



Public Information Meeting Minutes

Project: Lyme, NH - Thetford, VT 14460
Rehabilitation of Bridge over the Connecticut River

Date/Time: July 23, 2014 at 7 PM

Location: Lyme Town Office Building, Lyme, NH

Participants: Bob Landry, Bob Juliano and Christine Perron of NHDOT
George Bogue, Gerard Fortin and Mike Leach of Stantec

Attendees: See attached sign-in sheet

SUMMARY OF MEETING MINUTES:

Bob Landry introduced himself and began meeting with the introduction of other NHDOT staff (Bob Juliano and Christine Perron) and the Stantec staff (George Bogue, Jerry Fortin and Mike Leach) present. Bob continued and noted that the project meeting was to present the NHDOT bridge project, to obtain public input on the project and to understand the community and surrounding area that use the bridge and the community resources and concerns relative to the bridge and proposed rehabilitation. He noted the bridge is red-listed and the project is on the updated NHDOT 10-year plan for construction in spring 2022 and completion in fall 2023.

Bob L. noted that Stantec had done a detailed bridge inspection last fall and as a result of the inspection and load rating analysis report, the bridge was restricted to the present one lane traffic and a 15 ton load limit. The proposed repairs to the bridge would occur this fall to restore the two lanes. A presentation has been prepared that may address most of questions of the project.

Bob Juliano began the power point presentation related to the bridge portion of the project that included the corrosion of the bridge stringers and floor beams. Photographs of some deteriorated portions of the bridge were presented. The work would require closure of the bridge during rehabilitation and construction that would take 2 construction seasons with one to rehabilitate the bridge structure and the second one to paint the bridge. The rehabilitation work would also require repair or replacement of the bridge pier in the river. Photographs of some deteriorated portions of the pier were presented. One of the options considered for the pier replacement was to install drilled shafts adjacent to the existing pier and remove the existing pier and details were presented. The bridge would be supported on a beam between the shafts as shown in the two details.

Christine Perron presented the NEPA/historical portion of the presentation. Environmental concerns include dwarf wedge mussels in river that would need to be relocated if found after a scuba study. The bridge is a historic resource that is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. As part of the Section 106/Historical process, interested parties such as Heritage Commission, Historic Commissions and Town officials can be involved with the process and a Consulting Party and she had pamphlets and

July 23, 2014

Lyme, NH – Thetford VT 14460

Page 2 of 5

information that detailed the Consulting Party process for those that are interested. She would be available after to answer any questions. Regarding permitting, she noted the project is located along a NH Designated River. The project will require a wetland permit from NHDES and possibly the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources. The project would also require permit from the US Army Corps of Engineers. As the project proceeds, the Department would coordinate with the various agencies to avoid and minimize impacts to the resources in the project area.

Upon conclusion of the power point presentation, Bob L. opened the meeting to questions.

Resident Richard Pond asked about the schedule and if the bridge would be fixed this fall. Bob L. responded that repairs to the bridge would occur this fall to return the bridge to 2 lanes, but the rehabilitation would not occur until 2022 and 2023. It was asked if the 15 ton load limit would be removed after the repair was completed. Bob L. stated he would not know yet until the repairs were completed, but not likely at this time. It was asked if the bridge would be closed during the repairs. Bob L. noted it would have to be since the bridge is too narrow to place equipment to do the work and allow traffic.

Nate Miller of the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission spoke about the letter sent to NHDOT Commissioner, Clement, requesting the project timeline be advanced and that lower priority projects in the Planning Commission's view be delayed so the work on the Lyme -Thetford Bridge could be conducted sooner. He noted some success with similar requests. He suggested that with the concession to delay some of the lower priority projects, it would allow funds to become available sooner to do this project. It was asked when the letter was sent and he noted July 9th 2014. He noted that the Department is likely reviewing the letter and they have not received a response at this time.

Bob L. noted that the plan at this time was to have the project design completed and scheduled for bidding in 2018 without funding constraints. Under the updated 10-year plan, the project is slated for construction in 2022 and 2023. The fastest the project could be ready at this time is still 2018, but if funding is not available, then the project will be shelved until the funds are available.

