

Lebanon 29612 I-89 Exit 18/NH Route 120 Draft Public Involvement Plan

I. INTRODUCTION

The Lebanon 29612 – NH Route 120 from Hanover Street to Etna Road Project encompasses approximately 1.1 miles of NH Route 120, including the I-89 Exit 18 interchange and short segments of the adjacent local road network, to address traffic deficiencies during the peak hour. Some of the existing highway features and conditions to be aware of include the following:

- I-89 Exit 18 was originally constructed in 1967, and substantially improved in 1999 in conjunction with the construction of the Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center.
- The segment of NH Route 120 to be improved consists of multiple lanes with signalized intersections at the interchange ramps, Heater Road, and Etna Road.
- The study area is subject to very high peak period traffic, which leads to long queues on the interchange off-ramps in the AM peak hour and along NH Route 120 in the PM peak hour. Morning and afternoon peak hour traffic is highly directional creating substantial user delays and safety issues.
- Several incremental roadway improvements have been made in recent years within the study area to mitigate traffic impacts from private developments. Most recently including implementing adaptive signal control, addition of a northbound auxiliary lane between Heater Road and Etna Road, and the City, through development mitigation, has improved pedestrian and bicycle accommodations within the corridor.

The objective of the project is to develop an alternative that will improve the safety and mobility of the I-89 Exit 18 interchange and NH Route 120 corridor for all users. The purpose of this first phase of the project is to deliver an alternative development process that will:

- Research, collect, and analyze the existing traffic and geometric conditions
- Develop and evaluate improvement alternatives
- Engage the community in the development of alternatives
- Improve safety and mobility
- Enhance pedestrian and bike mobility

The City of Lebanon, in cooperation with the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission and other regional stakeholders, regularly convene a Route 120 Corridor Workgroup to discuss issues concerning multi-modal mobility and safety along the NH Route 120 corridor within both Lebanon and Hanover. As the development of improvement alternatives proceeds, it will be vital to work closely with this group as well as all other appropriate public or private stakeholders to gain consensus on design decisions.

This Public Involvement Plan (PIP) describes how the Project Team will reach out to the public at various points throughout the project process via a Project Advisory Committee, newsletters, public

meetings, e-bulletins, a project page on the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NH DOT) website and other forms of outreach, as appropriate.

The PIP outlines how the Project Team will inform and seek input from the communities, stakeholders, and the traveling public. Many approaches will be used to let people know what is happening throughout the project. There will be numerous opportunities for discussion and comment. Public opinion and comments will be well-documented and will be duly considered in the development of study recommendations.

II. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

NHDOT seeks to implement a comprehensive and inclusive public and stakeholder outreach program with the objective of seeking the best possible solution for the Lebanon Project, which meets the project objectives and is embraced by stakeholders. To that end, the PIP has been developed to support public engagement in accordance with the following guiding principles:

Accessible - The public receives sufficient notice of public meetings, which are held at a convenient time, place or on a virtual platform, and are accessible to all. The public is given time to review project-related materials in advance of meetings. Up-to-date project information is shared on the project website in an accessible format.

Responsive - Public questions and inquiries will be answered in a timely manner.

Transparent - The project planning process will be clear and understandable to the public. The Project Team will establish an open and honest dialogue with project stakeholders that shares pertinent information used to inform project decisions and direction. In addition, technical information and regulatory procedures will be explained in terms that are clear and understandable to help stakeholders understand the planning, regulatory and design processes.

Educational - Stakeholders shall have appropriate information presented to them. Project information, updates and news will be consistently communicated with the public through the project website, e-communications, newsletters, and local media outlets. Results of public engagement activities and how feedback was considered in the project will also be shared.

III. COMPLIANCE

Public projects such as the Lebanon 29612 I-89 Exit 18/NH Route 120 Project are subject to regulatory requirements. Several federal and state statutes or guidance documents call for certain outreach and coordination measures to be taken to ensure that adequate public and regulatory agency input is incorporated into the project.

