

October 24, 2008

**STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
BUREAU OF HIGHWAY DESIGN**

CONFERENCE REPORT

PROJECT: PELHAM 14491
(NH 111A, Improvements to Town Center Intersections)

DATE OF CONFERENCE: October 23, 2008

LOCATION OF CONFERENCE: Pelham Police Community Conference Room

ATTENDED BY: Department of Transportation

Working Group

Chris Waszczuk
Craig Green
Trent Zanes

Jeff Gowan
Diane Brunelle
Leo Thibeault
John Crane
Michael Walker
Dave Hennessey
Anne Perriello

SUBJECT: Working Group Meeting #9

NOTES ON CONFERENCE:

Introduction

Chris Waszczuk welcomed everyone to the ninth Working Group meeting. He stated the purpose of this meeting was to discuss the project status with regards to the fire station and review the alternatives and how they relate to the fire station. He acknowledged that indecision on the resolution of the fire station issue had caused a loss of momentum with the project. Chris explained that he hoped to renew interest in the project by coming to a resolution of the fire station and progressing the project to a public hearing. He reminded the Working Group members that even though the "earmarked funds" were dedicated to this project, delaying the project too long, could lead to the potential loss of the federal funding "earmark". Chris noted that federal "earmarked funds" have been rescinded in the past on other projects that were delayed and inactive for a long period of time.

Chris discussed the timing of the public hearing and explained that the earliest it could be held would be February 2009. He noted that the delay in getting to the public hearing as originally scheduled would affect the timing of construction by one construction season (from 2010 to 2011). The timing of the public hearing was intended to provide information regarding the project and the fire station to the public just prior to the town meeting, in hopes of getting voters to approve the fire station warrant article. Dave Hennessey suggested that the public hearing

should be held in January 2009 in order to give the town time to amend (if needed) the warrant article at the town's deliberative session. Chris explained that the environmental document for the project still had to be completed and issued for a 30-day comment period prior to the public hearing. Chris also felt there should be another public informational meeting in December to provide information to the public on how the fire station would be impacted by each alternative. He felt the public informational meeting could be used as forum for amending the warrant article at the town deliberative session.

Chris discussed his meeting with the Town Selectmen on October 14, 2008. He noted that he had field reviewed the fire station with the Selectmen and explained the subtle differences in the roadway improvement alternatives. His impression from the meeting was that the Selectmen supported the project and preferred Alternative A, but could support Alternative B.

Chris discussed the project costs and funding. He noted that there were two federal "earmarks" for the project. He also noted that the transportation elements were 80% federal funds and 20% state matching funds. He indicated that the fire station elements of the project including the building and land that might be needed would be 80% federal funding and require a 20% town match. The total funding for this project is \$3.9 million, which is intended to cover the cost of the engineering, right-of-way acquisitions, and the construction costs. Chris explained that the funding was fixed at \$3.9 million and any increase in construction cost would require a reduction in the amount of right-of-way funding that would be available to assist in the fire station element costs. There was a question if the town match had to be in cash or could it be bonded. Chris indicated the match would need to be in cash.

Review of Alternatives

Trent explained the differences between Alternative A and Alternative B from the standpoint of the plan, constructability, operations and safety, and maintenance. The following is a summary of the review:

Plan

Alternative B shifted the proposed alignment to not impact the fire station building. The curvilinear alignment of Alternative B would provide some traffic calming benefit to traffic approaching the roundabout. Trent noted that Alternative B would eliminate access in front of the fire station and the building would require modifications to allow fire apparatus to access the rear of the building. He also explained that the new edge of pavement on Alternative B would be within 10 feet of the northeast corner of the fire station building and 7.5 feet at the southwest corner. In order to mitigate for the functional loss of access for the emergency apparatus, a new garage type building would be constructed. The new building would require acquisition of a portion of the Congregational Church property.

Constructability

Alternative A would allow an area for construction staging on the fire station property and provide for traffic control through the fire station property as the roundabout was being constructed. Alternative B would likely rely on Woodbury Ave. for maintenance of traffic during construction of the roundabout. Also, construction (excavation, filling, grading, compaction) under Alternative B would be very constrained and occur several feet from the fire station building, which will be somewhat disruptive.

