

April 29, 2022

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

**CONFERENCE REPORT**

**PROJECT:** Epping 29608  
NH Route 125 Capacity Improvements

**DATE OF CONFERENCE:** March 10, 2022

**LOCATION OF CONFERENCE:** Via Teams

**ATTENDED BY:**

Greg Dodge – Epping Town Administrator  
Dennis Koch – Epping Department of Public Works  
Michael Wallace – Chief of Epping Police Department  
Kellie Walsh – Epping Town Planner  
Sandra Goodspeed – Epping Conservation Commission  
David Walker – Assistant Director, Rockingham Regional Planning Commission  
Scott Bogle – Sr. Transportation Planner, Rockingham Regional Planning Commission  
and Bike/Ped representative  
Wendy Johnson – NHDOT, Project Manager  
Gerry Bedard – NHDOT, Design Engineer  
Dan Prehemo – NHDOT, Design Group Leader  
Jennifer Riordan – GM2, Environmental Engineering Design Consultant  
Margaret Gordon - GM2, Environmental Engineering Design Consultant  
Chris Turgeon – BETA Group, Inc., Engineering Design Consultant  
John Byatt - BETA Group, Inc., Engineering Design Consultant

**SUBJECT:** Public Advisory Committee (PAC) Meeting #3

**NOTES ON CONFERENCE:**

Wendy Johnson opened the meeting and thanked all in attendance. Everyone introduced themselves and their role in the community or their area of interest relative to the NH Route 125 corridor. John Byatt discussed the role of the PAC, recapped the project limits; the project background and the project needs and objectives. He then discussed the current project status which is that the project is in the alternative evaluation and public participation phase. BETA, the consultant firm leading the design, has developed a draft Alternatives Study which has been reviewed by NHDOT. This meeting was to present the alternatives evaluated in the report and to receive comments from the advisory committee on the alternatives. An update on the schedule was also provided. The project has been delayed and the current advertising date of October

2024 will most likely be moved out. Refer to the attached meeting presentation for additional information of the items discussed.

Chris Turgeon began discussing the alternatives evaluated as follows:

### **Town Line to Fresh River Rd/Main Street**

This first segment is from a pavement joint 240' south of the Bentwood/Epping town line, to the Fresh River Rd/Main St intersection. Intersections are located at Brickyard Square, the NH Route 101/125 interchange and at Fresh River Road. This segment has minimal geometric improvements. What is currently proposed is pavement resurfacing and restriping to maintain the existing lane and intersection configurations, while providing 5' shoulders throughout the segment and maintain the existing curb and sidewalk. The 5' shoulders would be created simply by restriping the lanes to 11' lanes. New pedestrian ramps have been constructed recently. The main proposed improvement is signal system coordination and optimization between the four signals in this area to improve traffic operations and level of service (LOS).

### **Park and Ride**

Chris Turgeon discussed the alternative to align the park and ride access drive as the 4<sup>th</sup> leg of the signalized intersection with Brickyard Square Plaza. This would also add a southbound left turn lane on NH 125. The relocated drive will make access and egress for the park and ride easier and safer and hopefully encourage more use. It will require additional signal equipment. A drawback with this concept is that the land opposite the Brickyard Square Plaza is mostly wetlands and relocating the entrance will have extensive wetland impacts. In addition, it may require a median along the proposed Southbound left turn lane, which would restrict Northbound left turn access to CVS and Mobil.

- Wendy noted that the Department of Motor Vehicles may use the park and ride for commercial driver testing in the future, so we would potentially need to leave the old entrance open.
- Sandra Goodspeed said she was not thrilled with the wetland impacts that moving the entrance will create. She will bring the slide of the relocated entrance to the conservation commission to gain their input.
- Kellie Walsh said there are traffic issues now at the CVS entrance with vehicles entering from NH Route 125 versus through Brickyard Square as she said this entrance gets backed up now but would get worse if the CVS and Mobil entrances are combined.
- Kellie noted that the right in-right out only turns at the CVS was a good option.

