

**New Castle-Rye Bridge Project
Summary of Meeting
Cultural Resources Coordination Meeting
April 17, 2017**

Attendees:

Sheila Charles, NHDOT
Jill Edelman, NHDOT
Victoria Chase, NHDOT
Bob Landry, NHDOT
Marc Laurin, NHDOT
Jamie Sikora, FHWA
Laura Black, NHDHR
Edna Feighner, NHDHR
Jim Murphy, HDR
Stephanie Dyer-Carroll, FHI
Steven Skoglund, Consulting Party (by phone)
Kitty Henderson, Consulting Party (by phone)

The sixth coordination meeting with New Hampshire State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) on the New Castle-Rye Bridge Project was held on April 17, 2017 at the offices of the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT). Victoria Chase with NHDOT opened the meeting and welcomed attendees. Jim Murphy with HDR then provided a brief project history and update. He explained that a Replacement with Bascule Alternative was initially considered but in January 2014 the public raised concerns about the cost. NHDOT prepared a Benefit-Cost Analysis comparing the replacement with fixed and bascule bridge alternatives. In the winter of 2014, the fixed bridge was presented to the public and was selected by NHDOT as the preferred alternative. In June 2015, the design of a four-span fixed bridge was developed and navigational survey documents were submitted to the US Coast Guard (USCG). In September 2015, the USCG held a public comment period for users of the navigational channel. In March 2016, the USCG notified NHDOT that they'd concluded while a bridge that maintains 65' vertical clearance would be optimal, they were unable to produce sufficient data to support it. They indicated that 16.52' of clearance will be required for a fixed bridge, an approximately 2.5' increase over the four-span fixed alternative. They also indicated that the submission of a USCG permit will be required for final approval. In the summer and fall of 2016, the feasibility of a two-span fixed bridge was reviewed, and in April 2017 the preliminary design of a two-span fixed bridge with steel beams was completed.

Mr. Murphy then went on to describe the two-span fixed alternative. He explained that as designed the two-span alternative is a steel girder bridge with a concrete deck, supported by a single central pier. The design maintains the roadway widths envisioned under the four-span design alternative, but that the scenic overlook has been reduced. The steel pipe piles will either be driven or pre-drilled. Mr. Murphy explained that the fixed design would allow for the installation of a new water line along Wentworth Road (NH1B). He said that a fixed bridge was supported by the Project Advisory Committee at the December 2014 meeting, primarily due to the water line and cost savings. Mr. Murphy explained that in the Two Span Alternative, the approach walls have increased in height and length but that they still sit behind the rock causeways. They will be detailed in the final design to minimize their visual impact. A drainage swale is being considered in the design to treat stormwater.

Stephanie Dyer-Carroll with FHI then provided an update on the status of the consultation. She explained that when they last met in March 2015 the preferred alternative presented was the four-span fixed bridge. An Effects Memorandum and supporting documentation were submitted to the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources (NHDHR) in July 2015. In August 2015, Elizabeth Muzzy with NHDHR responded indicating her office had concerns with signing the Effects Memorandum. She requested additional information, including an explanation of how the bridge replacement was being evaluated under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), how NEPA and Section 106 were being coordinated, and how the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's (ACHP) guidance on the 1994 MOA was being implemented. She also said concerns expressed by consulting parties should be resolved. In a September 2015 letter to NHDHR, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) clarified that the EA will evaluate the Replacement with Fixed Bridge as the preferred alternative. Other alternatives considered but eliminated during the course of the planning process will be discussed up front in the EA. FHWA indicated that they will prepare a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to address the loss of the National Register-eligible New Castle-Rye Bridge. The MOA will clarify the connection between this new agreement document and the 1994 Scammell Bridge MOA.

