

April 5, 2021

**STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE**  
**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**  
**BUREAU OF TSMO**

**Meeting Minutes**

**PROJECT:** Portsmouth – York 16189B

**DATE OF MEETING:** March 24, 2021

**LOCATION OF CONFERENCE:** ZOOM Conference Call

**Attendees:**

NHDOT

Bill Cass  
Charles Blackman  
Jon Evans  
Steve Lemire

MTA

Ralph Norwood

MaineDOT

Steve Hunnewell

VHB

Mark Suennen  
Dan Schandel

Members from the General Public

**SUBJECT:** Portsmouth – York 16189B Public Informational Meeting

M. Suennen served as the meeting moderator and introduced the Project Manager Charles Blackman who then presented the overall project. The presentation included a brief update on the existing HLB rehab project, reasons why an ITS project is needed, and what solutions are being considered. Jon Evans then presented the Environmental aspects of this project. J. Evans noted that the Department is in the process of reviewing the project area to identify the presence of and potential impacts to any environmental, cultural and socioeconomic resources. J. Evans noted that cultural resources have been identified adjacent to the project area. J. Evans noted that Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act awards parties with an interest in cultural resources to become what are known as consulting parties which affords additional opportunities to participate in the Section 106 cultural resource review process. J. Evans noted that if anyone would like to become a consulting party or would like additional information on this process to please contact either Charles Blackman or himself.

The HLB rehab project is on schedule to finish in May of 2022 and will be fixing the structural elements of the bridge to last another 20 years or more.

The existing roadway on and around the HLB sees severe congestion during summer weekends which can lead to traveler delays and accidents. By proceeding with an ITS solution of using the low speed shoulder dynamically as an extra traveled way when conditions warrant its use, we can efficiently increase capacity at the times when it is needed most while staying within the existing roadway footprint. This alternative is much less expensive and far quicker to implement than a traditional major roadway and bridge widening type of project.

## Q&A

Q: Cristy Cardoso indicated that the project website did not contain the Zoom meeting information that was stated in the public notice letter. She was concerned that people may not be able to access the meeting that wanted to attend.

A: C. Blackman apologized for the oversight and stated that it was too late to update the project webpage at this point. It was also noted that the NHDOT website and letter that people saw to know about the meeting both contained the Zoom information.

Q: Cristy Cardoso asked if this meeting would be recorded and made available.

A: Yes the meeting will be recorded, however it will not be made publicly available.

Q: Representative Jackie Cali-Pitts noted that she recalled pieces of the bridge falling off the Truss and then the State declaring the land unsafe below. She asked if the land would be usable again.

A: The bridge has been repaired and there is no longer debris falling from it. The park has been closed, however the ownership is complicated and there are no plans to reopen the park with this project.

Q: Joe Pescatello stated that Mr. Blackman spoke about some technology being applied to help with traffic flow, but everything he mentioned sounded like it would be used to monitor traffic. Monitoring in itself won't change traffic patterns. He asked for an explanation of how that technology will actually improve traffic flow.

A: The technology will be used to monitor when traffic slows down and to ensure that the Shoulder Use is turned on and off appropriately if there are incidents or breakdowns or if traffic congestion warrants using the shoulder running. The technology will help assist in live people making decisions that will directly impact traffic.

Q: IBenton asked how tall the tower in Atlantic Heights on Ranger Way is going to be.

A: The final design has not been done yet, however it is expected to be between 105'-110'. Line of sight is needed to all of the devices as well as to the water tower at Pease.

Q: Mark Stevens indicated that he has experience with this type of system from England. He was very concerned with this system and felt that it was a bad idea. He shared that 44 people have died in the past 5 years in England using the Hard Shoulder. He feels that the Hard shoulder is not safe for travel due to so many drivers being distracted and having cars broken down in the shoulder.

A: We feel that there are a few differences between the system in England and what is being proposed here. We also feel that the proposed solution will be safe, as safety is our top priority and if we didn't feel that it was going to be safe we would not be moving forward with this solution.

- **Full time vs Part time use** - The default condition of the system is that the shoulder operates as a shoulder whereas the SMART system appears to default to use as a general purpose lane.
- **Length** – The Portsmouth-York 16189B is a short segment (approximately 3.25 miles, one direction), linking on-ramp to off-ramp traffic whereas the SMART system is a much longer freeway-style segments with long sections between interchanges, and is hundreds of miles long.