### **McDonald's / Dunkin Donuts/Sunoco/XtraMart access**

Chris Turgeon noted this was another area of access management that was evaluated to see if some improvements could be made. The current dual drive locations do not meet signal warrants and no high crash rates have occurred. It is currently proposed to maintain the existing configuration.

- There were no comments or questions regarding this area.

### **Fresh River Road to NH Route 27/Water Street**

Chris Turgeon discussed the alternatives evaluated at this segment. The option currently proposed is a consistent typical section of two 11' travel lanes NB and SB, 14' two way left turn

lanes (TWLTL) with 5' shoulders and 6' sidewalks for the length of this segment. Thus, the lane merges in this segment would be eliminated and a more consistent corridor would improve capacity. This requires roadway widening and ROW impacts. The lane configurations at the intersections would remain roughly the same. It was noted that the proposed widening would encroach close to the driveways of Aroma Joe's and the property across NH Route 125 near Janell Court. The right turn lane and access to Beehive Drive would remain similar to the existing condition. A pork chop island at the Shell station driveway on NH Route 125, which will limit the driveway to right in and right out access, is currently planned to be constructed in the near future and will be perpetuated with this project.

The group was asked for input on sidewalks and the areas they should be constructed. It was noted that sidewalks in the current plan are proposed on both sides of the road up to the rail trail. It was asked if sidewalks are desired from the rail trail to Water Street and if so, are sidewalks preferred on one or both sides of the road.

- Greg Dodge asked who maintains the sidewalks; the Town or the State. Wendy replied that the Town would maintain the sidewalks. The Town voiced concern about the costs to maintain additional sidewalks.
- There was consensus that sidewalks on both sides of NH Route 125 from Fresh River Road to the rail trail were appropriate.
- Kellie described some residential developments that are planned for Water Street to the east of the Water Street/NH Route 125 intersection. Due to these developments, she was supportive of constructing sidewalks on the east side of NH Route 125 to Water Street. She also mentioned that there are discussions about constructing a sidewalk along Jannell Court in order for pedestrians from the new developments to get to NH Route 125.
- Kellie also noted that from a planning perspective, she supports sidewalks on both sides of Route 125 from the rail trail to Water Street and would bring these options up with the Planning Board for their input.
- David Walker said roadway speeds will most likely increase due to removing the merge, therefore, there is a critical safety benefit to putting sidewalks on both sides of NH Route 125 to Water Street.
- Scott Bogle noted that 5-foot bike lanes are narrow with 5 lanes to Water Street as vehicular speeds will increase. He asked if increasing the shoulder/bike lane widths in this area could be looked at.
- Sandra asked if the shoulder would be considered a bike lane. Chris responded that it would not be marked as a bike lane but 5-foot shoulders are included to accommodate bicycles.
- Kellie mentioned that there is proposed residential development on East Exeter Road: a proposed 36 unit apartment development; a mixed use development; and a proposed 60 unit workforce housing development. There is ongoing potential discussion for sidewalk on Route 27 by developers in this area.
- Greg asked if the bottle neck would go away. Chris indicated it would go away with the added lanes.
- Scott asked if the utility corridor in the area was dry. Chris mentioned that several culverts outlet there because it is a low area but was not certain if it was a wet or dry area.

- Wendy mentioned that pedestrian accommodations would be provided at the southern leg of the NH Route 27/125 intersection if sidewalks were constructed along NH Route 125 to the Route 27 intersection.

