

REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER

HINSDALE, NH-BRATTLEBORO, VT, A004(152), 12210C

NH ROUTE 119 RECONSTRUCTION OVER CONNECTICUT RIVER

Commission

PUBLIC HEARING

January 18, 2018 -- Hinsdale Town Hall -- 7:00 PM

Hinsdale NH-Brattleboro VT 12210C, A004(152). This project will replace the two bridges carrying NH 119 over the Connecticut River, bridge numbers 041/040 and 042/044, with a single structure and reconstruct the adjoining segment of NH 119 on new location. The reconstruction of NH 119 begins approximately 600 feet south of Georges Field Road in New Hampshire and extends north and west to Vermont on a new alignment approximately 0.6 miles to a new intersection with VT 142, 900 feet south of the existing intersection of NH 119 and VT 142. The improvements to VT 142 extend 500 feet north and 1,000 feet south of its new intersection with NH 119.

The following decisions are the Department's resolution of issues as a result of the testimony presented at the January 18, 2018 Public Hearing and written testimony subsequently submitted:

1. Daniel Cotter, representing Marlboro College in Vermont, voiced concern with the number of parking spaces being removed from the college parking lot as a result of the project.

Response: The Department will coordinate with VTrans to investigate keeping the parking lot impacts to a minimum.

2. Jason Cooper and Malcom Moore, suggested an easement should be purchased through the Barrows property in Vermont to be used for a future rail/trail connection.

Response: Acquisition of public recreation easements are not part of the scope of this project.

3. Debra Thereault, is looking for information regarding tenant rights in Vermont and a contact person to coordinate with regarding project impacts.

Response: Tenant rights for Vermont are part of the acquisition process and will need to be coordinated with VTrans. Dan Landry is the current contact person for VTrans.

4. Frances Boucher, suggested naming the new bridge the "Colonel Ebenezer Hinsdale Bridge", a leading citizen of the Town in 1753 when the Town was incorporated. It was also suggested that bridge lighting of a historical nature, similar to lighting in Brattleboro VT be incorporated onto the new bridge.

Response: Naming of the new bridge requires Legislative action. If that does happen the “Col. Ebenezer Hinsdale Bridge” could be a name that is put forth for approval. The use of bridge lighting of a historical nature will be a consideration as lighting options are reviewed with the Project Advisory Committee.

5. Some people supported retaining the existing bridges after the new bridge is built and other people wanted them removed. Frances Boucher suggested if the bridges are to be retained then the existing dedication plaques should be refurbished as a minimum.

Response: Currently the project has no historical impacts provided the existing bridges are retained after the new bridge is built. The current proposal retains the existing bridges for use by pedestrians and bicycles as well as access to the island. The Department is coordinating with a work group that includes the Vermont Windham Regional Planning and the New Hampshire Southwest Region Planning Commission to identify potential available funding sources that could be put towards the existing bridges rehabilitation/conversion to bicycle/pedestrian uses. The amount of funding available will impact how much can be put towards the existing bridge conversions. The work group will also be addressing future maintenance responsibilities for the retained structures.

6. David and Patricia Schmidt, parcel 7, expressed several concerns with the project and potential impacts to their property. The concerns noted are:
 - a. Will the height of the roadway have any impact on their driveways requiring alterations to prevent puddles from developing in the driveways?
 - b. Will the project have any impact on their existing septic leech field that is located to the front side of the building?
 - c. They have concern with the roadway drainage along their frontage and being sure ponding does not occur on their property as a result of failed roadway drainage.
 - d. They expressed concern with the way the State plows snow in front of their property and the amount of snow that ends up in their driveway.
 - e. They feel drivers continuously exceed the posted speed in this section of 35 MPH roadway and wonder if better signage, transverse rumble strips, flashing warning lights or slow down messages, radar alert speed signs or recording cameras could be installed to help alert drivers to the posted and traveling speed.
 - f. They feel the roadside slope along the westerly side of Route 119 has become overgrown as a result of neglect over the years and feel clearing of vegetation should be undertaken to restore their former view of the river.
 - g. They wonder if a sidewalk will be extended past their house to the adjoining property and if pedestrian and bicycle crossings will be provided at the entrance to Georges Field and if any of this work will impact their existing fence.
 - h. They noted the need to allow access to their property during construction.
 - i. They are concerned that headlights will shine directly onto their property as a result of the proposed realignment of Route 119 and noise levels on their property will increase as a result of the project. They would like the alignment altered to provide more distance between their property and the roadway.

Response: The following addresses the above listed questions/concerns:

- A. The proposed roadway in the area of the existing drives will match the existing elevations such that it will not create ponding. A shallow drainage ditch is proposed along the roadway to help direct drainage to the appropriate outlet areas.
- B. The proposed edge of roadway is not getting any closer to this property so the septic leech field will not be impacted
- C. The existing drainage within the project limits will be reviewed to ensure it is functioning correctly. One drainage system that crosses under Route 119 just to the south of this property is proposed to be replaced.
- D. The Department strives to manage snow removal in a safe and effective fashion. Stopping at driveways or altering the plow action creates a safety concern for vehicles behind the plow vehicle. Special removal of snow from private driveway openings is not an appropriate action for State vehicles.
- E. Signage within the project area will be reviewed and updated as necessary to meet current standards. Transverse rumble strips would not be an appropriate application for this location as repetitive users of the road segment would become used to them over time so they would lose their effectiveness. They would create an unnecessary rise in the noise level in this area. Flashing warning lights and slow down messages should only be used in areas where there is a unique geometric or unusual condition ahead. That is not the situation at this location on Route 119. Radar alert signs could be installed if the Town were willing to accept the maintenance responsibility for them once they were installed. Generally Towns do not support such a use in areas that are not densely populated. Cameras to record speeds for law enforcement are not allowed in NH for this type of use.
- F. Clearing of the roadside trees is done to a limited amount by the District Maintenance crews, generally as mowing behind the guardrail. Growth on the steeper side slopes is not removed and likely is not within the Department right-of-way.
- G. The proposed sidewalk extends to George's Field Road, it does not continue southerly across this property frontage, thus no pedestrian markings will be included across George's Field Road. Paved shoulders are proposed for the entire limit of the project and will be available for bicycle use.
- H. Access to properties during construction will be provided. Short-term access restrictions may be implemented during some daytime construction operations
- I. Headlight glare is not anticipated to be a concern as the combination of roadway curvature and profile grades will limit the direct headlight impact to the property. Additional impacts to other properties that would result if the alignment of the roadway was modified is not justified considering the limited headlight exposure with the proposed alignment.

4/26/18
Date



Victoria F. Sheehan
Commissioner

N.H. Department of Transportation