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Meeting Notes

Attendees: Chris Waszczuk, NHDOT
Mike Dugas, NHDOT
Bill Janelle, NHDOT
Marc Laurin, NHDOT
Marty Kennedy, VHB
Senan Murdock, VHB
See Attached Attendee Lists

Date/Time: October 22, 2003/7:00 PM &
October 23, 2003/7:00 PM

Project No.: 51272

Place: Timberlane Regional High
School, Plaistow, NH &
Sanborn Regional High
School, Kingston, NH

Re: NH 125 Plaistow – Kingston
Public Informational Meetings

Notes taken by: Senan Murdock

Introduction, Project Background & Need

Chris Waszczuk opened the meeting and thanked everyone for attending and explained that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the planned upgrade of NH 125 in the communities of Plaistow and Kingston. He reviewed the Public Participation Process and explained that an Advisory Task Force, which includes officials from both Plaistow and Kingston, has been set up to guide the development of the project. C. Waszczuk introduced the members of the Advisory Task Force Committee (ATF). He explained that to date there had been a total of eleven ATF meetings, six Access Management meetings, as well as a few Public Officials meetings.

C. Waszczuk described the six-mile project limits, which extend from East Road in Plaistow to NH 111 in Kingston. He proceeded to discuss the project history and the project need. In describing the project goals, C. Waszczuk expressed a need to address deficient sections of the roadway, to improve capacity, enhance safety, relieve congestion, and to enhance the safe and efficient access to abutting properties. He noted that close to 300 accidents were recorded along this section of the corridor during the 5-year period between 1996-2000.

C. Waszczuk noted that in addition to the physical roadway improvements that would be necessary to address deficiencies, improve roadway and intersection capacity, and improve safety, access management was needed to preserve the corridor capacity, improve corridor mobility, and enhance long-term safety. C. Waszczuk noted that some of the tools being investigated as part of the access management plan for the project include:

- Appropriate spacing for signalized intersections.

- Use of left turn lanes to eliminate left turn movements occurring from the through travel lanes.
- Use of medians to eliminate uncontrolled left turns.
- Use of connector or service roads to minimize points of access.

C. Waszczuk reviewed the feedback received at previous public access management meetings, where the primary concerns involved the raised median, perceived increased travel time, and difficulties for truck and emergency vehicles. He explained that some of these concerns have been addressed to a certain degree with the plan being presented tonight. He introduced Marty Kennedy of VHB to discuss the specifics of access management.

Access Management Plan

Marty Kennedy presented a PowerPoint presentation that included a definition of access management, a discussion on the benefits of access management, and a description of the following plan elements included in the NH 125 Access Management Plan:

- 4 lanes from East Road to Hunt Road/Newton Junction Road, 2 lanes to the north
- Raised median along 4-lane section
- Traffic signals with left-turn lanes
- Connector or service roadways
- Directional median openings
- Jughandles
- Emergency vehicle turnarounds

He also identified potential future connector roadways that would not be constructed as a part of this project. He explained that these future connectors would be a part of the comprehensive access management plan. The town would be able to use this access management plan as a tool when parcels are developed in the future.

He introduced Senan Murdock of VHB to discuss the details of the conceptual improvement plan.

Proposed Conceptual Improvement Plan

Senan Murdock reviewed the three proposed typical section widths that would be used along NH 125. He noted the scale of the plan, and explained what the colors on the plan represent. He noted the various constraints within the project area that had to be considered, such as wetlands, properties that are eligible for the National Historic Register, cemeteries, and ledge areas.

S. Murdock described the details of the proposed concept plan. He reviewed the widening on NH 125 between East Road and the Hunt Road/Newton Junction Road intersection, each of the intersection improvements, and then the improvements north of Hunt Road. Important details of the plan include the following:

NH 125 Widening from East Road in Plaistow to Hunt Road in Kingston

The project would widen NH 125 to a five-lane divided section from East Road in Plaistow to match into the Hunt Road project in Kingston. The widening would be constructed equally about the center of the existing road, except for the section of NH 125 between Dorre Road and Debra Road. In this location the widening has been shifted entirely to the west side. This would provide an adequate grade for the northerly connection to Colonial Road, and avoid impacts to the cemetery.

