

REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER

NORTH HAMPTON, A002(909), 24457

BRIDGE REPLACEMENT CARRYING US ROUTE 1 OVER NHRR

**Commission
PUBLIC HEARING**

**OCTOBER 18, 2018
7:00 PM**

NORTH HAMPTON SCHOOL

The following decisions are the Department's resolution of issues as a result of the testimony presented at the October 18, 2018 Public Hearings and written testimony subsequently submitted for the North Hampton, A002(909), 24457 project described as:

This project includes a bridge replacement (Red list Br No 148/132) carrying US Route 1 over the Pam Am RR (currently NHDOT owned, formerly Boston & Maine RR) and will relocate and improve intersection safety at both approaches of North Rd (west and east). Reconstruction and shoulder widening on US 1 will improve the integrity of the roadway as well as improving bike and pedestrian access along the roadway.

1. Ms. Mary Drake Hale, 3712 Cactus Creek Court, Highlands Ranch, Colorado (Parcel 5), requested that North Road (East) remain in its current location and to eliminate the existing two-way left turn lane just north of the Hubbington's Furniture;
Mr. Mark Hale, Denver Colorado requested that the department revise its proposal to eliminate impacts to the Hale property (Parcel 5), noting that the open space and trees are aesthetically significant;
Mr. Richard Luff, Sagamore Golf Center, 22 North Road (Parcel 4), noted his support of Ms. Hale's desire to reduce impacts to the open lands; and
Mr. Peter Rhoades, Hubbington's Furniture, 148 Lafayette Road, affirmed Ms. Hale's objective for preservation of open space and asked the Department to consider her concerns.

Response: The two-way left turn lane provides improved safety for vehicles turning in and out of driveways along the state highway. The project will maintain dedicated left turn lanes to North Road (east and west) and re-establish the existing two-way left turn lane within the project's limits.

The current location of North Road (east) does not provide sufficient sight distances to vehicles turning from US Route 1, the intersection skew does not safely accommodate all vehicle movements, and conflicting left turns with Hubbington's Furniture access point would not be resolved. In addition, improvements to address the approach grade for North Road (east) would result in significant property and access impacts for the Sagamore Golf Center property. The Department believes the proposed layout best addresses the project purpose and need and will improve safety at the intersection. Alternatives to address impacts to trees and open space along the Hale property were further evaluated and determined to be infeasible. (see also response #3)

2. Ms. Michelle Brewster, Seacoast Birth and Family Connection, LLC, 165 Lafayette Road (US Route 1), requested that a traffic signal be placed at North Road (east) and Lafayette Road, in its existing location, to mitigate traffic concerns;
Mr. Robert A. Casassa, Cassassa Law Office, 459 Lafayette Rd, Hampton, New Hampshire, through written testimony on the behalf of Mary D. Hale, objected to the proposed alteration of North Road and requested that the department collect all crash data (Town and State) available and collect additional traffic volume data to supplement the Traffic Signal Warrant Analysis;
Ms. Mary Drake Hale, 3712 Cactus Creek Court, Highlands Ranch, Colorado (Parcel 5), requested that North Road (east) remain in its current location and a signal be installed to eliminate proposed impacts to her property's open space.

Response: The Department updated traffic volumes for the opening year of 2020 and design year of 2040 for reassessment of the traffic signal warrant analysis at North Road (east and west). Based upon the updated projected traffic volumes, neither intersection meets the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) warrants for traffic signals. However, signal conduit will be installed and interconnected between the two intersections to accommodate future signals should traffic conditions warrant.

Based upon the available crash reports and/or data, the crash warrant for signals are not met; however, the proposed alteration at both intersections will improve safety due to increased intersection and stopping sight distance and separation of turning vehicles.

3. Mr. Robert A. Casassa, Cassassa Law Office, 459 Lafayette Rd, Hampton, New Hampshire, through written testimony on the behalf of Mary D. Hale (Parcel 5), requests that the department relocate North Road (east) to the north of the Seacoast Birth Center property adjacent to McFarland Ford Dealership; and Mr. Bryan T. Kaenrath, Town Administrator, Town of North Hampton, 233 Atlantic Avenue, requested that the Department consider diverting North Road (east) 1250 feet north from its current location. He noted that benefits include preserving the rural nature of the Hale property (Parcel 5), improved roadway grade on North Road, better sight distance at the approach to Lafayette Road, and eliminating an additional access point in the area of Hubbington's Furniture.

Response: The Department has evaluated four conceptual layouts to relocate North Road (east) with the objective of preserving the open field by shifting the North Road adjacent to the McFarland Ford Dealership on the north side of Seacoast Birthing Center. Each layout requires greater right-of-way acquisitions along the Hale property and could result in impacts to the Town of North Hampton's open land to the east of Parcel 5. The realignment of North Road (east) will result in additional impacts to forested wetlands of up to 3.2 acres causing an increase in wetland mitigation. This will necessitate higher order water quality treatment for compliance with the Small Municipal Separate Storm Sewer (MS4) requirements, and result in an increase in construction cost over the Department's preferred alternative layout by as much as \$2,010,000. Furthermore, Sagamore Golf Center (Parcel 4) access would become more circuitous off the relocated Town road.