### **Lamprey River Crossing Area**

Chris Turgeon noted that the Northbound auxiliary lane over the Lamprey River is proposed to be extended further north than currently exists to allow more time for vehicles to pass slow moving trucks. John Byatt discussed how the width of the existing bridge carrying NH Route 125 over the Lamprey River would allow for 4.5-foot shoulders/bike lanes (with lanes narrowed to 11 feet). He noted these 4.5-foot shoulders/bike lanes are acceptable but other options were evaluated to consider pedestrians. These options include:

1. **Separate bike path/bridge:** Shifting the lanes to the west so a 5-foot shoulder could be provided for bicyclists heading north and providing a separate bike path in the railroad right of way (ROW) for southbound cyclists. This would require a separate bridge be constructed over the river. This bridge would be located at the same location as the previously existing railroad bridge. However, NH Division of Historic Resources has determined that the remaining piers and abutment are not eligible for the national historic register, thus impacts to these substructures would not be an issue. The path would be approximately 10-feet wide to allow room for both pedestrians and bicyclists.
  - Scott asked if the piers were structurally stable and if they could even be reused or even if the stones could be reused. John indicated it is unknown at this time. However there is significant cracking so it would need to be investigated. In addition, the proposal presented is a steel bridge which likely would not use these piers.
2. **Widen the existing highway bridge:** The existing bridge could be widened to provide 5-foot shoulders with 12 lanes. Two options evaluated were:
  - At least a 6.5-foot widening to add 5-foot shoulders on each side of the bridge (as well as maintain 12-foot lanes.)
  - At least an 18.5-foot widening to add 5-foot shoulders and 8-foot brush curbs on each side of the bridge. The 8-foot brush curbs could allow for any future pedestrian accommodations on the bridge.
  - Sandra said she preferred that the existing bridge be widened instead of bicycles using the path as cyclists likely would stay on the roadway.
  - David said he preferred the bridge widening over a new structure.
  - Greg said widening the existing bridge makes the most sense.
  - Kellie said she preferred the new footbridge and would bring these options to the planning board.
  - Scott said he assumed there would be no maintenance of the 8-foot brush curbs in winter. Wendy said he was correct that they would not need to be maintained unless they were connected to the sidewalk.
  - Gerry Bedard asked if anyone knew about pedestrian activity on Mill Street to cross the river and if this crossing would still be used if the pedestrian bridge was constructed. Greg and Sandra both responded that they did not know. Kellie indicated that walkers were more likely to be on Mill Street and cyclists would be more likely to be on NH Route 125.
  - Jennifer Riordan noted that the Lamprey is a NH designated River and a Federally Designated Wild and Scenic River and impacts to its banks would have to be evaluated.

- The Town asked who would maintain the pedestrian bridge. DOT confirmed the Town would have to.

### **NH Route 27 to Coffin Road**

Chris Turgeon noted a mostly consistent proposed typical section of 12' lanes, 14' TWLTL and 8' shoulders through this stretch consisting of mostly pavement resurfacing and restriping. There will be some widening and minimal ROW impacts, and there are no sidewalks proposed in this segment. At the Elm Street intersection, the left turn Northbound onto Elm Street and TWLTL Southbound is maintained. Opposing left turns at Highland Drive were evaluated but didn't warrant left turn lanes and there were no significant safety issues. Carrying the TWLTL through that intersection is proposed. With regards to access management, modifying the driveway entrance at Telly's Restaurant to prevent Southbound left turns into the entrance and modifying the BP driveway to make it more defined was evaluated as it is currently open and spread out. One other area of interest for access management is the DMV driveway. It has been discussed that people may have issues making a left turn out the DMV driveway.

- Scott asked the group if there was any interest in pedestrian crossings of NH Route 125 at Elm Street and Highland Ave. Wendy noted that any signal at these locations would need to be maintained by the Town. Chief Wallace said there were not enough pedestrians to warrant crossings at these locations, they would probably be ineffective and pedestrian signals would have a negative effect on traffic, particularly on Friday night. He added that the Highland Ave area was a senior's development and none of them walk to NH Route 125. There was additional conversation that the lack of pedestrians may be related to the lack of crossing facilities.
- Kellie noted that a commercial development was approved by the planning board in the southwest corner at the intersection at Fogg Road.
- Greg noted that there is a pedestrian signal at the Rail Trail crossing that causes some traffic issues and requested that it be part of the signal coordination as it did not appear to be currently.