Operation and Safety

With Alternative B there is some concern with the restriction in the sight distance due to the fire station building. The sight restriction might cause some uneven speed to occur that could affect the efficiency of the roundabout. However, the sight restriction was felt not to be a safety issue,

as vehicles will need to slow as they approach the roundabout and yield prior to entering the roundabout. Trent noted that even though the intersection sight distance did not meet the minimum AASHTO guidelines for 25 mph design speed criteria, the stopping sight distance did meet the minimum.

Trent noted the more challenging aspect of Alternative B was exit/entry of the fire trucks. The proposed drives would be two-way, however the large fire trucks would likely require the entire width of the driveway to maneuver. The fire chief noted his concern for the off duty fire responders trying to access the station when emergency vehicles would be leaving in response to a fire /incident. He felt there would have to be some type of internal policy for exiting and entering during a response. The fire chief suggested a traffic preemption signal to allow for emergency vehicles to access the roadway.

Sargent Anne Perriello, representing the police chief, noted a concern with the fire and police responders coming out of the same drive during an emergency response. She also noted her concern for the limited sight distance from the drive to the roundabout under Alternative B. She felt traffic speeds would be increasing as vehicles left the roundabout, and likely exceed the posted speed of 25 mph.

Maintenance

Trent explained that Alternative B would require snow removal in front of the fire station, as there would be very little area left in front of the building for snow storage. He noted that the maintenance of this section of roadway was the responsibility of the town. He also indicated that there would need to be a municipal agreement with the town to maintain the sidewalks. There was a question if the town would be required to maintain the sidewalk in the winter. It was noted that the agreement would require maintenance of the sidewalk based on the town's policy of sidewalk maintenance. However, it was noted that there is currently a lawsuit regarding maintenance of sidewalks for meeting ADA compliance, which may require that sidewalks be maintained for ADA compliance.

There was also a concern expressed by the fire chief that with the modifications to the fire station, it might not meet ADA compliance. This may require shifting of some of the functions (such a fire permits) to another location or building.

Critical Cross-Sections

Trent reviewed the cross section information noting that the proposed roadway centerline elevations generally matched the existing centerline grades to try to minimize impacts into the fire station and impacts to the underground utilities. However, by shifting the road closer to the fire station and introducing the necessary cross slopes, the ground alongside the fire station concrete slab is lower by approximately 1.4 feet. This will require curbing at the edge of the road and a back curb along the back edge of the new sidewalk. Vehicular access to the front of the fire station will be precluded.

Updated Project Costs

Trent reviewed the updated project costs. It was noted that the current estimate for right-of-way funds for the fire station element of the project is approximately \$437,500 (\$407,500 for Alternative B). Because of the fixed amount of funding, if the construction costs (or any other costs should increase) it could reduce the amount of funding for the fire station element.

Review Fire Station Options

Jeff Gowan discussed his meeting with the Selectmen regarding the fire station. He noted his concern regarding a decision to proceed with Alternative B relates to what can be done to achieve

the required functionality of the fire station at a minimal cost. He indicated there had been some rough concept costs developed for constructing a building for the emergency response apparatus. The rough costs showed to construct a "Morton" type building would be approximately \$200,000. An estimated cost for modifications to the existing fire station would be approximately \$20,000. He also noted there would need to be replacement of the septic system which is estimated at \$50,000. The fire chief noted a concern for the utilities servicing the fire station and the police department that are all located on one pole, which has to be relocated as part of the project. He noted that these utility lines contain 911, telephone, fire, and the station's primary communication lines.

The fire chief noted that the exact locations of the underground utilities are not known.

Steps to Progress the Project

Chris asked that the Selectmen provide him in writing their support and/or direction regarding the project. Chris suggested both Dual Roundabout alternatives A and B be shown at the public hearing.

Tentatively a public informational meeting will be scheduled for December 17 at 7:00. Jeff Gowan will find a location for the meeting (the Elementary School was suggested as a possible location). Jeff will also coordinate advertising the meeting with flyers, and posting notices at prominent locations within the Town. Chris noted that letters will be mailed to all abutting property owners and other local and State Officials.

Chris will contact Jeff Gowan with the requests for support and direction from the Selectmen, and Jeff will contact the Selectmen.

Chris suggested that a Working Group meeting be held after the public hearing or the town meeting to determine the direction of the project.

Submitted by:

Craig A. Green, PE
Administrator

Noted by: CMW

cc: W. Cass

C. Waszczuk

Tom Gaydos, Pelham Town Administrator