The alternative layouts were also presented to the Natural Resource Agencies; NH Department of Environmental Services Wetlands Bureau, NH Natural Heritage Bureau, NH Fish & Game Department, US Army Corps of Engineers, US Environmental Protection Agency, Federal Highway Administration. Other State and Federal agencies and local organizations are notified of meetings and attend for specific projects of interest, including the National Marine Fisheries Service, US Fish & Wildlife Service, NH Coastal Program, NH Office of Energy & Planning Floodplain Management Program, NHDES Watershed Management Bureau, and local River Advisory Committees.

Key points from the Natural Resource meeting;

- NHDES
 - o All the alternatives required additional and greater wetland impacts.
 - o None of the alternatives met the "least impacting criteria" of the wetland regulations.
 - o All alternatives move the open space impacts north.
- NHF&G noted that all alternatives would fragment wildlife connectivity to a much greater degree than the hearing layout.
- NH Natural Heritage Board, Army Corps of Engineers, and the Nature Conservancy
 - o Noted that the original hearing layout was the least environmentally impactful.

- The Nature Conservancy
 - o Open space includes “green space” not just fields but forests and undeveloped land, therefore all alternatives increase the open space impact over the hearing layout.
 - o Fragmentation of habitat with the three conceptual alternatives is a concern.
 - o Connect the Coast has identified a wildlife corridor in the area.
 - o These green spaces have been recognized by the “*Land Conservation Priorities for the Protection of Coastal Water Resources (2016)*”, a conservation plan funded by the NHDES Coastal Program and NOAA, as important pollution attenuation areas

The Natural Resources Agencies agreed that permitting any of the alternatives would be difficult due to the hearing layout being the least impactful of all alternatives.

Due to the environmental permitting challenges, significant cost, and additional design time, the Department does not consider these alternatives reasonable. The Department believes the proposed layout best addresses the project purpose and need and will improve safety at the intersection.

4. Mr. Robert A. Casassa, Cassassa Law Office, 459 Lafayette Rd, Hampton, New Hampshire, through written testimony on the behalf of Mary D. Hale (Parcel 5), requested that the Department consider relocating North Road (west) to the south of the former Rollins Furniture building.

Response: North Road (west) relocation south of the former Rollins Furniture store was evaluated during the initial preliminary design of the project. This alternative is not recommended due to additional impacts to wetlands, increased water quality treatment areas due to additional roadway runoff for the Towns compliance to the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) requirements, mitigation for potential impacts to the Slender Blue Iris (*Iris prismatica*) (a state protected plant), higher Right-of-Way impacts, and increased construction costs.

5. Ms. Michelle Brewster, Seacoast Birth and Family Connection, LLC, 165 Lafayette Road, is concerned that noise from construction will affect her business.

Response: A noise analysis was completed for the environmental study. This analysis concluded that noise produced during the construction phase of a highway project could result in short-term impacts of varying duration and magnitude. The ground clearing and earthwork phases of highway construction are frequently identified highest increase in noise; however, these activities will be short-term and do not necessitate mitigation.

6. Ms. Jennifer Gosselin, 45 North Road (west), inquired as to how the Department is going to address drainage along the town road adjacent to the residences on North Road (west) and requested the Department to include the addition of culverts on the north side of the town roadway to direct drainage past the residences.

Response: Road surface runoff along US Rte. 1 will be conveyed in a closed drainage system to a proposed water quality feature located on Parcel 5. As a result, it will reduce the runoff flowing down the town road from US Route 1. In addition, the realignment of North Road (West) will include a horizontal curve with superelevation redirecting the town road surface runoff to the south side away from the residential properties.

The Department will evaluate the need for additional drive culverts, within the project limits, during the Final Design of the project.

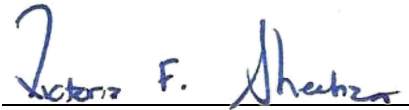
7. Mr. Richard Luff, Sagamore Golf Center, 22 North Road (Parcel 4), noted his support of the overall need for the project and would prefer the short-term closure option instead of two phase construction. He requested the closure be accomplished after his seasonable business property is closed (i.e.: October to February) and his business sign be relocated closer to the new intersection; and

Mr. Peter Rhoades, Hubbington's Furniture, 148 Lafayette Road (Parcel __), noted his preference for construction was short term closure preferably in the summer months (his slowest sales time). He feels they can sustain a short 14-day closure versus 4 to 5 months of traffic backup challenges.

Response: The Department will continue to evaluate the traffic control method options for the bridge replacement during final design, seek public feedback on the selection of the most cost effective, least disruptive alternative, and coordinate with the Town of North Hampton for maintaining their emergency response needs.

The sign relocation for Sagamore Golf Center will be part of the right-of-way impact evaluation for the project. The Bureau of Right-of-way will work with the property owner and the town to relocate the sign to an appropriate location that meets all State and local regulations

Date: February 14, 2022



Victoria F. Sheehan
Commissioner
N.H. Department of Transportation