Intersections and Pertinent Roadway Elements from East Road in Plaistow to Hunt Road in Kingston

- Three jug handles would be constructed as a part of this project.
 1. The northeast quadrant of Joanne Drive/NH 125
 2. Opposite the drive to Sawyer's Function Hall on the east side of NH 125
 3. On the west side of NH 125, just north of Hunt Road.
- A new signalized intersection would be constructed opposite the former drive-in property. A retaining wall would be constructed in front of the John Deere parcel to avoid parking impacts. The drive that runs between Village Curtain shops and John Deere would be widened to accommodate separate turn lanes at the intersection. This would serve as an access road to a new service road that would run behind the businesses parallel to NH 125 from Auto Exchange on the south, and extending north to Old Road. The service road would consist of two 12' lanes and 4' shoulders. It has been laid out to minimize impacts to the wetlands. Potential driveway accesses to the new service road that could be built as a part of this project have been shown in a dashed orange.
- A raised median island would extend across the service road connection to NH 125 near Old Road. Old Road would tie into the service road and would be stop controlled.
- The Danville Road intersection would be reconstructed and signalized. Danville Road would be realigned so that it intersects NH 125 at a better angle. Approximately 600' of Danville Road would be reconstructed and widened to provide separate turn lanes at the intersection. A short section of new town road would be constructed as the fourth leg of the intersection to provide access to Petro King and the abutting vacant development parcel.
- A raised median island would extend across Jesse George Road and turning movements at this intersection would be limited to right in and right out only.
- Sidewalks would be constructed on both sides of NH 125 starting at East Road and extending north to NH 121-A. The sidewalk on the west side of NH 125 would extend to Plaistow Commons.
- The intersection of NH 121-A (Main Street) and NH 125 would remain signalized. NH 125 would be widened with an extra lane in the northbound direction to provide a double left to NH 121-A. NH 121-A would be widened to provide exclusive left turn lanes on the eastbound and westbound approaches. The work would extend approximately 500' to the east, and to Walton Road on the west side. Sidewalks would be constructed on both sides of NH 121-A from the intersection westerly to Walton Road.
- Nine directional median openings would be constructed along NH 125 between NH 121-A and Hunt Road. These median openings would allow left turns into selected driveways, but would not allow left turns to exit.
- The existing connection of Walton Road to NH 125 would be eliminated. A connection would be provided for the function hall that would permit left turns to enter, but would not allow left turns onto NH 125. This element was included at the request of some residents of the Walton Road neighborhood and would require Town approval.
- A traffic signal would be installed at Old County Road. The work would extend approximately 450' along Old County Road both east and west of NH 125. Old County Road would continue to provide a single approach lane at the signal while exclusive left turn lanes would be provided on NH 125.

- Four median breaks with widened shoulders would be constructed to provide opportunities for emergency vehicles to reverse direction. The widened shoulder would also be provided at the intersections of NH 125 with Old County Road and NH 125 with Roadstone drive.
- Kingston Road would be extended northerly to a new signalized intersection opposite Roadstone Drive. The layout utilizes a portion of the existing Granite Road to minimize impacts to the steep hillside. One 12' lane would be provided in each direction with 4' shoulders. Kingston Road extension would be widened at the intersection to provide separate turn lanes. A ramp would be constructed which would allow northbound trucks to access the Kingston Road extension to reverse direction at the signal.
- A retaining wall would be required in front of Swing's and Things in order to minimize impacts to their display area.
- A directional median break would be provided at Dorre Road to permit left turns into Dorre Road, but would prevent left turns onto NH 125.
- This proposal would eliminate the southerly connection of Colonial Road and construct a turnaround at the discontinued end of Colonial Road. The northerly end of Colonial Road would be realigned opposite Debra Road, which would be shifted to the south approximately 400', to a new signalized intersection. A ramp would be constructed which would allow southbound trucks to access Debra Road to reverse direction at the signal.
- Retaining walls would be required along the frontage of Bayberry Park and Century Auto Sales to minimize impacts to their parking areas.
- Proposed widening would match into widening that is to be constructed as part of the NH 125/Hunt Road intersection project in 2004.

Improvements north of Hunt Road in Kingston

- A two-lane section is proposed north of the Hunt Road intersection. In this area NH 125 would be widened approximately 5' to each side to provide two 12' lanes and 10' shoulders. The improvements would match into the interim improvements constructed at the Old Coach Road intersection.
- A 3-lane section with 4' shoulders would be provided near the southerly entrance to Meeks Road. The overall roadway width would be the same as the proposed two-lane section north of Hunt Road.
- The northerly intersection of Old Coach Road and NH 125 would be realigned to improve the intersection angle.
- The southerly intersection of Meeks Road and NH 125 would be realigned slightly to intersect NH 125 at a better angle. The driveway to the Shell service station would be reconstructed to align with the improved section of Meeks Road.
- The northerly intersection of Meeks Road and NH 125 would be eliminated and a turnaround would be constructed at the discontinued end of Meeks Road.
- Widening would end just south of Stoneybrook Road where the existing road is presently 44' wide.

