

August 27, 2009

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

CONFERENCE REPORT

PROJECT: LACONIA
X-A000(884)
15691
US 3 & NH 11B Safety Improvements

DATE OF CONFERENCE: August 13, 2009

LOCATION OF CONFERENCE: Weirs Community Center, Laconia

ATTENDED BY: NHDOT
Craig Green
Michael Dugas
Steven Babalis
Mark Morrill
Bill Lambert

(See Attached Attendees List)

SUBJECT: Public Informational Meeting

NOTES ON CONFERENCE:

C. Green explained that this intersection had come to the Department's attention through studies undertaken as part of the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP). He explained that the current Federal highway funding law, known by its acronym of SAFETEA-LU, created the HSIP to identify highway safety issues and provide for modest safety improvements that would achieve a significant reduction in traffic fatalities and serious injuries. New Hampshire receives \$5.5 million per year to implement modest safety improvements in locations where crash data indicates safety deficiencies. He stressed that the HSIP is intended to be data driven; locations identified to use these funds must have a crash history that demonstrates there is a safety need.

This particular intersection came to the Department's attention through the development of the NHDOT's annual "5% Report" identifying the State's most severe safety needs. The NHDOT identified locations with the highest crash rates for roadway segments and highest number of crashes for intersections for each functional class of roadway. From the "5% Report" further analysis of the locations was used to narrow the number of locations, of which this intersection was one of approximately 30 selected for further study. He also noted that the City has been long interested in improving the intersection and has been pursuing improvements on their own for several years. C. Green cited known issues including heavy summer traffic volumes and

congestion, driver confusion caused by the intersection design, and pedestrian safety. He then asked residents and officials to offer any other observations on the operation of the intersection.

Jose Dematos, owner of parcel 4, commented that stormwater run-off from the road drains down his drive toward the cottages and Paugus Bay channel and is not captured or treated.

Several residents felt that the intersection was heavily congested for only a few weeks in summer and that improvements to signs would be adequate. However, another resident noted that on summer Saturdays there are long queues on NH 11B during the peak hours. He added it isn't uncommon for backups to occur also on US 3 south of the intersection and across the bridge, west of the intersection.

It was reiterated multiple times that driver confusion was the predominant problem. Some abutters to the intersection remarked that they witness "close calls" on a daily basis. Many local residents felt that the intersection functioned fine during off peak season since the local residents are familiar with the intersection. The owner of parcel 8 commented that while traveling through the intersection, whether he has the right of way or not, he will yield expecting that the opposing driver may be unfamiliar with the intersection and will not yield properly. Police Chief Moyer cited that in the last seven years, 90% of the accidents in the intersection have occurred due to failure to yield. The other 10% were mainly attributable to driver inattention. He added that due to the type of accidents (i.e., right angle collisions), several of the accidents have resulted in injuries. None of the accidents reported have involved pedestrians.

One resident commented that the stone wall on the south side of the eastbound US 3 approach limits sight distance. Patrons of Donna Jean's Diner (parcel 6) have very little sight distance looking left trying to exit the drive due to the wall.

Some residents were concerned with the absence of pedestrian crossings at the intersection. They felt that whatever type of treatment occurs at the intersection, pedestrian safety should be considered.

Mike Dugas described the existing conditions and how they would affect any proposed improvements. US 3 crosses Paugus Bay over a historic concrete arch bridge. Any widening of this bridge would be very costly (i.e., beyond the means of the project funding) and would constitute a historic impact. Impacts to surrounding properties would also be undesirable as they would delay and add to the cost of the project. Whatever form of treatment is chosen for the intersection, it must be implemented with the least possible impact to traffic and surroundings businesses.

M. Dugas introduced three potential treatments, emphasizing that they were conceptual and subject to change based on input received at this meeting and refinements to the design that arise during the project development. The three concepts consist of signaling the existing intersection configuration with minor road improvements, realigning US 3 and NH 11B to a "T" intersection with signals installed, and a roundabout concept. M. Dugas explained that the constriction imposed by the historic bridge on the turning lanes that could be provided at the signalized intersection would result in very poor traffic operations with either of the traffic signal alternatives. Eastbound queues would be expected to regularly extend beyond Lakeside Avenue. Traffic investigations indicate that the roundabout alternative would handle summer traffic most efficiently and with the shortest queues. It appears that the three alternatives could be

constructed almost entirely within the existing right of way, with minor property impacts. Under the roundabout alternative, the driveway to Donna Jean's Diner would connect directly to the circulating roadway of the roundabout.

Questions and comments

Comment: Some residents felt that the proposed improvements were unnecessary. They stated that if the failure of drivers to yield were the main issue at the intersection, then improving the signs would be sufficient for fixing the intersection. Many suggestions were brought forth. Some residents were supportive of installing flashing signals to warn drivers of the intersection. It was suggested to install a sign confirming that US 3 northbound movement has the right-of-way. Painting large arrows to indicate proper movements was suggested.

Question: It was asked if some form of temporary treatment could be installed until the project begins construction.

C. Green responded that he would look into possible interim treatments.

Question: A resident inquired how bicycles would negotiate the roundabout.

