

**New Castle-Rye Bridge Project
Summary of Meeting
Public Information Meeting
January 30, 2014
6:30 – 8:15 p.m.**

The second Public Information Meeting for the New Castle-Rye Bridge Project was held on Thursday, January 30th, 2014 in The Common (Recreation Center) in New Castle, NH. Approximately 55 members of the public attended. Bob Landry with NHDOT opened the meeting. A brief presentation was then provided on the status of the project and attendees were encouraged to ask questions.

James Murphy, a Project Manager with HDR, reviewed the progress to date on the project. He shared that the Raised Profile and Off-Alignment Alternatives have been formally eliminated, and the two remaining alternatives, Major Rehabilitation and Replacement with a Bascule Structure, have been evaluated in greater detail over the last several months. Several key concerns have been expressed throughout the public process including the importance of minimizing the duration of the bridge closure, the benefits of a solid surface deck on the bridge, the benefits of moving the sidewalk to the east side of the span, and the fact that a bascule is the preferred type of movable bridge.

Daniel Hageman, an Environmental Scientist with FHI, then updated the public on the natural resources review to date. The initial review identified wetlands and threatened and endangered species in the vicinity of the bridge. A wetland delineation was undertaken in 2013 and is being finalized. In November 2013, the project team also conducted an eelgrass survey, documenting eelgrass southeast of the bridge. Eelgrass is habitat for several aquatic species. The project team has defined a tentative November 15th – March 15th window for in-water work for bridge construction.

Stephanie Dyer-Carroll, a Planner and Cultural Resources Specialist with FHI, provided an update on the cultural resources review to date. She indicated that the project team met with the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources (NHDHR) in November 2013. One key point of discussion was a 1994 Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) prepared for the replacement of the Scammell Bridge. In the Scammell MOA, the NHDOT and NHDHR committed to maintaining the New Castle-Rye Bridge, only replacing it under exceptional circumstances such as natural disaster. However, the MOA was not consistent with a 1994 letter from NHDOT Commissioner O’Leary that indicated excessive costs or environmental impacts as potential reasons for replacement.

Ms. Dyer-Carroll stated that a Phase 1A Archaeological Study had been completed. The study identified the 1874 Bridge Abutments as an archaeological site that is potentially eligible for the National Register. The abutments lie within the Area of Potential Effect, but would not be impacted by either the Major Rehabilitation or Replacement with Bascule Alternatives.

James Murphy then outlined the extensive maintenance and repairs that have been completed on the bridge since 1994. This includes the rehabilitation of the piers, the repainting of the structure, repairs to the machinery and electrical systems, and repairs to the beams and bridge deck.

Mr. Murphy then went on to compare the two alternatives. He stated that the Major Rehabilitation Alternative would require the replacement of virtually all of the bridge’s original fabric, resulting in a replica bridge. Major Rehabilitation would require a longer closure (approximately 5 months) and would

not resolve pedestrian and bicycle safety concerns. This alternative would impact the approaches to the bridge and would require one-way travel on the bridge for up to five weeks. It would not impact private properties. While it would require in-water work, it would also seek to minimize impacts to natural resources. The cost of this alternative would be \$15.3 million, with lifetime costs in the order of \$41.6 million over 75 years (with current day expenditure). The Major Rehabilitation Alternative would have a shorter life-span (35-40 years). Although it adheres to the Scammell MOA as much as possible, it would likely result in an Adverse Effect under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

The Replacement Alternative would require a shorter closure (3 months) and would provide flexibility in the construction season to limit impacts to the public. It would improve pedestrian and bicycle safety and would not include a guardrail, a potential hazard for vehicles. The Replacement Alternative would cost in the order of \$15.8 million, with lifetime costs in the order of \$24.3 million (with current day expenditure). It has a longer life span (75 years). Like the Major Rehabilitation Alternative, the Replacement Alternative would require one-way travel on the bridge for up to five weeks, it would not impact private properties, it would require in-water work, and it would also seek to minimize impacts to natural resources. This alternative would result in an Adverse Effect under Section 106.

Mr. Murphy said that the Replacement Alternative has been recommended by the project team due to a number of key factors. It would require a shorter closure time, lower life cycle costs, and a longer service life. The Replacement Alternative would allow for a wider shoulder and a sidewalk on the east side of the bridge in order to improve pedestrian safety. In addition, it would allow for a closed deck system. Mr. Murphy showed both conceptual renderings and a flyover of the Replacement Alternative.

Mr. Murphy ended the presentation by outlining next steps. These include a coordination meeting with NHDHR in February, the identification of mitigation measures to address the loss of the bridge, and potential revisions to the 1994 Scammell MOA. He indicated that the 30% Design Submission is due to be complete in July and that construction will begin in 2018.

Questions were posed throughout the meeting and are outlined below. The first questions are those asked by the public. The additional question was asked by NHDOT.

Public Questions:

Q. How do you prevent the cables on the MSE walls from rusting?

A. The soil anchors are designed to be placed underground and thus would not rust.

Q. Would the bascule section have an open grate?

A. Under the Replacement Alternative, the entire bridge would have a solid surface.

Q. Could the bike lanes be wider?

A. The design –has four-foot lanes. Widening them further could potentially impact private property.

Q. How many times a year is the bridge opened?

A. Approximately 8 times per year, including openings for the Coast Guard and for private sailboats.

Q. How will the project be funded?

A. The project will be constructed entirely with Federal funds.

Q. Why is a lift bridge being pursued?

A. Coast Guard vessels that use the waterway require a certain clearance. The project team looked at a fixed bridge that would be raised 6' to accommodate the Coast Guard boats, but the impacts were substantial. In addition to the Coast Guard, the marina on Sagamore Creek would likely object to a fixed bridge.

Q. Will residents be able to get online updates when only a single lane is open on the bridge?

A. NHDOT -has a project website where there is information about the bridge., Traffic will be able to pass over the bridge when a single lane is open. The contractor will clear the road when a significant backup (a quarter mile) occurs on either end.

Q. In the Replacement Alternative, why are the piers spaced further apart than they are now?

A. The wider spacing of the piers will allow for expedited construction.

Q. Have you looked at the fender system and how it will affect the current?

A. This is something that will be studied as the design progresses, however the fender system will be comprised of walers; it will not be a single solid face and will allow water to pass through it.

Q. Has the design team considered whether the channel could be dredged?

A. This is possible in the future, but is not part of this project. A lift bridge would be required in order to dredge the channel.

Q. When will construction on the Sagamore Bridge be complete?

A. The construction will be complete in December 2014. Construction on the New Castle-Rye Bridge will not begin until the Sagamore construction is complete. Current funding for the New Castle – Rye bridge is not until 2017 which would put construction in 2018.

Q. Who will work with the electric company to ensure that there is no impact to the supply during construction?

A. NHDOT will work with the electric supplier.

Q. Has the design team talked to the local Fire and Emergency Services to make sure that there won't be a disruption?

A. Yes. The Fire and Police Departments are both represented on the Public Advisory Committee. Minimizing closure time is intended to limit impacts to emergency services.

NHDOT Questions to the Public:

Q. Will moving the sidewalk to the east side create problems on the west side of the bridge?

A. Residents indicated that it would not.

Additional Comments Provide by the Public:

- Sea levels will change over the life of the bridge.
- The curve of the road south of the bridge is a safety hazard. NHDOT should consider trimming the trees within the Right of Way there to make it safer.

New Castle-Rye 16127 Preliminary Design



NHDOT will look for a sidewalk maintenance agreement with the towns of New Castle and Rye to address snow removal of the sidewalk.