S. Murdock noted that the Department proposes to lay out controlled access ROW along NH 125. This CAROW would formalize and limit the number of access points to properties along NH 125. In general the proposed ROW would be approximately 10' beyond the proposed edge of pavement resulting in a total ROW width of 100'. S. Murdock explained that there are parcels along NH 125 that would have the access points altered. He noted that they have been shown on the plan with a blue dot. S. Murdock also noted that there are eight building acquisitions that would be acquired as a

part of this project and he pointed each out on the plan. Senan also pointed out the drainage and construction easements that would be needed for this project.

S. Murdock explained that the wetland impacts for this project are approximately 7 acres. He said that the Department would be proposing a wetland mitigation package as a part of this project. The proposed mitigation package would likely include parcels in both the communities of Plaistow and Kingston. S. Murdock pointed the various parcels out on the mitigation plan and indicated that the Department's investigations are preliminary.

Project Schedule, Funding, and Cost

C. Waszczuk then reviewed the Project Development Process and explained the project status. He explained that this project is included in the State's Ten Year Transportation Plan and is funded with 80% federal funds and 20% state funds. He explained that the Department is seeking input to formulate the preferred alternative and once consensus is reached, a formal Public Hearing, targeted for next spring, will be scheduled. The Final Design, ROW procurement, and environmental permitting would begin after a successful Public Hearing.

C. Waszczuk reviewed the revised construction estimate and explained that the project would not be able to be constructed all at once. He stated that the construction cost for the project has increased from the original conceptual estimate of \$8.65 million (1995 estimate) to the present estimate amount of \$22.0 million. The current update of the 10-Year Plan shows portions of the construction funding, totaling \$9.5 million, programmed in fiscal years from 2005 through 2010. The remaining construction funding in the amount of \$12.5 million is shown programmed for 2015. He mentioned that the GACIT hearings were coming up which would decide how much money would be available for this project. Before opening the meeting up to comments and questions, Chris Waszczuk informed interested owners of historic properties directly affected by the project, or agencies possessing a direct interest in the historic resources in the project area about how they could become Consulting Parties to the process identified in Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. He explained that interested parties should indicate their interest in writing to the Federal Highway Administration, in care of Harry Kinter, Special Projects Manager.

Comments/Questions from the October 22nd Public Informational Meeting in Plaistow, NH

Comment – When will the project be constructed?

Response – C. Waszczuk explained that construction would start no sooner than 2005 and would likely be segmented.

Comment – How about Hunt Road?

Response – C. Waszczuk explained that Hunt Road is a separate project and construction will begin early next year.

Comment – How about Old County Road?

Response – C. Waszczuk explained that right now the Department, in coordination with the ATF, is trying to determine which areas along the corridor are highest priorities. Old County Road

could be an area that may be constructed in the 2005 to 2010 time frame. More discussions are needed before these decisions can be made.

Comment – It is hard to imagine that traffic will flow as smoothly as it does today with five additional signals. Has any consideration been given to coordinating the signals?

Response – C. Waszczuk explained that the signals would be coordinated where it makes sense. In order for them to work effectively, the signals need to be spaced no greater than approximately ½ mile apart. In the southern section of the project, the signals are spaced at a good distance for coordination. Further to the north, the distance between the signals is greater, thus coordination in the northern end may be difficult.

Comment – Valerie Hershfield, Union Leader, asked how many emergency access turnarounds there are on the plan.

Response – S. Murdock explained that there are four emergency access median breaks spaced intermittently between the proposed intersections, and two over-widened shoulders that will be provided at signalized intersections. This results in a total of 6 emergency access turnarounds.

Comment – Has there been any coordination with the state of Massachusetts or the city of Haverhill for the section of NH 125 from I-495 north to the town of Plaistow.

Response – C. Waszczuk noted that Massachusetts has begun study on their segment of NH 125. He noted that it is in the very early stages of the study.

Comment – My concern is that at the present time there is a great deal of traffic that exits I-495 at the Route 125 exit in Haverhill. People are looking for alternate routes. Has this been addressed?

Response – Marilyn Senter, Plaistow Selectperson, stated that she has been working with the city of Haverhill and the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission. Louis Berger is currently working on a study for them that shows a possible new exit off I-495, in the vicinity of Route 97, that provides access to NH 121 and NH 125 in Plaistow and Atkinson.