Resident Avend Tenser has a farm 2 miles south of the bridge and uses the bridge every day and probably crosses 100 times. He has farm trucks that are 25 tons when full that need to cross over the bridge. He indicated that alternates based upon using the detours are not feasible especially with a tractor that does 15 MPH. He has tractors with equipment that are wider than a single lane and has concerns when crossing. Bob expressed concern that the 25 ton trucks may, at best, only use the center of the bridge due to the deteriorated nature of the outside stringers (essentially then a one lane bridge). Mr. Tenser asked if there could be any special signs placed warning about tractors and farm equipment. He asked about getting a special plate or something to use the bridge with the weight restrictions and farming equipment. Bob L. noted that they want to know more about the specific details of the 25 ton trucks as the loading would be checked to verify if they could use the bridge.

A resident stated that he believes all the funding currently goes to I-93, and that any new tax increase would also and that is why there are no funds available to repair the bridge. Bob L. noted that was not true and that only a small portion of the funding goes to I-93. He noted that the Bridge Bureau has several projects that are being funded. He did not have the numbers with him but he could make the numbers available to show that the I-93 project takes only a small portion of the funding and that other projects are being funded.

It was asked when the repairs would be done. Bob L. noted that the repairs would be done this fall when a crew becomes available. He noted that after the repairs are completed, the weight restriction may still be in effect. He would know more after the work was completed.

Rita Seto, a representative for the Two Rivers (Vermont) Regional Planning Commission stated that they were also in support of moving up the bridge schedule.

Bob L. asked if school buses use the bridge. This was confirmed and it was stated that emergency responders and Mutual Aid also uses the bridge. It was stated that the closure would have a significant impact on the schools and emergency responders and Mutual Aid.

It was stated that there is not gravel in Lyme. The gravel the Town uses comes from Thetford and the bridge is needed for access. The Town has currently stockpiled gravel.

A resident noted that another bridge previously existed 4 miles to the north and could possibly be a site for a temporary bridge. Bob L. indicated that the abutments are now on private property and therefore this option is not likely.

It was asked about a temporary bridge during construction. Bob L. noted that there was no option for a temporary bridge. This project will be constructed within the right of way. The only issue is access to the pier to conduct repairs or replacement. There is no room to install a temporary bridge in this location since three sides are occupied by existing dwellings. Under the project, there would only be minor approach work beyond the bridge to match to the existing grades. Guardrails are outdated and would be upgraded and replaced and the Vermont side guardrails would be updated too. Some minor approach work is anticipated, and it would depend on the final elevation of the bridge deck.

Resident Gillian Tyler –owner of the red “toll house”, adjacent to the bridge in New Hampshire, was glad that the improvements would not impact the historic toll house. She was also glad that the project was to preserve the bridge.

A representative of the Lyme Heritage Commission was glad the project was to save the bridge and that they wanted to be involved in the 106 process.

It was stated the Lyme historians are in support of the project.

It was asked what color the bridge would be. Bob L. noted that DOT would work with the Town of Lyme on the color and explained that on another bridge project, the Town wanted the original color from 1932 that was a light green, and after they began painting the bridge, the Town realized the color was not what was expected. The color the Town wanted was a color from 1960 (a dark green). A Thetford VT selectman stated that the Town of Thetford would defer picking the color of the bridge to the Town of Lyme and the State.

Bob L. noted that this is a NH project since 90% of the bridge was in New Hampshire. He noted that the State Line was identified by a US Supreme Court Decree based upon the location from 1936.

It was asked if a pedestrian walkway could be added to the project. Bob L. noted that the bridge could not support the additional load.

It was asked if the project could be completed sooner, and if it was possible to remove and replace the bridge. Bob L. noted that if the project was a replacement, then it would be wider and may create issues with the abutting properties. He noted there are potential historic issues if abutting properties are impacted and replacement of the bridge would be costly. The project is a rehabilitation project. This bridge replacement option will be one of the alternates in the NEPA review process.

It was noted that environmental studies related to the dwarf wedge mussel in the area may have already been completed by TransCanada for FERC relicensing of the two dams along the river. This information may be available for the bridge project.

Bob L. asked about the river usage. The response was the river is used for recreational purposes.

