Presentation

NOTES ON CONFERENCE:

This meeting is held as an annual event for summer residents. The safety improvement for NH 63 was included as an agenda item to allow for the summer residents to be aware of the proposed improvements.

D. Lyford presented the project and gave a brief overview of what has taken place to date. He explained that an on-line alternative was developed and presented in 2003. Residents expressed concern with the impacts and recommended the development of a bypass alternative. This was developed and reviewed with the Town and residents in 2005, and many NH 63 residents expressed support. In general, many residents expressed support while the Selectmen were opposed. The Town officials were opposed for various reasons, one being that the bypassed segment of the existing NH 63 would have been relinquished to the Town. D. Lyford informed the residents that the NH 63 improvements remain in the State’s Ten Year Plan with an anticipated construction date of 2011 and a construction budget of \$400,000. D. Lyford explained that two options for improvements (to the ‘S’ curves only) have been developed that

are intended to describe the possible limits of the project and give two scenarios of impact, one into the hillside and one into the lake.

M. Dugas gave a technical presentation of the two options. M. Dugas summarized the existing conditions; narrow roadway (21' vs. 24' elsewhere), no safe place for pedestrians and bicyclists, trucks crossing the double yellow line to avoid impacting the ledge, sight distance not adequate for safely stopping at 30 mph, guardrail in terrible condition and ditchline on the hill side of the road virtually non-existent.

M. Dugas explained the two options and their respective impacts. The project length is approximately 1500 feet beginning at the last house on the row and ending where the lake shoreline and NH 63 diverge. The new roadway would keep the existing alignment and curvature, with 10-foot travel lanes and a 2-foot shoulder. An improved ditch width would be located four feet from the edge of the pavement to allow for water to pass through the ditch before entering the lake. With the wider roadway section, adding only 3 feet to the overall width that is out there today, and with the setback to the ledge wider with the ditch trucks will be able to avoid crossing the double yellow line and reduce the hazard. The new roadway would also address the cable guardrail with the construction of new guardrail along the lake.

Option #1, holding the lake as the control with the hill being impacted, would require pole relocations. M. Dugas explained with the cross section the amount of earth that would be removed to construct the new roadway and to also relocate the abutters' driveway. Option #2 allowed for the hillside to be the control and have the lake impacted. Under Option #2 the new roadway would be pushed toward the lake minimizing the impact to the hillside and avoid blasting.

D. Lyford explained that the chosen alternative would likely be a combination of the two options presented. D Lyford also explained that the lake bottom along NH 63 has been recently surveyed and that the information was going to allow for a more defined impact area if the roadway were to move closer to the lake. With that the floor was opened for questions.

The following contain questions, responses and comments made during the open floor portion of the meeting.

An attendee is concerned about the routing of traffic during construction with either of the options. D. Lyford responded that the option #2 may possibly be able to maintain one lane of traffic with either a temporary traffic signal or flaggers with only daytime lane closures. Option #1 may require big trucks being diverted to different routes.

An attendee, along with several members of the audience, felt that large trucks should be prohibited from NH 63 and the speed limit reduced to 25 mph. D. Graham explained that existing State law does not allow speed limits on State highways to be posted lower than 30 mph, or for limitations on trucking. Pursuit of these options would require changes to State law. He noted there is an existing advisory 25 mph speed limit sign located in the vicinity of the SB approach to the 'S' curve.

Lack of speed enforcement was a major concern voiced by many members of the audience. The question whether a state trooper would be able to stop a motorist on NH 63 was asked. D. Graham explained that there were laws governing state police jurisdiction and local enforcement limiting the use of state troopers in this instance.

An attendee voiced concern over the Shoreland Protection Act and whether the construction of either option would be feasible due to the environmental hurdles. D. Lyford explained that both options would be examined for environmental impacts. There would have problems moving the roadway toward the lake as well as blasting the ledge in proximity to the lake.

An attendee had a question about the amount of cut on the option #1 cross section vs. the cut on the option #2 cross section. M. Dugas explained that the height of the cut on option #1 was approximately 15 feet while the cut on option #2 was closer to 5 feet. The intent of option #2 would be to avoid impacts to the hillside on the west side of the road wherever possible.

An attendee, who has attended all public meetings to date for this project, asked what was new to the town with the two options presented. M. Dugas explained that the two options presented widened the road by only 3 feet and provided more sight distance with the allowance for a wider ditch on the hillside of the roadway. In addition the plan would be to preserve the existing curvature.

An attendee expressed concern over the removal of existing vegetation along the lakeshore in option #2 and that all the trees along the shore would be removed. The question was asked whether the rock slope would be able to support vegetation and withstand erosion from the wave action on the lake. D. Lyford offered that the stone slope might be constructed such that vegetation above the high water mark, generated by waves, is placed to enhance the view from the water.

Two abutters attending the meeting had sent a letter to D. Lyford voicing concerns along with possible various solutions to the speeding and pedestrian safety issues. [A copy of the letter, dated August 8, 2009, is in the correspondence file.] D. Lyford acknowledged receiving the letter and stated that the various suggestions listed would be reviewed with the town. He did state however that the suggestion of constructing seasonal speed bumps would not be allowed due in part to the maintenance involved and also the increase in truck noise created with the down shifting to roll over the speed bump and subsequent shifting into higher gears to gain speed.

An attendee asked if there were road signs (message boards) available to use such as the "Your Speed Is ..." portable signs used in the vicinity of schools and other places. D. Lyford stated that the state had only one permanent location on the Hillsboro Bypass within a Limited Access portion of the road. The Safe Routes to School program was going to implement their use this fall and if they seemed to be affective then the state may consider their use elsewhere. NH 63 would not be suitable for such a sign at this time.

Several members of the audience voiced concerns that any improvement to the roadway would only encourage more traffic and higher speeds. One comment in particular expressed that the

only saving grace to the cottages was the fact the roadway was narrow and had limited sight distance to slow vehicles down. Several people expressed the notion that widening the roadway was going to straighten out the 'S' curves. D. Lyford reiterated that the improved roadway under both alternatives would preserve the existing curvature.

A Selectman asked if the \$400,000 included monies for the engineering and if more studies were done then there would be less money to build the road. He suggested that the state take the \$400,000 and essentially spend the money on the existing roadway by improving the guardrail, remove parking along the roadway in front of the cottages to improve safety, and remove some of the hillside to improve sight distance. D. Lyford responded that the \$400,000 was just for construction.

An attendee was concerned about the alternative to be chosen and not being able to have a say in the choice. A suggestion was made to hold a meeting next summer to allow seasonal residents to attend. D. Lyford explained that the plans would be presented again to the town in both a public informational setting and in the formal public hearing setting. The chosen alternative would only move forward with the full support of the Selectman.

An attendee wanted to know why the Selectman did not support the Bypass Alternative. The Selectman Chairman explained that the Town did not want to have the responsibility of maintaining the abandoned stretch of NH 63 that the state would turn over to the town. It was a burden that the town was unwilling to take.

The Town Road Agent spoke briefly on the difficulty he has with a 12-foot wide snow plow and negotiating the curves during a snowstorm with oncoming traffic. He commented on the existing cable guardrail being highly deficient and a liability in that it would not stop a vehicle from entering the lake in its current condition. He stated that something needs to be done here and in his opinion it was not an option to do nothing.

An attendee suggested that traffic cameras be used to enforce the speed limit as is done in other states. D. Lyford answered that speed cameras are currently against the law in New Hampshire.

Submitted by:

Nancy L. Spaulding, P.E.
Preliminary Design Section

NLS/MJD/nls
cc: W. Cass
C. Green
D. Lyford
D. Graham