



Hinsdale, NH – Brattleboro, VT Connecticut River Bridge Project

Project Advisory Committee Meeting #1

Hinsdale Police Department
10 Main Street
Hinsdale, NH 03451

MINUTES

February 1, 2017

Project Advisory Committee: Michael Abbott, *Representative, New Hampshire State Legislature*; Jill Collins, *Town Administrator, Town of Hinsdale, NH*; Steve Diorio, *Board of Selectmen Vice Chair, Town of Hinsdale, NH*; Jay Ebbighausen, *Former Board of Selectmen, Town of Hinsdale, NH*; Peter Elwell, *Town Manager, Town of Brattleboro, VT*; John Gomarlo, *Member/Resident, SWRPC Transportation Advisory Committee/Town of Winchester, NH*; Kathryn Lynch, *Community Development Coordinator, Town of Hinsdale, NH*; Fred Moriarty, *Board of Trustees Treasurer, Brattleboro Museum and Art Center*; Kate O'Connor, *Executive Director, Brattleboro Area Chamber of Commerce*; Edwin Smith, *Member/Resident, SWRPC Transportation Advisory Committee/Town of Hinsdale, NH*

Project Advisory Committee Lead Team: Chris Baker, *Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTTrans)*; Raul Gonzalez, *Southwest Region Planning Commission (SWRPC)*; Don Lyford, *New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT)*; J.B. Mack, *SWRPC*; Susan McMahon, *Windham Regional Commission (WRC)*; Erica Roper, *WRC*; Bill Saffian, *NHDOT*; David Scott, *NHDOT*; Trent Zanes, *NHDOT*

Guests: Barry Montgomery, Michael Fifield, Shane Sage, Clare Hudon

I. Welcome and Introductions

Don Lyford called the meeting to order at 3:08 p.m. and all attendees introduced themselves.

II. Draft Public Involvement Plan

J.B. Mack provided an overview of the Public Involvement Plan (PIP) for the construction of a new Hinsdale-Brattleboro Bridge over the Connecticut River. The PIP outlines how the public will be involved in the project including the Project Advisory Committee (PAC) and the Project Lead Team. J. B. Mack explained that a number of important stakeholders have been identified in the PIP and the goal is to make sure those groups are engaged in the project development process. He presented guiding principles for the public involvement process, and described the project's purpose and need, and PAC guidelines. He added that various forms of communication would be used to reach out to the PAC and the public. A central clearinghouse of all project information will be placed on project webpage linked to the NHDOT website. This webpage will include project designs, maps, meeting agendas, meeting minutes, the public involvement plan, and environmental documents.

Barry Montgomery inquired if the Ecovation Hub from the Brattleboro Economic Development District would be involved in the project in any way. Susan McMahon replied that the bridge project would be

more within the realm of transportation, and that the Ecovation Hub generally focuses on sustainability, community-scale resilience to climate change, and green building initiatives.

Michael Abbott asked if there would be a spokesperson for the group. J.B. Mack said that Don Lyford, from NHDOT, is the Project Manager. Donald Lyford added that if there were any major questions or concerns, to view the project website, and to contact NHDOT. He would suggest that anyone with questions to steer them to him via an email or a phone call, however, if they have additional concerns, he invites them to attend the PAC meetings.

Motion: To approve the Public Involvement Plan as written and presented.

Motion by John Gomarlo, seconded by Edwin Smith. Approved by unanimous vote.

J. B. Mack said that the Project Lead Team has discussed having a New Hampshire and Vermont representative Co-Chair future PAC meetings. The role of the Co-Chairs would be to enforce the ground rules summarized in the PIP and keep meetings on topic. He explained that the Project Lead Team nominated Jill Collins and Peter Elwell as Co-Chairs.

Motion: To approve Jill Collins of the Town of Hinsdale and Peter Elwell of the Town of Brattleboro as the bi-state co-chairs for the PAC.

Motion by Jay Ebbighausen, seconded by Steve Diorio. Approved by unanimous vote.

III. Overview of Project/Project Status

Bill Saffian presented on the potential structural layout and aesthetics of the bridge design, including Chris Carly's 2005 concept for the bridge. He began by discussing rail designs between the proposed bridge sidewalk and the road. Jay Ebbighausen asked if the steel rail would withstand a 35 mph test-level crash. Bill Saffian replied that both steel rails and concrete rails are built to withstand such an impact. Michael Abbott asked if there was a corrosion issue with steel rails in comparison to cement rails. Bill Saffian responded that typically, NHDOT's steel rails are galvanized or there is a possibility of using aluminum for certain rails, which has relatively low corrosion. He added that there is a higher corrosion potential for a concrete rail, due to the steel that is used in the concrete being exposed to chlorides through the concrete.