Bob L. noted that to conduct the repairs to the pier, it would require a barge and some staging that would encompass a good portion of the center of the river. The work would require obtaining a Coast Guard permit for the construction. Bob noted one of the options shown would be to repair the outside of the pier, but this would likely require some additional rehabilitation and maintenance work in later years, perhaps in 20 years. The option cost shown in the presentation are capital cost and don't address future maintenance.

It was asked about the rate of degradation for the bridge. Bob L. noted that they vary and that there is no good answer.

It was asked as to the extent north and south of the bridge the area of historic review would occur. Christine P noted that it would depend on the project aspects. If, for example, the bridge was replaced to be something else, the buildings that have a view shed of the pier could be considered in the area of potential effect since that would be an effect to the properties. She noted that since this project was a rehabilitation project, the area of potential effect would likely be much smaller, so resources would be investigated within a much smaller footprint.

Bob L. noted that the NHDOT website will have the project information and be updated to include the power point presentation and meeting minutes.

Bob L. stated that some of the issues with the pier construction are because the water depth at 15 feet makes construction difficult. It was stated that the downstream dam was constructed in 1948, just after World War II and the water level was raised by 10 feet. The water level at the time of bridge construction in 1936 was lower and the pier construction would likely have been done with cofferdams.

It was asked how NHDOT let the bridge condition get so bad. Bob L. did not have an answer, but that maintenance is conducted based upon available resources and funding. Bob noted that NHDOT had 26 bridge maintenance crews, but through attrition and limited resources there are currently only 13 crews.

It was asked about the proposed replacement of the pier and the costs. Bob L. noted that the costs presented were for construction and not maintenance. Bob L. noted the design alternates presented show a shelf on the pier, and there is concern with people getting out on the pier. It was suggested that a rendering of the proposed pier options be provided. The rendering would provide a better understanding of the proposed pier view and intent.

It was noted that the pier for the North Thetford Bridge has never been removed. It was noted that the North Thetford Bridge closure had a significant impact to the vibrant northern area. The bridge was removed in the 1970's and the area suffered economically. It was asked if the NHDOT still owns the bridge abutments. Bob L. noted that the location was likely an easement and that once the bridge was removed; the land reverted back to the abutters.

A candidate for the NH House of Representatives noted that the state was known for its fiscal restraint. He noted that the funding issues are political choices. It was suggested by another participant that they were not here for politics.

Bob noted that the Departments' Bureau of Traffic would look into advance warning signs for the bridge for farm equipment and the 25 ton farm trucks.

The meeting ended at approximately 8 PM.

These minutes are our attempt to summarize the discussions held during this meeting as accurately as possible. If there are any items discussed herein that are misrepresented in any way, please contact Michael Leach (Stantec – michael.leach@stantec.com) within ten working days. In the absence of any corrections or clarifications, it will be understood that these minutes accurately summarize the meeting discussions.

23 July 2014

Re: Lyme-East Thetford Bridge

To the Representative of the New Hampshire Department of Transportation and any other person(s) concerned:

Please consider my thoughts about the Bridge at the Lyme-East Thetford crossing that is to be rebuilt by 2022.

I'm sure I'll echo others on both sides, who hope that the rebuilt Bridge will:

- * include slightly wider lanes**
- * include sidewalk space, at least on one side**
- * allow people between the supports and the sidewalk, as the Orford-Fairlee Bridge does, so that people can safely sketch or take photos from on the bridge without being in the way of pedestrians and motorists.**
- * be built to last through at least another century that will probably weather several more mega-storms.**
- * come to our part of the River sooner than 2022!**

As a Vermonter who uses the Bridge several times a week, year-round, I see these needs as fairly universal to most users of the Bridge, including visitors from away.

**Thanks for considering these requests.
Susan Rump
Thetford Center, VT**

Attendance

Lyme, NH - Theford, VT 14460 - Public Informational Meeting

Lyme Town Office Building -- July 23, 2014

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Rita Seto	Two Rivers-Orlauguechee RPC	802 457-3188	rseto@trorc.org
JESSICA EATON	THEFORD SELECT BOARD	802-333-9491	J.EATON@THEFORDVILLAGOV.VT.US
Gillian Taylor	OWNER OF THE LYME "TOLL HOUSE" SIDE	802-333-9574	94 PASSUM.PSIC.PT. Fairlee, VT 05045
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Mike Jean Smith		795-3166	

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Lyme Town Office Building --- July 23, 2014

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