

December 30, 2002

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

BUREAU OF HIGHWAY DESIGN

CONFERENCE REPORT

PROJECT: Jefferson-Randolph
NHS-X-034-1(18)
13602

DATE OF CONFERENCE: November 12, 2002

LOCATION OF CONFERENCE: Randolph Town Hall

ATTENDED BY: NHDOT

R. Maddali	G. Placy	M. Dugas
K. Nyhan	J. McKay	

Others

L. Wilson (NHDHR)
S. Whitman (NHOSP)

SUBJECT: Public Officials Meeting

NOTES ON CONFERENCE:

Following brief introductions by the chairs of the Randolph and Jefferson selectboards, R. Maddali reviewed the development of the US 2 improvement project from the inception of the corridor study to the current status of the design work. He stated that the current schedule is for the proposal to be presented again to the towns in February 2003 at a Public Informational Meeting. Pending a positive outcome of these meetings, the Department anticipates proceeding to a Public Hearing in late Summer 2003. Construction is currently scheduled to begin in 2006.

K. Nyhan presented a summary of the natural and cultural resources that are present within the corridor and the protection that is provided them by federal and state regulations. He also explained the scope of the upcoming wildlife study to be undertaken by Louis Berger Group shortly.

M. Dugas outlined the existing conditions and roadway deficiencies. The current posted speed limit is 50 mph through the project limits. The average daily traffic volume of 4,700 vehicles per day is projected to increase to 6,300 in 2025 and includes 20% trucks. Much of the roadway has little or no formal paved shoulders except in those areas that were improved more

recently, including the vicinity of Valley Road and the segment of US 2 east of the Bowman Inn. Additionally, US 2 suffers from very poor vertical geometry particularly the segments near the Carter Spring and immediately east of Valley Road. With the exception of the deficient reversing curves near the Bowman Inn, the horizontal geometry satisfies the requirements of the 50 mph posted speed.

M. Dugas explained that the design effort has investigated both an online option and a potential bypass of Jefferson Highlands. Both alternatives would apply a design speed of 80 km/h (50 mph) and are described below.

Online alternative

The proposed improvement would construct a 3.6-3.0 (12-10) typical section through much of the corridor while reducing the shoulder width to 1.2 m (4') within the Jefferson Highlands. M. Dugas described some key improvement areas:

- Jefferson Highlands: It appears that constructing even a 1.2m (4') wide shoulder through the Highlands would impact some of the existing stone walls. The design will be modified to minimize these impacts where possible.
- Carter Spring: The proposed profile improvement would raise the elevation of the sag by approximately 1.5m (5'). Avoiding impacts to the Spring would necessitate shifting the roadway centerline approximately 10m (33') to the south. This shift may allow the construction of a pull-off area on the north side of US 2 for access to the spring. East of Carter's Cut Road the proposed profile adjustment would require that the Wells driveway be relocated approximately 30m (100') east to provide an acceptable grade.
- East of Valley Road: The crest of the hill would be lowered by approximately 1.2m (4') requiring the roadway to be shifted 7.5m (25') south to avoid impacts to the Farrar and Webster driveways along the north side of US 2.
- Bowman 's' curve: US 2 would be shifted 8m (26') north in front of the Randolph Fire Department building to permit greater separation between the two reversing curves.

Jefferson Highlands bypass

The Highlands have been designated a historic district and therefore the design process will need to consider designs that avoid impacts to the district, as required by the Section 4f guidelines. The conceptual bypass would pass south of the Highlands, beginning in the vicinity of the NH 115 intersection with US 2 and rejoining US 2 immediately east of the Water Wheel restaurant. The bypass would extend approximately 3.5 km (2.4 miles) and would generally follow the contour of the hillside, reaching a maximum separation from the existing US 2 of approximately 450m (1,500'). Connections from the bypass to the existing US 2 would be provided most likely both east and west of the Highlands. Cost estimates of this alternative have not yet been computed, but this alternative is expected to be considerably more expensive than the on-line alternative in the following areas:

- Road construction: Build 300m (1,000') approach of NH 115 to US 2; realignment requires 1,000m± additional road construction as compared to on-line alternative; construct two connectors from bypass to existing US 2 for access to Highlands.

- Earthwork: Bypass construction will require significant earthwork, particularly from Carter's Cut Road to the eastern terminus of the bypass.
- Right of way: Bypass will require the purchase of a full-width corridor for its entire length; the on-line alternative will likely require the acquisition of strips of right of way alongside the existing US 2.

The Highlands bypass concept would have the following positive and negative implications:

- Positive implications:
 1. Minimizes impacts to built-up portion of historic district.
 2. Removes traffic and associated noise from district.
 3. Eliminates need for truck climbing lane immediately east of NH 115.
- Negative implications:
 1. Serious concerns from natural resource agencies (EPA, NHFG, etc.) regarding the environmental impacts.
 2. Truck climbing lane would be needed east of Carter's Cut Road.
 3. Increased property impacts versus the on-line alternative. Bypass would require acquisition of approximately 25 acres of land).
 4. Increased construction cost due to greater length of roadway and amount of earthwork.
 5. Bypassed segment of US 2 would be turned over to town as a class 5 roadway.
 6. Because historic district extends to Israel River, proposed bypass would remain within the district.

Other design elements

M. Dugas also explained that the design is considering the placement of one or more scenic overlooks along US 2 within the project limits. One potential location has been identified immediately west of the Alpine Forest Motel on the south side of US 2. Finally, trail users have asked that a pedestrian underpass be provided east of Lowe's Store. Both snowmobilers and hikers frequent the existing at-grade crossing. It appears that an underpass would be feasible in this location.

Questions and comments

Several Jefferson officials spoke in opposition to the proposed Highlands bypass. They expressed concern with the impact upon the natural environment of the forest and Israel River and upon the view of the mountains and valley from the existing US 2. They were also quite concerned about the cost of assuming maintenance of the bypassed segment of US 2. Mark Brady read a letter from Councilor Burton expressing his opposition to the bypass concept.

John Scarinza, Randolph Planning Board, stated his support for the modified 3.6-1.2 typical section. He also supported the proposed pull-off at the Carter Spring. He felt that the existing Randolph fire department building should not be considered a design control. The Department should acquire and replace the building elsewhere if it would result in a better road design. He added that it appeared three houses west of the fire department were omitted from the plan.

(Upon further review, two of the houses were properly indicated and heavy woods obscured a third.)

Jim Mieklejohn, Randolph Conservation Commission, while supporting the proposed improvements, noted that the improvements to the roadway would likely lead to higher vehicle speeds.

Alan Lowe, Randolph Police Chief, expressed his support for the addition of shoulders to US 2. He also agreed with the need to improve the many poor sight distance locations.

Working session

The evening culminated with working sessions during which the attendees were able to comment on the proposed Highlands bypass concept and the on-line improvement alternatives. K. Nyhan and Stacey Doll summarized the input gathered from the two sessions and shared their observations with the audience. In general, the Highlands bypass concept received strong support from the residents of the Highlands but little or no support from town officials or others. There was also widespread support for the on-line improvement alternatives with concerns noted regarding the likely property impacts (especially within the Highlands) and the possible increases in traveling speeds. There was no consensus regarding how wide the proposed shoulders should be.

The information gathered in the meeting and the working sessions will be studied and incorporated into the plan as appropriate. A public informational meeting will be held in February or March 2003 in Jefferson. All project abutters will be invited to the meeting.

Submitted by:

Michael J. Dugas, P.E.
Preliminary Design Supervisor

MJD:mjd

cc: J. Brillhart, R. Maddali, K. Nyhan

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