Comment – What is the affect of a protracted construction schedule on controlled access ROW? Is there any flexibility in access points for future development?

Response – C. Waszczuk said yes, CAROW can be emended, similar to what was done for the Conway project.

Comment – Kenneth Fredrick noted that the proposed improvements extend onto the west side in between Dorre Road and Debra Road. That is a very steep hill there and significant blasting will be required. Can you comment on what is proposed in that area?

Response – C. Waszczuk explained that due to the extent of proposed work in this area, several property acquisitions are envisioned. He explained that the Department would be proposing to purchase his property.

Comment – Kenneth Fredrick offered to sell his house to the state and requested that the state make him an offer.

Response – C. Waszczuk acknowledged the offer and explained that the acquisition can't occur until after a successful Public Hearing has been held and design approval for the layout received (late-2004 at the earliest).

Comment – Support was expressed for the discontinuance of the NH 125 end of Walton Road.

Comment – Robert Kalil (Auto Mile) expressed concern with the impact of the proposed drainage easement on parcels 120 and 121. He stated that he has plans to expand his business and is worried about the impact of this drainage easement.

Response – C. Waszczuk explained that the drainage easements that have been shown are very preliminary. The Department can be flexible and would try to modify the layout, as development occurs to minimize impacts. (Subsequent to the meeting, he suggested the owners submit their plans for expansion and the Department would try to modify the easement as appropriate.)

Comment – Charles Kendrick (Re-Max) requested a driveway from NH 125 to the rear of his property on Walton Road.

Response – C. Waszczuk explained that vehicles would be able to make a u-turn at the directional median break for Walton Road. He said that the feasibility of a driveway onto Walton Road would be investigated.

Comment – Does the design for Danville Road accommodate large trucks? Was any consideration give to the amount of traffic on Main Street and Danville Road?

Response – C. Waszczuk mentioned that NH 121A is a state road and is more appropriate to accommodate the traffic volumes and movements in that area. M. Kennedy explained that there was a series of meetings early on in the project relative to this issue. He explained that options were considered that provided for a double left onto Danville Road, or NH 121A. It was determined that NH 121A was preferred. . It makes more sense to direct the heavy left-turning traffic at the NH 121A intersection. It is also further away from the school entrance at Greenough Road. Geometrically, the configuration of the NH 125/NH 121A intersection would accommodate a double left more easily. Both Danville Road and NH 121A will accommodate tractor-trailers.

Comments/Questions from the October 23rd Public Informational Meeting in Kingston, NH

Comment – Representative John Flanders from Kingston expressed his interest in moving this project along. He mentioned that he has been invited to Washington in December to meet with transportation officials to discuss funding issues.

Comment – Robert Geoffroy, owner of Kingston Foreign Auto, said he has been in business for 22 years and he is upset that his business is going to be acquired. He doesn't think the improvements are necessary because only two lanes are provided at the state line.

Response – C. Waszczuk explained that Mr. Geoffroy's opposition to the project would be noted.

Comment – Leslie Hume, Kingston Highway Safety Committee and member of ATF, explained that the current highway system is failing. She noted that she supports the current plan and

believes that it addresses all the safety issues and will support economic development along the NH 125 corridor. She explained that the heavy traffic of today will continue to grow, and it is important for the town of Kingston to have a plan to address it.

Comment – David Joy (Meeks Road) said it looks like a lot of changes have been made to the plan since the last meeting. He feels that the plan is too complicated and too many lights have been added.

Response – C. Waszczuk explained that today there are 23,000 vehicles traveling along NH 125 just north of East Road. Traffic disperses to the side roads further to the north, which is why the 5-lane section stops at Hunt Road. Exiting movements from side roads onto NH 125 are very difficult because there is no control. Traffic signals will be used to safely control vehicular movements at these intersections. C. Waszczuk explained that the signals would be coordinated, where appropriate.

Comment – Bill Hughes (Sunshine Drive) asked if the Department considered constructing a three-lane section with a center turn lane from Kingston Road to the north. He suggested following a progressive approach, building improvements from south to north.

Response – M. Kennedy explained that NH 125 is a major road that will continue to develop further to the north. Substantial congestion would result without a 5-lane section extending north to Hunt Road. Marty explained that there are currently 12,400 vehicles per day on NH 125 in the vicinity of Meeks Road. Assuming normal growth projections, that number is expected to increase to 21,000 vpd over the next twenty years. The southern section of the corridor, near East Road in Plaistow, currently has 23,000 vpd. Therefore, in twenty years time, the northern section of the corridor will likely experience similar traffic volumes as the southern section does today.