C. Green replied that there were two philosophies regarding bicycles. A bicycle can occupy the lane and proceed through the roundabout, as would a motor vehicle. This is considered safe because the roundabout slows vehicle speeds to approximately 15 mph. A bicyclist can also choose to operate as a pedestrian and use the pedestrian crossings and perimeter sidewalks to circumvent the roundabout.

Question: A resident asked if there had been any fatalities or serious injuries from intersection accidents.

C. Green responded in conjunction with Chief Moyer that no fatalities have occurred at the roundabout but there have been some serious injury accidents.

Concern: A resident cited that the cobblestones within the truck apron at the Meredith roundabout are a concern due to the noise they create.

C. Green commented that there are multiple treatments available for truck aprons including concrete or stamped and colored asphalt pavement.

Question: It was inquired when the project would begin construction.

C. Green responded that the time it will take to begin construction on this project is uncertain. There are many issues to negotiate ranging from environmental issues related to the proximity to the lake, the potential historical and archeological resources in the vicinity of the project, and possible property impacts.

Concern: A resident voiced concern regarding the many special events that occur in the Weirs. The resident questioned whether an officer could control a roundabout during these events. He felt that, with signals, the intersection could be better controlled with an officer.

Chief Moyer answered that he felt a roundabout would not compromise his ability to manage traffic during Motorcycle Week.

Concern: A resident was concerned whether there would be funding for this project few years down the road. The resident cited the reduction in scope for the Laconia 13895 project as time progressed and feared this project could be victim to similar reductions.

C. Green answered that funding for this project will be available.

Question: A resident asked about the cost of the proposed roundabout and how it would compare to the cost of the Meredith roundabout.

C. Green replied that the roundabouts are very different and thus it would be difficult to compare construction costs. For example, the Meredith roundabout project also reconstructed a substantial amount of roadway on the approaches to the roundabout. Cost figures for this roundabout will be computed as the design is refined.

Submitted by:

/S/ ON FILE

Steven J. Babalis
Preliminary Design Section

SJB

Noted by: M. Dugas

cc: W. Cass, M. Morrill, C. Green

MEETING ATTENDANCE

PROJECT Laconia: US 3 / NH 11B safety improvements study

LOCATION Weirs Beach Community Center

PROJECT NO. X-A000(884) 15691

Federal State

Name	Agency or Address	Comments
Rusty Bert Loret Paul DiBona Matt Lahen Don Richards Seth Creighton Shanna B Saunders BRUCE LUND Andrew Giovanni Anthony DiCalogero Cynthia J. DiCalogero Rich Kacharjian Pat O'Hearn Trianna Silvanig Janice O'Hearn Pat O'Hearn Howard Cole PAUL MOYNIHAN JOHN SPOONER	48 LUCEME AVE LACONIA 51 ENDICOTT ST E MUNSON - 22 Timber Lane Laconia Laconia Planning Dept 8 MILFORD, N.H. 03049-6539 E WESLEY COURT 24 Centenary Ave, Laconia 14 HAVEN AVE (PO BOX 5298) 14 HAVEN AVE 211 DAVIS AVE 1 Pindilton Beach Rd 10 Pindilton Beach Rd 15 Pindilton Beach Road 1 Pindilton Beach Rd 203 Endicott St E CITY OF LACONIA - DPW 9 Mickenly Rd 98 Dockham Shore Rd 164 Endicott St., E. #3 1152 WEINSB. # 12 45 E endicott st CITY OF LACONIA CITY COUNCELER #6 " " #5 1144 Weirs Blvd WB	hills about 700 ft City of Laconia, Assistant Planner favor better signage, not a roundabout Better signage, move enforcement of violators NEED SIGNALS 1ST Weirs Beach Need Traffic signals - THANKS! ALL ALTERNATIVES SEEM TO IMPROVE UPON CURRENT SAFETY RISKS. Blinking lights, yellow for N Red for S Support better signage and a blinking light only in favor of "T" and sidewalks LETS DUE 103 Yield ahead sign at smokehouse T-Inter section Something needs to be done - its a mess
Kimberly Burbank Cynthia Shepre PAUL J. COLLINS Justin Quinn Eileen Cabanel Armand Bolduc Bob Hamel Fred Clausen		

MEETING ATTENDANCE

PROJECT Laconia: US 3 / NH 11B safety improvements study

LOCATION Weirs Beach Community Center

PROJECT NO. X-A000(884) 15691

Federal State

Name	Agency or Address	Comments
JOSE DeMates	PO BOX 5706 Laconia 03247	Roundabout looks the best for safety + flow
Bob Surabian	29 Zebby rd Laconia	pedestrian crossing
Marge KERNS	180 LYNNWOOD Laconia	
Donna Coleman	203 Intervale Rd, Gilford	opposed to roundabout
Mike Seymour	10 Emerald Dr, Laconia	
GREG KNYTCH	5 PARSONAGE DR Laconia	
Brenda Baer	CITY Hall, Laconia	
Neal Boutin	107 Tower St	Don't change the character of the weirs
DANA F. QUINN	45 ENDICOTT ST E PO BOX 5882 Weirs Beach	UNDecided as of yet
MARK MORAN	NH DOT - D03	
Bill Lambert	NH DOT - Traffic	
DENIS BOURQUE	1184 WEIRS BLVD	ROUNDABOUT IS BEST OPTION