

**New Castle-Rye Bridge Project
Summary of Meeting
USCG Coordination Meeting
April 22, 2014**

Attendees:

Chris Bisignano, USCG
John McDonald, USCG
Nate Robinson, USCG
Elizabeth Gunn, USCG
Bob Landry, NHDOT
Bob Juliano, NHDOT
Jim Murphy, HDR

The first coordination meeting with the United States Coast Guard (USCG) on the New Castle-Rye Bridge Project was held on April 22, 2014 at the NH Port Authority Facility in Portsmouth, NH. Attendees introduced themselves and a brief introduction to the project was provided.

Bob Landry provided the summary of the project to date. He explained that there is a need to replace the bridge due its obsolescence, and its structural condition. He stated that four alternatives were originally introduced: rehabilitation, replacement with a bascule bridge, replacement with an elevated fixed bridge, and replacement with a bascule bridge constructed west of the existing roadway alignment. A fifth alternative, replacement at existing grade with a fixed bridge, was introduced after project cost concerns were raised at the last public meeting. Two alternatives, replacement with an elevated fixed bridge, and replacement with a bridge constructed west of the existing roadway were eliminated early in the process due to unreasonable environmental impacts. The rehabilitation alternate was eliminated because it was not feasible. The NHDOT is moving forward with reviewing two alternatives: replacement with a bascule bridge and replacement with a fixed bridge. Under this project, FHWA is the lead federal agency for NEPA.

Bob Landry also explained that a Public Advisory Committee (PAC) was formed in early 2013, and is comprised of town officials, emergency responders, abutters and local businesses. There have been three meetings with the PAC to date, with the most recent being in January 2014. A fourth PAC meeting is scheduled for April 24, 2014. Additionally, three Public Informational Meetings have been held on this project. Bob Landry explained that the navigable channel is rarely used, and that the primary concern by those who attended the PAC and Public Informational meetings is minimizing impacts to vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

Discussion began on marine traffic that travelled in the area, and how a fixed bridge alternative may affect marine traffic. Bob Landry and Jim Murphy stated that the design team had reviewed the lift logs for the New Castle-Rye Bridge, and that it had in the past been used by the USCG for buoy maintenance, but that stopped during 2010. There had been a handful of other openings for private vessels from 2009-2010. Lt. Nate Robinson stated that the USCG uses smaller vessels for buoy maintenance now, which do not require lifts. Lt. Nate Robinson also stated that the Gundalow, a private vessel, had previously expressed interest in entering that harbor, and that he would follow up to determine what the intentions of the vessel's owners are.

Bob Landry stated that Witch's Cove Marina is upstream of the bridge, and could be negatively affected by a fixed bridge.

Bob Landry stated that concerns were raised at a previous PAC meeting that a fixed bridge may restrict future dredging of the channel. Chris Bisignano stated that dredging would be a concern for any commercial use of the channel. Bob Landry stated that Witch's Cove Marina and lobstermen frequently use the channel. John McDonald stated that smaller barges could be used under a fixed bridge, but a larger, 50' barge is the preferred size. The current bridge clearances are 28'-9" horizontal and 13'-5" vertical. Replacement with fixed structure would provide horizontal clearance of 51'-6" and a vertical clearance of 13'-8". Replacement with a bascule structure would provide a horizontal clearance of 44'-6" and not restrict vertical clearances, but there are existing overhead utility lines that would restrict the vertical clearance to approximately 65'.

Chris Bisignano inquired whether any closures will be required; Bob Landry stated that the intent is to limit the bridge closure to three months, with in-water construction lasting from November to the end of March based on public input. Jim Murphy added that this window limits impacts to both the environment and to vehicular traffic. Chris Bisignano followed up by stating that a 120 day notice to the USCG will be required to establish a Regulated Navigation Area, and that a 30 day notice will be required for any closure or restriction to the navigable channel.

Chris Bisignano stated that there is a United States Army Corp (USACE) maintained channel in the area, and that the USACE would have to approve any future restrictions to the navigable channel. Additionally, the group discussed whether there had been previous commitment to maintain existing navigable clearances in the channel. Chris Bisignano indicated since all other bridges surrounding area are fixed, authorizing the subject bridge as fixed would completely prevent Army Corps from access upstream for federal navigation channel maintenance.

The group closed by discussing the next steps in the review process. Bob Landry stated that there is a PAC meeting on April 24th, and a Public Meeting is being considered, likely at the end of May. Chris Bisignano and John McDonald recommended that Bob Landry attend the Dredge Management Task Force (DMTF) meeting on April 30, to gather input from the group on how a fixed bridge may affect future dredging. Chris Bisignano stated that NHDOT should contact the USACE to inquire about whether a fixed bridge alternative would be allowed and provide SHPO determination of effect for demolition of an historic resource, if applicable. Mr. Bisignano also recommended that NHDOT contact upstream facilities with proposals. Lastly, Mr. Bisignano requested bridge opening logs for the last 3 years.