Comment – Scott Urwick (East Kingston Conservation Commission) explained that East Kingston would be indirectly impacted by this project because it is part of the Powwow River Watershed. He expressed environmental concerns regarding stormwater volume and quality due to increased impervious surfaces and asked for a copy of the environmental document.

Response – C. Waszczuk explained that the Department has included drainage easements on the plan to provide areas to construct treatment swales and detention ponds. He noted that these investigations are very preliminary and more details will follow when the project is in final design. He also explained that copies of the environmental document would be made available at local libraries and town offices.

Comment – Betty Mudd (Institute for Christian Renewal) questioned the proposed drainage within the limits of the Hunt Road project.

Response – C. Waszczuk explained that the Department has more refined plans within that area that he could show her after the meeting. He noted that the Department has purchased drainage easements on that property to maintain the proposed drainage.

Comment – Rep. Kim Casey (East Kingston) asked if the 21,000 vpd represent volumes for Friday afternoon during the summer. She also noted similar areas along NH 125 that have numerous signals (Epping and Lee) and tend to back up.

Response – M. Kennedy explained that the traffic counts were taken in November. Marty noted that the numbers are adjusted for appropriate design conditions that use the 30th highest hour for design. He also explained that the signals have been spaced evenly and will be coordinated. The signals will

be timed such that if you travel at the appropriate speed, you will get the green light at each signal. If you travel faster than the posted speed, you will reach the next signal before the green phase and will have to stop at a red light.

Comment – Ellen Faulconer (Kingston Planning Board) noted that she supports the current plan, which has much improved access from the initial concept. She said that the town needs to plan ahead for inevitable growth. She explained that she feels the current plan is the safest economically viable plan. The construction of center turn lanes without a median will cause increases in the police and ambulance budgets.

Comment – Robert Geoffroy (Kingston Foreign Auto) voiced his concerns about coordinated signals. He mentioned a six-lane boulevard in Philadelphia that is coordinated and he feels doesn't work properly. Motorists speed to get through successive signals before the lights turn red.

Comment – Robert Whitney (Whitney's Garage) noted that his business is being impacted by the project and he thinks that his building may be historic because it is older than 50 years. He asked the state to reevaluate the historical significance of his building.

Response – C. Waszczuk said that he would ask for it to be reevaluated.

Comment – Ellen Faulconer explained that it might be possible to relocate businesses on their current properties rather than relocating them or putting them out of business. Bill Janelle, NHDOT Right-of-Way Bureau, provided further clarification on property impacts and available compensation. He explained that there were two areas of funding that the Department considers; funding for property acquisitions at fair market value for the highest and best use and funding for relocation assistance. He reviewed the following ROW items:

- Appraisals are completed by the State. The owner can complete separate appraisal (reimbursement by the State is available)
- Relocation assistance is available for
 - Moving expenses
 - Modifying building expenses
 - Constructing a new building
 - Reestablishment expenses
- Also, a Property owner could move a building back on property with money received in the settlement.

Comment – Jeff Hirsch (Campers' Inn, Kingston) asked how far into the future the proposed improvements would operate adequately. He mentioned that he is concerned about higher travel speeds north of the five-lane median divided section. He voiced his concerns about a 3-lane section with a center turn lane, citing his business on Amherst Street in Nashua. He explained that people wouldn't come to his business because they couldn't turn safely into his driveway. He noted that he thinks that the Department has done a great job having these public forums, getting input from the communities, and trying to come up with a reasonable solution.

Response – M. Kennedy explained that the traffic volumes and development growth had been projected out 20 years. Marty explained that travel speeds will not be able to be controlled as well further to the north, and that it will be an enforcement issue. C. Waszczuk reiterated that the safest facility is one with a raised median.

Comment – Peter Broderick (Kingston Selectman) expressed his support for the current plan. He asked the audience to imagine the impacts in the future if nothing is done to improve the corridor.

Comment – C. Waszczuk stated that the previous night’s meeting in Plaistow was positive. He noted that he has heard mixed comments tonight from the Kingston community. He asked the audience if there is a level of consensus in carrying this proposed plan forward to a Public Hearing.

Response – Half of the audience supports the plan as needed for future development; half of audience feels that the design is excessive.

Comment – Ellen Faulconer added that town officials and the Department would be willing to meet with any interested property owners one-on-one to further discuss any plan details or the ROW process.