### **Fogg Road / Coffin Road Intersection presented**

Chris Turgeon noted that at this location the proposal is to construct two 12' through lanes in the Northbound and Southbound direction through the intersection and then tapers back to one lane in the northbound and southbound direction, with 12' left turn lanes onto Fogg and Coffin Road with 5' shoulders. This configuration will ideally help with capacity issues, backups at the light and the level of service (LOS). As a result of the additional through lanes, there could be changes to access to some abutting properties such as right in/right out only at the Communications Construction Group and NAPA Auto Parts driveways. The Communications Construction Corp property has access on Old Stagecoach Road and NAPA has access on Coffin Road. Full access to Route 125 would remain for Epping Well.

- David asked if there were any pedestrian crossings or bicycle accommodations at this intersection, and recommended them even if seldomly used. Chris responded that minimum 5-foot shoulders for bikes are planned but no pedestrian crossings.
- Scott asked who maintains the paint on crosswalks. Wendy responded that DOT maintains the paint on crosswalks when part of a traffic control signalized intersection, otherwise it is the Town's responsibility.

### **North of Coffin Road to NH Route 87**

Chris Turgeon noted that the proposal is to resurface and restripe to 12' travel lanes in each direction with 8-10' shoulders, similar to the existing configuration with no widening proposed.

- There were no comments for this section.
- Gerry asked if the new development in this area may affect a snowmobile crossing under NH Route 125 just south of NH Route 87. Kellie responded that there is a 6-lot commercial subdivision in this area (4 lots on the west side of NH Route 125, south of Old Nottingham Road, and two on the east side at the southeast corner of NH Route 87 and NH Route 125) and that she was not aware of any proposed plans to impact the snowmobile crossing or trail.

### **NH Route 87 intersection with NH Route 125**

Chris Turgeon said three options were evaluated for this intersection:

1. **No changes:** Maintain the current configuration. It is important to note this is not a high crash area and it does not meet any signal warrants.
2. **Add opposing left turn lanes:** The road would be widened slightly to provide 12' travel lanes Northbound and Southbound and add 12' opposing left turn lanes with 5' shoulders. This would create a more defined intersection and improve safety with the dedicated lefts, especially as this is a 55 mph zone. A left turn warrant is met for Southbound lefts onto NH Route 87.
3. **Roundabout:** A roundabout to provide turns onto NH Route 125 while not stopping traffic on NH Route 125 was evaluated. The benefits are slowing vehicles down in the area approaching an intersection while still keeping traffic flowing for improved safety. However, this option would result in extensive ROW impacts, and changes to abutting driveways and access. There are not significant numbers of recent crashes.
  - Kellie said she leans toward the opposing left turn lanes option. She said the Fire Department has expressed safety concerns with this intersection and a new 19 unit residential subdivision in this area will bring more traffic.
  - Chief Wallace said he prefers the opposing left turn lanes option as there is not a lot of traffic on NH Route 87 and Old Nottingham Road. He felt that the two lane roundabout would have an increased crash rate.
  - Greg said he was not in favor of the roundabout and did not recommend proceeding further with it as there is not enough side road traffic.
  - Chief Wallace said accidents can be severe at NH Route 87 as people do not see the stop signs. There was discussion about the need for tree trimming around the stop signs and intersection to improve visibility. Wendy said there are currently 48-inch stop signs, which are large, at the intersections but perhaps their placement needs to be evaluated.

### Next Meetings/Steps

The next meeting will be a joint meeting with the Epping Selectboard and the Epping Planning Board. Greg will work with Kellie to find a time for that meeting. After that, a public informational meeting will be held.

Wendy asked for further comments from the PAC within the next week and minutes of today's meeting would be prepared and sent out to the PAC soon. The presentation slides will also be sent out to the PAC.

Submitted by:

John Byatt, PE

cc: Attendees  
Public Advisory Committee members

Attachments

1. Meeting No. 3 Presentation