This project will comply with:

- Statewide and Metropolitan Planning. 23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Parts 450 and 500 and 49 CFR Part 613, February 14, 2007;
- Environmental Impact and Related Procedures and Section 4(f). 23 CFR Parts 771 and 774, October 16, 2001; 40 CFR 1506.6 and Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. 552);
- Protection of Historic Properties. 36 CFR Part 800;
- Air Quality Conformity. 40 CFR Part 51, November 24, 1993;
- Management and Monitoring Systems. 23 CFR 500, December 1, 1993;
- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964;
- Environmental Justice Executive Order 12898, US Department of Transportation Order 5610.2(a); and
- FHWA Work Zone Safety and Mobility Rule 23 CFR 630 subpart J.

The federal regulations listed above require:

- Early and continuing public involvement opportunities during all stages of the planning and programming process;
- Timely information about transportation issues and processes to the community affected by transportation plans, programs and projects;
- Reasonable public access to information used in the development of the plans and projects;
- Adequate public notice of public involvement activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points;
- A process for demonstrating explicit consideration and response to public input;
- A process for seeking out and considering the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households; and
- Periodic review of the effectiveness of the public involvement process.

A Continuous and Evolving Process

This PIP is a living document. The plan will be regularly revisited, and refinements made throughout the course of the project, as outreach needs evolve. This will allow for flexibility so that the public involvement process can be “nimble,” allowing the Project Team to respond appropriately and efficiently to project needs as they evolve. This element is especially pertinent given the on-going COVID-19 pandemic and the unknowns surrounding how public outreach strategies will need to adapt over the course of the project.

IV. ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS

The PIP includes many methods to inform and involve the public and stakeholders in a meaningful way. Project information will be made accessible to the public as well as Project Team members, who share information in a complete and understandable manner and record and respond to comments and concerns. Key initial elements in the PIP include:

Stakeholder Outreach Kick Off Meetings

Stakeholder Outreach Kick Off Meetings (2) are anticipated to collect information and present the project process to the local communities. The meetings will be held in the City of Lebanon and Town of Hanover to solicit input from elected officials and citizens. Preparation of materials to facilitate the “blank sheet” meeting are included in this task. The Project Team will consider hosting meetings virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Project Advisory Committee (PAC) (Working Group) Meetings

A Project Advisory Committee will be established for this project in collaboration with NHDOT and the Project Team to review and discuss alternatives and to incorporate local input into important design decisions. Members of this committee include representatives of the Route 120 Working Group as well as other constituencies not previously involved in Route 120 planning efforts. The intent of the newly constituted PAC is to build upon the efforts/history of the Route 120 Working Group while broadening the scope of citizen representation in the planning effort.

The primary responsibility of the PAC is to participate in the overall project process, provide and disseminate information, review and comment on draft documents and Section 106-related issues and address specific environmental, social and economic issues associated with the development of project recommendations. The Project Team will provide PAC members a reasonable opportunity to review materials in advance of committee meetings. All project information will be sent via e-mail or by hard copy if email is unavailable. It is anticipated that the PAC will meet up to five (5) times during this project. The Project Team will consider hosting meetings virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

PAC members will represent the following organizations or constituencies:

- Top officials from the Towns of Lebanon and Hanover or designee
- A representative from the Lebanon and Hanover Planning Commissions
- A representative from the Lebanon and Hanover Conservation Commissions
- A representative from Greater Lebanon Chamber of Commerce
- A representative from Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission
- A representative from Lebanon/Hanover Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee
- A representative from Lebanon School District
- A representative from Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center
- A representative from Advance Transit
- A representative from Vital Communities
- A representative from Upper Valley Transportation Management Association

Others as identified, including through Environmental Justice outreach, and approved by NHDOT Public Information Meetings

The purpose of these meetings is to obtain input from the public regarding the development of this project and its recommendations. These meetings will be planned to coordinate public participation in the NEPA process (including Section 106 requirements), both for public scoping and review of the

Categorical Exclusion and Section 4(f) Evaluation, as applicable. Public Information Meetings will be general "open house" style with brief presentations.