Fred Moriarty inquired if the concrete rail, when damaged, would be more difficult to repair. Bill Saffian replied that he would agree with that assessment, due to the fact that fresh concrete would have to be brought in to recast the damaged area, as opposed to a steel piece, where the damage piece would be cut out and replaced rather easily. He added that one of the benefits of concrete, especially in regards to aesthetics, is that it can be recasted to look a particular way. David Scott added that concrete rail has to be crash tested, which is expensive unless it is of a style that has already been crash tested.

J.B. Mack asked if 27 inch height requirement between the road and sidewalk would be from the sidewalk or the roadway. Bill Saffian replied that it would be from the roadway. Bill Saffian added the Manual for Assessing Safety Hardware (MASH) is the new state of the practice for the crash testing bridge rails, and any projects that have an advertising schedule after December 31, 2019, would have to comply with MASH. Kathryn Lynch asked what the difference in cost would be between the MASH standards and the previous standard. David Scott replied that he believed it would not be significant.

Fred Moriarty asked if the pedestrian rail would only be on the sidewalk side of the bridge. Bill Saffian replied that it would, however, if it were to serve the dual purpose of being a pedestrian and vehicular rail, it must also be tall enough to provide protection to bicyclists. Bill Saffian then elaborated on the different types of pedestrian-compliant rail. Fred Moriarty asked if the function of the vehicle guardrail was to

protect vehicles from driving off the bridge. Bill Saffian said yes, that it serving the dual purpose of protecting pedestrians from the vehicles, but also of vehicles from going off the bridge.

Bill Saffian began speaking about the bridge intersection in Vermont and its connection to Vermont Route 142 (Vernon Street). Barry Montgomery asked if there is public parking near the entrance of the bridge. Bill Saffian replied that the parking is for the Marlboro College Graduate School and is not public parking. Barry Montgomery asked if the bridge was compliant with Complete Streets. Bill Saffian stated that he did not know, but that it was compliant to bicyclists, pedestrians, and vehicular traffic. J.B. Mack asked how many overlooks the bridge would have. Bill Saffian replied that the Chris Carly design proposed seven piers; however, if fewer were necessary, NHDOT would put less on the bridge.

Peter Elwell asked if it would be likely if municipal plows push snow onto the sidewalk. David Scott replied that NHDOT would look into the consequences of plowing snow onto the sidewalk. J.B. Mack asked what the clearance requirements were for the railroad. Bill Saffian replied that, for the State of New Hampshire, it was 22 ½ feet from the top of the rail to the obstruction. However, because the specific track is in Vermont, NHDOT must follow the Vermont standard of 23 feet from the top of the rail to the obstruction. J.B. Mack then asked if the height would accommodate double-stacked railroad cars. Susan McMahon said that it would.

Bill Saffian then presented on the lighting options for the bridge, explaining that electricity costs would be split by the municipalities at the state line. Barry Montgomery asked what weight would be given to making the bridge a tourist attraction, especially since Brattleboro is working to make the town more pedestrian-friendly. David Scott answered that it would be up to the PAC to decide what is appropriate for the bridge and if they feel that drawing in tourists is a need, to let the Project Lead Team know.

Kathryn Lynch stated that she has been working with Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, and that the biggest concern that they have is what is going to be done with the old bridges. She asked if NHDOT had a plan in place. Don Lyford replied that NHDOT plans to maintain them as bicycle and pedestrian bridges. However, NHDOT has not gotten to the point of whether the town or the state will pay for maintenance. He said that it would likely be a combination of both the town and the state. Don Lyford added that it is not the intent of NHDOT to take down the existing bridges, because of their historic value.

IV. Next Steps

Don Lyford said that for the next meeting, there would be a list of items to be approved by the PAC, for example, the width of the bridge and the piers. Bill Saffian said that some of the decisions that have to be made are more time sensitive than others so as to keep the design moving forward. These include the plan to have or exclude the barrier between the roadway and sidewalk and the style of the piers.

V. Next Meeting

Don Lyford stated that he would like the PAC to meet in March and April, and see if there is need for a meeting in May, after which he feels that the meetings would be spread out further. He asked if 3 p.m. would be a good time to meet and if Wednesday would work as well. Erica Roper replied that there was a request from the Vermont state representative if the meetings could be held on Mondays, when the state legislature is not in session. J.B. Mack suggested putting out another Doodle poll to select the next meeting date.

VI. Public Comment

There were no additional public comments.

VII. Adjourn

Motion by Steve Diorio, seconded by Peter Elwell. Approved by unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Raul Gonzalez
Planner
Southwest Region Planning Commission