

**New Castle-Rye Bridge Project  
Summary of Meeting  
Cultural Resources Coordination Meeting  
March 12, 2015**

**Attendees:**

Sheila Charles, NHDOT  
Jill Edelman, NHDOT  
Victoria Chase, NHDOT  
Bob Landry, NHDOT  
Marc Laurin, NHDOT  
Bob Juliano, NHDOT  
Jamie Sikora, FHWA  
Laura Black, NHDHR  
Edna Feighner, NHDHR  
Ben Wilson, New Hampshire Department of Historic Sites  
Jim Murphy, HDR  
Stephanie Dyer-Carroll, FHI  
Esther Kennedy, Consulting Party

The fifth coordination meeting with New Hampshire State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) on the New Castle-Rye Bridge Project was held on March 12, 2015 at the offices of the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT). Stephanie Dyer-Carroll with FHI opened the meeting with a brief project update. She indicated that a Public Information Meeting was held on February 5, 2015. At the meeting, NHDOT presented the Fixed Bridge as their preferred alternative and discussed the findings of the Benefit-Cost Analysis. Ms. Dyer-Carroll shared that the towns of New Castle and Rye, as well as the Portsmouth Water Department, provided statements at the meeting, and that both the New Castle and Rye Select Boards now support a fixed span. Personnel from Portsmouth Ports and Harbors, as well as the U.S. Coast Guard, attended and answered questions. A public comment period was held through February.

Ms. Dyer-Carroll indicated that the Benefit-Cost Analysis was updated in February 2015 to address comments received by the project's Public Advisory Committee. The study examines the costs of construction, maintenance and utilities, and potential benefits of each of the Fixed and Bascule Alternatives including dredging; commercial fishing; boat-related economic activity, specifically moorings and impacts to local businesses; tourism revenue; livability improvements; sea level rise and coastal resiliency; safe harbor; and noise.

James Murphy, Project Manager with HDR, showed several renderings of the Fixed Bridge and compared the profile of the Fixed Bridge to that of the existing bridge. He also showed a more distant view from the Wentworth-Coolidge Mansion.

Ms. Dyer-Carroll concluded the presentation by outlining next steps. NHDOT has requested that the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources sign the Determination of Effects Memorandum. Additional steps include the establishment of a timetable for consultation, the preparation of the NEPA documentation and Section 4(f) Evaluation, and the preparation and execution of a Memorandum of

Agreement. NHDOT will also obtain a permit from the U.S. Coast Guard. The project will be advertised in 2017.

Questions and comments followed the presentation. These included the following:

- Esther Kennedy, a Consulting Party, stated that the majority of attendees at the Public Information Meeting were not in favor of a fixed bridge, including the owner of the Heritage, area fishermen and marinas, and that the U.S. Coast Guard seemed to agree. She said that an attendee at the public meeting suggested a vote to determine how many people supported a fixed bridge, but a vote was not taken.
- Ms. Kennedy pointed out that when the Rye and New Castle Select Boards originally voted, the cost difference between running a new water line on a fixed bridge versus running a line under water was estimated to be \$3 million. However, now the City of Portsmouth estimates the difference to be \$600,000 and they have clarified that the cost would be split among their 97,000 users. Bob Landry asked whether she thought the New Castle Select Board would come to a different finding based on the new estimate. Ms. Kennedy said she didn't know. Mr. Landry indicated that he would check with the Town of New Castle.
- Ben Wilson, with the New Hampshire Department of Historic Sites, said that the bridge is a major route to get to Fort Stark and Fort Constitution and that NHDOT should notify his department in advance of the closure. He said he didn't believe a fixed bridge would affect the Wentworth-Coolidge Mansion. He did indicate that they are trying to construct a historic maritime trail on the property and that they will want to reconstruct a dock at the Mansion. Pickering Marine will need to be able to get back to the site to erect it. Jim Murphy said that Pickering currently enter the Back Channel without a lift. Mr. Wilson said that the dock will be constructed within two years, before construction begins on the New Castle-Rye Bridge.
- Mr. Wilson also said that the channel is only eight to ten feet deep now and that dredging will need to be done soon. He said it would be great if it could be undertaken as part of this project. Mr. Landry said that dredging last occurred 20 to 30 years ago. Mr. Murphy indicated that the Back Channel is on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' dredging list. Bob Landry stated that members of the Rye Select Board believe the Back Channel is no longer navigable. Mr. Wilson said that it is navigable but that it needs to be dredged.
- Mr. Wilson said that the State owns Leachs Island and that periodically people camp there illegally. Portsmouth Fire and Rescue needs to be able to get there. Ms. Kennedy said that they can get there without a lift bridge.
- Ms. Kennedy said that she has seen the Gundalow, a commercial sailing vessel, moored at Creek Farm in the Back Channel.
- Jamie Sikora with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) said that, based on conversations with the U.S. Coast Guard, an Environmental Assessment may need to be prepared. He also stated that the 4(f) evaluation will need to look at the constructive use of historic properties. Mr. Landry asked whether FHWA will be determining the level of documentation required under the National Environmental Policy Act. Mr. Sikora said yes, together with NHDOT.
- Ms. Kennedy said that she had been told that with a new bascule the time required for a lift could be reduced from four hours to 15 to 20 minutes. If the opening time could be decreased, there could be more use of the Back Channel. In addition, marine construction would not have to be tide based. Mr. Murphy clarified that while remote opening was a goal of the Bascule Alternative, it was not definite.

- Ms. Kennedy said that the New Hampshire Coastal Risk Hazard Commission is directing State agencies to consider sea level rise and that a recent Executive Order suggests that states should plan for the worst. She asked whether sea level rise would be considered in the Environmental Assessment. Mr. Sikora said that it would be discussed at a global level.
- Edna Feigner with the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources said that the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation needs to be notified. Laura Black, also with the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources, said that everything seems to favor a bascule and that signing the effects memorandum could move the project forward. She doesn't believe the project should be advanced at this stage. Mr. Sikora said that signing the effects memorandum would only document that there is an adverse effect. It would not move the project forward, but just facilitate notifying the Advisory Council.
- Ms. Black then stated that the effects memorandum can be executed. She said that the memorandum should note the bridge removal. Both Ms. Black and Ms. Feigner indicated that indirect effects need to be examined as part of this process. Mr. Landry said there are no indirect effects, that the bridge is rarely opened.
- Mr. Landry asked Mr. Wilson whether he sees a benefit in a bascule span. Mr. Wilson said that this is the only access point for tall boats and that it's too bad that one access point for these boats can't be maintained. He also stated that heritage tourism is expanding and that the boat clubs want crane access to repair their docks.
- Ms. Black asked what happened with the Advisory Council when FHWA contacted them. Mr. Murphy stated that they directed FHWA to reference the Memorandum of Agreement for the Scammell Bridge within the agreement for the replacement of the New Castle-Rye Bridge.
- Ben Wilson asked whether bids would be received in 2017 with construction beginning in 2018. Mr. Murphy indicated this is accurate.
- Jill Edelman said that they would revise the effects memorandum and send it on to the New Hampshire State Historic Preservation Office. She said that they would also notify the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation of the finding. She asked whether it was appropriate to discuss mitigation at this point. Ms. Feigner said that NHDOT needs to go back to the community to discuss mitigation. Mr. Murphy indicated that the potential measures were developed in concert with the Public Advisory Committee.

At the end of the question and answer period, a list of potential mitigation measures was distributed to attendees.