The Project Team will use the Open House portion of the meeting to educate the public about key technical issues surrounding the project. It is anticipated that there will be four (4) Public Information Meetings held at key project milestones. The Project Team will consider hosting meetings virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Public Hearing

The Project Team will conduct one (1) Public Hearing if the project has right-of-way impacts.

Preparation and Documentation of Meetings

The Project Team will be responsible for the preparation of all meeting presentations and provide a written summary of all Kickoff, Public Advisory Committee, and Public Information Meetings.

E-Bulletins & Flyers

The Project Team will produce up to four (4) e-bulletins annually to inform the public about project developments and special topics. The e-bulletin communications will be short and designed for electronic formatting.

In addition to posting on the NHDOT project website, the e-bulletins will be sent to the Towns, Medical Center and local employers, Dartmouth College, Upper Valley List Serve (managed by Vital Communities) and other civic-focused Facebook and social media networks for distribution.

Contact List

The Project Team will maintain a mailing list of interested parties throughout the project. The mailing list of interested parties includes, but is not limited to:

- Legislators from US Congress, Executive Council, State Representative and Senate
- Individuals or organizations that have indicated an interest in this project
- Section 106 Consulting Parties
- Identified Title VI entities
- PAC Members
- Stakeholders
- Media
- Abutters
- Local municipal officials
- Others

Public Survey

The Project Team will develop one (1) survey through Survey Monkey to obtain public input to inform the development of potential alternatives. This survey will gather information about public perception of existing conditions, needs and opportunities.

Interactive Online Mapping Tool

The Project Team will develop an interactive online map of the project area, which the public can post notes on to detail specific areas of concern and suggest desired improvements. Interactive online mapping tools are useful as they provide the Project Team with granular information about existing conditions, public sentiment, and perceived needs. This information helps the Team develop presentation materials that address local concerns.

Media Relations

The Project Team will provide materials to NHDOT's communications staff to assist the Department with advertising public meetings through radio and TV outlets that cover the Upper Valley area.

The Project Team will provide a draft media advisory to NHDOT for two (2) public information meetings with pertinent information on the date, time, location and purpose of the public meetings and project status. Outreach to media outlets will occur within two weeks in advance of two (2) public meetings. NHDOT will be responsible for initiating all media contact.

Website

The Project Team will provide NHDOT relevant project information in electronically formatted files for the agency to post in the "Project Center" section "Project Specific Information" subsection of the NHDOT website - <http://www.nh.gov/dot/projects/index.htm>. Information provided may include notices of upcoming public meetings, pop-up meetings, presentations, newsletters, project reports and contact information on how to communicate with the Project Team.

In addition, the Consultant will provide information about the project for posting on the City of Lebanon and Town of Hanover website.

Promotional & Educational Materials & Development

A successful solution to the traffic operations may include alternative interchange and intersection designs, like the Diverging Diamond Interchange (DDI) proposed in the previous design workshops. The team will assist and develop informational or promotional materials to educate the public on the design of the alternative interchange, if selected, and how to navigate through the newer intersections for all modes of transportation.

Other Communication Activities

Throughout the course of the project, miscellaneous communication activities will occur with members of the public, especially during the periods leading up to and following public meetings. A sampling of communication tasks we anticipate are:

- Coordination with the City of Lebanon and the Town of Hanover to send out e-alerts in advance of upcoming meetings
- Design and mailing of flyers to community gathering locations
- Development and maintenance of a database of all comments received
- Directly respond to comments or coordinate a response from another member of the study team
- Track all comments and responses within database
- Provide reports of comments for NHDOT within the monthly progress report