

Meeting Summary

Project: Lebanon 29612 – I-89 Exit 18 / NH Route 120 Improvements

Event: Project Advisory Committee Meeting (PAC) #3

Date and Time: Thursday, June 3, 2021, 4:00 – 5:30 PM

Location: Zoom Online Meeting Platform

1. Attendees (23)

PAC Members

Megan Butts, Interim Director, Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission
Van Chestnut, Executive Director/Member, Advance Transit/Upper Valley Transportation Management Association
David Duncan, Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center
Bethanny Fleishman, Transportation Program Manager, Vital Communities
Jennie Chamberlain, Chair, Hanover Bike Walk Committee
Bruce Garland, Lebanon Commissioner
Julia Griffin, Town Manager, Town of Hanover
Robert Houseman, Director of Planning and Zoning, Town of Hanover
Ernst Oidtmann, Chair, City of Lebanon Conservation Commission
Rebecca Owens, Associate Planner, City of Lebanon Planning
Perry Seale, Facilities Manager, Hypertherm
Colin Smith, Chair, City of Lebanon Pedestrian & Bicyclist Advisory Committee

Other Attendees

Alex Belenz, Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission

New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT)

Margarete Baldwin, Roadway Section Group Leader
Jason Ayotte, Project Manager
John Butler, Highway Design Engineer
Rebecca Martin, Senior Environmental Manager

Consultant Team

Roch Larochelle, Consultant Team Project Manager (HDR)
Keith Cota, Project Engineer (HDR)
Jeremy Jackson, Traffic Engineer (HDR)
Smith Siromaskul, Senior Traffic Engineer (HDR)
Susan Bemis, Environmental Resources (FHI Studio)
Marcy Miller, Public Involvement Manager (FHI Studio)
Laura Parete, Public Involvement Specialist (FHI Studio)

2. Presentation Summary

The New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) hosted the third PAC meeting for the Lebanon 29612 project on Thursday, June 3, 2021, from 4:00 – 5:30 PM via the Zoom Online Meeting platform. Ms. Marcy Miller, FHI Studio Public Involvement Manager, welcomed the PAC members. Ms. Miller introduced key project team members, reviewed the meeting agenda, and provided an overview of how to participate in the virtual PAC meeting. Ms. Miller stated that NHDOT Project Manager Donald Lyford retired, and Jason Ayotte is replacing him on the Lebanon 29612 Project for the NHDOT.

Ms. Miller provided an update on project progress since the last PAC Meeting. She explained that environmental data collection efforts continued, the base traffic model had been refined, operational deficiencies had been reviewed, PAC comments were collected, and the project team revised the Purpose and Need Statement and the Matrix screening categories. Ms. Miller asked if the PAC had questions or comments. There were no questions from the PAC.

Mr. Roch Larochelle, HDR Consultant Team Project Manager, provided an update on the Purpose and Need Statement. He shared the revised Purpose and Need Statement, and the revised Goals and Objectives, which reflected feedback from PAC members. Mr. Larochelle asked if the PAC had questions or comments. There were no questions from the PAC.

Mr. Larochelle gave an overview of the high-level corridor observations. Mr. Smith Siromaskul, of HDR, explained a graphic that depicted pre-Covid traffic conditions and the observed level of congestion for both AM and PM peak periods. Additionally, Mr. Siromaskul provided an overview of possible intersection types that may be considered by the Team as we get into an analysis of feasible alternatives for the overall corridor noting that if roundabouts were to be considered, the Hanover Street intersection would likely work with a single lane while Etna and Heater Roads would likely each require three lanes on NH 120 to pass the 2044 traffic. Three lane roundabouts are considered to be too big to be practical; therefore, roundabouts do not appear to be a viable solution at the Heater Road and Etna Road intersections. Mr. Siromaskul explained several different types of innovative intersection and interchange designs that could be considered, such as Restricted Crossing U-turn (RCUT), Michigan Left Turn, Continuous Flow Intersection (CFI), Diverging Diamond Interchange (DDI), and Single Point Urban Interchange (SPUI). Mr. Larochelle asked if the PAC had questions or comments. Questions and comments are summarized in Section 3 of this meeting summary.

Mr. Larochelle shared the updated and populated Initial Alternatives Screening Matrix. He explained that the project team used the feedback from the PAC Meeting #2 as well as feedback from the Regional Planning Commission to update the Screening Matrix. Mr. Larochelle then reviewed each option/alternative on the matrix seeking concurrence on which should move forward to Level 2 Screening. PAC comments about the Initial Alternatives Screening Matrix are summarized in Section 3 of this meeting summary. He next explained that after the review at tonight's PAC, the project team will have a menu of options that will be consolidated and included for further evaluation in the next part of the screening process.

Mr. Larochelle concluded the formal presentation portion of the meeting by explaining the next steps. He said that the project team will consolidate and develop the alternatives that will progress to the level 2 screening phase. Additionally, pedestrian and bicycle data collection will continue, and wetland

mapping will be conducted. A Public Information Meeting is anticipated in Summer / Fall 2021 and the next PAC Meeting is anticipated in Fall 2021.

3. Questions and Comments

Questions

Question (Q) – Do you see examples of pedestrian non-compliance with cutting across the roadway when they are directed off their “desired path?”

Answer (A) – Just like drivers, pedestrians will likely take the path of least distance. In off-peak hours, there is no barrier that would stop pedestrians from cutting across the roadway. During peak hours, the heavy traffic flow would likely defer non-compliance crossing of the roadway.