Ms. Dyer-Carroll then outlined issues that have been raised during the consultation process and their resolution. Concerns were raised by a consulting party about potential effects to Creek Farm. Ms. Dyer-Carroll explained that NHDOT coordinated with the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests who run the farm. The Forest Society indicated that the fixed bridge would have no impact on the operation of Creek Farm. Another issue raised during the consultation was the potential for a fixed bridge to impact a proposed dock and maritime trail system at the Wentworth-Coolidge Mansion. However, Ben Wilson with New Hampshire Department of Historic Sites indicated that the dock will be constructed before the bridge is replaced. Moreover, a lift isn't required for Pickering Marine to access the Back Channel. A third issue raised was the loss of the historic bridge. NHDOT's analysis determined that rehabilitation wasn't feasible due to the degree of deterioration of the bridge, and that the limited number of lifts doesn't justify the increased cost associated with replacement with a movable bridge.

Ms. Dyer-Carroll then moved on to discuss mitigation for the loss of the bridge. She explained five mitigation measures have been identified through consultation with NHDHR and consulting parties. These include: archival documentation of the bridge; marketing the bridge for relocation; the construction of a memorial plaque documenting the history of bridges on the site; the manufacture of portable panels documenting bridge history for use by the New Castle Historical Society; and archaeological monitoring during ground disturbance in the vicinity of the 1874 Rye Bridge Abutments. Final mitigation will be outlined in the MOA.

Ms. Dyer-Carroll concluded the presentation with a discussion of the project timeline and next steps. She indicated that a Project Advisory Committee (PAC) meeting is scheduled for May 4th in the afternoon, and that a Public Information meeting will be held that evening. The intent of the meetings is to brief the PAC and public on the two-span fixed design. NHDOT then anticipates releasing the Environmental Assessment (EA) for public comment in July and holding another public meeting in August or September to receive comments on the EA. NHDOT and FHWA said later in the week they would be providing sections of the EA to NHDHR for their review and comment. They will also be revised and resubmitting the Effects Memorandum to NHDHR for their review and signature.

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

- Kitty Henderson with the Historic Bridge Foundation said Consulting Parties should have the opportunity to review the EA sections in advance, just as NHDHR does. She asked whether ACHP had been notified that FHWA intends to substitute NEPA for the Section 106 process. Ms. Dyer-Carroll said they are not employing substitution, but rather the two compliance processes are being coordinated in accordance with ACHP guidance. Ms. Henderson then asked whether the ACHP had been notified of the adverse effect. Jamie Sikora with FHWA said they had not because the Effects Memorandum has not yet been signed. He agreed to provide the EA sections to consulting parties for a 30-day review.
- Stephen Skoglund asked if the sidewalk will be located on the east side of the bridge. Mr. Murphy indicated that it would. Mr. Skoglund asked about the maintenance of the sidewalk by the Town of Rye. Ms. Chase said that the sidewalk won't be paved if Rye doesn't sign the maintenance agreement.
- Mr. Skoglund also said he thinks the velocity of the water coming off a solid surface bridge will be strong, and then he asked if there will be catchment areas. Mr. Murphy said that there will be catch basins, and that a catchment area is being studied. He said the change in profile will affect how water runs off the bridge.
- Mr. Skoglund then asked about the timing of construction. Mr. Murphy said the project will be advertised in January 2018 and that the closure will occur between January and March 2019.
- Ms. Henderson asked when the next meeting will occur. Jill Edelmann with NHDOT said the project they will discuss the project again at the June 8th Cultural Resources Coordination Meeting.
- Ms. Laura Black (NHDHR) asked how and when the issues raised through the consultation process will be resolved. Mr. Murphy said that FHWA, NHDOT and the consultant team have made a good faith effort to address all the comments, and he asked what comments and issues are outstanding. Ms. Black said more than two years had passed since they last met and that she couldn't provide them at this time.
- Ms. Dyer-Carroll said that the EA sections to be provided to SHPO and consulting parties will include the project history, alternatives, and cultural and visual resources.
- Mr. Sikora reiterated that they will discuss the project at the June Cultural Resources Consultation meeting, and that they will meet again once the EA has been released.