



Hinsdale, NH – Brattleboro, VT Connecticut River Bridge Project

Existing Bridges Subcommittee Meeting #4

**Brattleboro Town Offices
230 Main Street
Brattleboro, VT 05301**

MINUTES

July 16, 2019

Subcommittee Attendees: Patrick Moreland, *Co-Chair, Town of Brattleboro*; Jason Cooper, *Friends of West River Trail*; Mark Carignan, *Brattleboro Police Department*; Steve Diorio, *Hinsdale Board of Selectmen*; Prudence MacKinney, *Formerly of Vermont Department of Health*; Ed Smith, *Hinsdale Economic Development Representative*; Sharon Smith, *Hinsdale Historical Society*.

Staff and Technical Assistance: J. B. Mack, *Southwest Region Planning Commission (SWRPC)*; Marion Major, *Windham Regional Commission (WRC)*; Anthony King, Bob Landry, Trent Zanes, *NHDOT*.

Guests: Bob Audette, *Brattleboro Reformer*; Michael Fairchild, *Brattleboro Resident*; Kathy Urffer, *Connecticut River Conservancy*.

The meeting began at 10:31 a.m.

I. Meeting Minutes of May 23, 2019

Motion: To approve the minutes of May 23, 2019 as presented.

Motion by Sharon Smith, seconded by Steve Diorio. Approved by unanimous vote.

II. Project Updates

Bob Landry updated the Subcommittee with information about NHDOT's joint application with the Vermont Agency of Transportation for \$20 million through the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grant. The application was recently submitted. He noted that they received several support letters for the project. Approximately \$8 million of the grant is planned for the rehabilitation of the Anna Hunt Marsh and Charles Dana bridges including the removal of the cantilevered sidewalks. Twenty percent of the entire grant will be dedicated to improvements in Vermont.

Bob Landry also gave an update on NHDOT's efforts to procure the engineering firm Hoyle and Tanner and Associates, Inc. to assist the state agency in projecting maintenance and operations costs associated with the Anna Hunt Marsh and Charles Dana bridges. He expects NHDOT to have them under contract in two to three weeks. Part of their initial work for NHDOT will be to develop the maintenance and operations costs.

Steve Diorio asked Bob Landry what NHDOT's fallback position would be if it doesn't receive the \$20 Million BUILD grant. Bob responded that New Hampshire plans to pay for its part of the project with Grant Anticipation Vehicle (GARVEE) bonds. Vermont plans to pay for its share of the project mostly with federal funds along with a Vermont match.

Jason Cooper asked if there were any updates regarding the Barrows and Fisher Oil property as it relates to the larger bridge project. Will that property be purchased? Trent Zanes responded that the property will remain privately held. A small easement is being negotiated to ensure the State has access to the bridge pier and bridge for maintenance purposes.

Ed Smith asked if there has been any progress negotiating with the new owners of the old Marlboro College building for the project. Trent Zanes said that there are no issues. He explained that one of the principle concerns of the new owners was the loss of parking due to the project. However, NHDOT's design team believe the parking lot can be reconfigured in such a way that the same number of parking spaces can be retained even with the owner's losing some land for the VT 142 road improvements. Ed Smith said that he had heard that owners of the former Marlboro College building were still waiting to hear back from the VTrans. Trent Zanes said that sometimes it takes a little time for the design people to finish up their work sketching out site plans and getting them to the right of way bureau, but it should be resolved shortly.

Michael Fairchild asked if it would be possible to take down the two existing bridges. J. B. Mack responded that this has been brought up several times to date and that NHDOT has responded that the Federal Highway Administration and several other stakeholders approved the Environmental Assessment for the project, a key milestone for getting federal funding for the project, with the stipulation that the two states commit to rehabilitating the two existing bridges and making them available for bicycle and pedestrian use. Co-Chair Moreland added that both the Towns of Brattleboro and Hinsdale reviewed and accepted the proposal for the new bridge, which included keeping the two bridges in place.

III. Goal Development

Co-Chair Moreland stated that one of the charges of the Existing Bridges Subcommittee is to prepare a vision for the two existing bridges and Hinsdale Island. He passed out a section of the Environmental Assessment document that included information about the purpose and need for the Hinsdale-Brattleboro Bridge project. He suggested looking at the document because it articulates overarching goals for the Hinsdale-Brattleboro project. Co-Chair Moreland recited the 5 goals listed in the document and asked the Subcommittee to review the document:

- Maintain a transportation corridor between Hinsdale, NH and downtown Brattleboro, VT
- Correct the safety, structural and functional deficiencies of the existing transportation corridor
- Maintain area social and economic relationships
- Preserve the integrity of area resources to the extent possible
- Conserve fiscal resources

Co-Chair Moreland said that he would like the Subcommittee to think about additional goals that may be appropriate for the existing bridges and Hinsdale Island. J. B. Mack added that the Subcommittee may want to also take a look at the existing goals as they may be germane to the existing bridges and Hinsdale Island as well. The following ideas were brought forward:

- Minimize impact on local taxpayers
- Recreation access to hiking trails, access to George's field and other destinations

- Enhance local recreation
- Promote active transportation
- Provide a bicycling and pedestrian commuting option
- Project should be clean and safe
- Enhance and support cultural resources such as public art and exploring cultural events
- Enhance river access (car top boating, swimming)
- Low impact design (on island)

IV. Public Outreach

Co-Chair Moreland noted that part of charge of the Existing Bridges Subcommittee is to facilitate a public involvement process to inform the vision for the design and future use of the existing bridges and Hinsdale Island. He asked staff what kinds of public outreach methods they would recommend. J. B. Mack and Marion Major provided some examples and discussed the idea of involving a university-based Landscape Architecture program to assist the Subcommittee in developing some visuals to inspire public feedback for the existing bridges and island. In addition, the Subcommittee offered the following ideas:

- Participate in local fairs or events with a booth (such as the local farmer's markets)
- Provide graphics for people to respond to...picture's of the bridges and island that they can draw on and offer ideas
- Events should be in Hinsdale and Brattleboro, but in both cases mixing of populations should be encouraged
- Set up a booth at Runnings and/or Walmart
- Set up a gmail account that takes ideas from the public and link it to the Brattleboro Reformer article that will be written about the meeting today
- Give walking tours of the island
- Consider pop-up events on the island, but need to be careful about compromising traffic flow on NH 119
- Set up booths at the respective town meetings
- Utilize Brattleboro Community Television to discuss the project and solicit feedback
- Utilize NHDOT drones to take video of project area as well as downstream the Connecticut River
- Partner with Norm's Marina to tour the area with kayaks or canoes
- Partner with Fairlee Marine to tour the area with a pontoon boat
- Create a Facebook page
- Do a bicycle tour of the area with the local chapter of 350.org (Dave Cohen and Abby Neuken)

V. Next Steps

Co-Chair Moreland suggested that the Subcommittee meet again in approximately a month to develop a document that sharpens up the goals and public outreach plans. J. B. Mack offered to put something together on both topics that the Subcommittee could react to at the next meeting.

VI. Next Meeting

There was consensus to meet in approximately a month. Co-Chair Moreland asked staff to send out a Doodle poll to schedule the next meeting.

VII. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 11:45 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

J. B. Mack
Principal Planner