Q – Would you consider keeping the traffic above ground and people and bikes in tunnels underground at the major intersections?

A – When you look at an at-grade situation, if you ask pedestrians to travel the extra distance and go over a bridge or through a tunnel it can lead to a lot of non-compliant crossings. While pedestrian grade separation is an option, it might not be progressed once we start evaluating costs and the ped/bike demand.

Q – Do you expect to pave over the rest of Hanover and Lebanon in the next twenty years?

A – There are significant traffic volumes in this area today that need to be addressed as part of the project. The Project Team is evaluating roadway and other alternative solutions to relieve traffic within the Rte. 120 corridor.

Q – Why is the plan to add more lane capacity rather than demand management?

A – The project team recognizes that there are other non-structural approaches to consider other than simply adding pavement. The team will evaluate and consider these other options, but the ability to reduce traffic volumes will not allow that to be the sole solution for this corridor. In addition, relying on mode shift to walking and bicycling does not address those who are not in the physical condition to do so, either from a fitness or capability standpoint.

Q – Why are other modes of transportation, such as transit, bike, or pedestrian options not considered in reducing traffic congestion?

A – The study will look holistically at traffic/demand management that includes increased use of bikes and walking. Addressing congestion issues today on the roads will provide safer means for vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists.

Q – Will a park-and-ride be a necessary component of analyzing potential Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Service.

A – A Park and Ride is not currently being considered at Exit 18 as part of the project. An intermodal hub was being considered in this area approximately 10 years ago, but it did not achieve statewide priority for funding to move forward. A more recent [Statewide Strategic Transit Assessment Study](#), that included a [Park & Ride component](#), did not identify the Upper Valley region as a high priority area for future Park and Ride facility needs.

Q – Will designated transit lanes will be considered?

Lebanon 29612 Project (I-89 Exit 18 / NH 120 Improvements)

A - Priority access for transit has been tested in the past with limited success and will likely result in loss of traffic efficient movements and cause additional traffic delays due to the loss of capacity. In addition, a designated transit lane is typically not considered on corridors with large bus headways.

General Comments

- We may have different traffic patterns. We may need a more preventative train of thought instead of throwing more money at roads and pavement.
- Experience shows that if a road is part of a larger transportation network within a region, peak-hour congestion cannot be eliminated for long on a congested road by expanding that road's capacity.
- The Project Team offered to set up a meeting with interested PAC members to discuss vehicular congestion and potential bike, pedestrian, transit, and other solutions.
- Consider shifting all bicycle and pedestrian traffic to the existing bicycle/foot bridge and Mount Support Road. This system already exists and would prevent expanding Route 120.
- An issue we are seeing is there is somewhat constrained development in the NH 120 corridor, but still a lot of permitted growth, such as DHMC growth, etc.
- Even in an urban environment, vehicle miles traveled increase if lane miles are added.

Alternatives Screening Matrix Comments

The comments below are regarding the Alternatives Screening Matrix.

NH 120 Corridor Wide Option/Alternative

- A PAC member said that people need to be connected to goods, services, destinations, including Centerra, the pharmacy, etc.
- What is the thought process for why a multi-use path on the east side, as opposed to the west side, of route 120 might be better? Considerations for an eastern preference were offered:
 - It would be away from the Hanover Street pedestrian bridge.
 - Mount Support is on the west.
 - From Hanover, the west side is preferred.
- A PAC member said that if there were 6-lanes of traffic, pedestrian crossings, bridges, etc. would be more important. Presumably, it would be more difficult to get across more lanes of traffic as a pedestrian.
- Another PAC member agreed that expanding lanes could cause enough pedestrian delay and prevent adequate (single-stage) crossing. could make it unsafe to travel to Lebanon High School on foot or bike.

NH 120/ Hanover St. Option/Alternative

- A PAC member suggested that the Hanover Street Bridge be reconnected to vehicular traffic.
 - The project team mentioned that the traffic model will evaluate the effect on the overall traffic network resulting with full vehicular access for Hanover Street.
- A PAC member commented that they do not like the option that the City of Lebanon has suggested at the Hanover Street and Route 120 intersection, but do like the idea of a traffic signal at the intersection that would allow cyclists to turn left onto Hanover Street. This would protect cyclists from free-flowing traffic. The PAC member suggested that this be considered as an additional alternative.

Lebanon 29612 Project (I-89 Exit 18 / NH 120 Improvements)

NH 120/ Exit 18 Interchange Option/Alternative

- No comments were offered.

NH 120/Evans Dr Option/Alternative

- No comments were offered.

NH 120/Heater Rd Option/Alternative

- A PAC member said that improvements here would only work in conjunction with other improvements as noted. Old Etna Road cannot handle all the capacity, so combining alternatives is good.
- A PAC member said that if the build option adds a lane for a right turn on Heater Rd., please consider adding islands or crossing time to allow for pedestrians to travel across the road.

NH 120/Etna Rd Option/Alternative

- No comments were offered.

Transit/TDM Related

- A PAC member asked if designated transit lanes will be considered. See Question & Answer above.
- A PAC Member suggested that ride sharing be encouraged and rewarded.
- A PAC member asked if a park-and-ride would be a necessary component of analyzing potential BRT Service. See Question & Answer above.

Other Alternatives/Outside Project Limits

- A PAC member from the City of Lebanon said that the Lahaye (shared use) Path is happening and will soon be built.