- **Sign viewing** - The design intent is to have at least one, and preferably two, Lane Use Signals in view to the driver at all times whereas the SMART system appears to have longer distances between gantry systems and areas with no viewing available for long stretches.
- **Striping** - The striping of the shoulder for I-95/Maine Turnpike shows it as a distinctly different lane whereas the SMART system looks very much like a general purpose lane.
- **Operation Response time** - The operations of the Portsmouth-York 16189B shoulder system will be continuously monitored when the system is turned on with the intention of having 100% video coverage of the shoulder available to the operators. The system will also include coordination with local emergency and State Police dispatch on both sides of the bridge to encourage rapid response to a disabled vehicle identified in the shoulder. The average response time in England is 34 minutes from when a vehicle becomes disabled until first responders arrive. This time is expected to be drastically shorter for the proposed system.
- **Radar and CCTV coverage** – We are proposing 100% viewing of the shoulders where England has large gaps.
- **Variable Speed Limit signs** – England uses variable speed limit signs over specific lanes, however we do not plan to use variable speed limits signs as we do not think there is additional value with them.

Q: IBenton asked if it would make sense to hang the antennas off of the bridge itself.

A: The current microwave system is on the bridge and due to the vibrations and bouncing of the bridge, it leads to the microwave signal being dropped due to the small margin of error with receiving the small microwave beam with the antenna dish.

Q: Nicole Pollack stated that she lives in the Atlantic Heights neighborhood and is concerned about the antenna height. She felt that it would be a really tall and intrusive. She asked if the tower would affect wifi or cell service.

A: The tower will only be about 10' or so above the existing soundwall on the bridge and it will be located on the opposite side of the bridge from the neighborhood. We do not feel that it will be very noticeable from the neighborhood. The tower would not affect wifi service or cell service positively or negatively.

Q: Larry Cataldo asked if the tower would be painted in any colors that would blend it into the environment.

A: No the tower is not proposed to be painted. The color will be the light blueish grey color like all of the light poles and CCTV poles in the area.

Q: Kerry Kenney asked if there had been any discussion about the aesthetics of the tower during the design process since it will be sitting in an historical neighborhood.

A: The tower is expected to be a truss tower, however it may also end up being a monopole.

Q: Mark Gardner stated that truck traffic has been greatly increased using the Sarah Long Bridge while the I-95 bridge construction is underway combined with the new traffic light at the intersection of River

Street and Route 1 bypass in Kittery. Is there anything that could be done to decrease engine breaking noise caused by the trucks? For example could more signs be put up asking the trucks not to use their engine breaks while on this section of road? If so who has the responsibility for positing signs?

A: In New Hampshire the Attorney General has decided that NHDOT cannot install “no Jake Braking” because it could open the State to liability if a truck gets into an accident.

Q: Michael stated that there has been increased traffic with the closure of Exit 1 off of I-95. He mentioned that there is a new 300 unit complex that will be build close to exit 1. He also asked if anything would be changing at Exit 2.

A: We are aware that when Exit 1 is closed the local street network will see more traffic but we will have a detour in place if we ultimately decide to close Exit 1. We are also working with VHB on additional modeling to see if there is anything else like Ramp Metering that may help avoid closing Exit 1. This study is about half way complete. We have recently been made aware of the 300 unit complex has been given approval. Exit 2 will remain unchanged with this project.

Q: Nicole Pollack asked how much the traffic would increase during construction. Will bridge workers be parking on Ranger way? There seems to be a number of speeding trucks from Irving on Kearsarge way.

A: There will be some trucks needed to do the work, however it shouldn't be that many or for that long. We are unaware and unable to comment on the Irving truck traffic concern.

Q: Phil Cohen asked if there would be any radiation that will be generated from the proposed antenna. He also asked if at the completion of the bridge project, that the parks in the neighborhood beneath will be able to be reopened for active use.

A: There will be minimal radiation generated from the antenna and the small amount would be high up above where any people will be. There is no plan to reopen the parks under the bridge with this project.

Q: Phillip Cohen asked if there was data available regarding the kind of radiation that can be shared.

A: We will research this topic and we will post it to the Project Website.

Q: Will there be any remediation of the land under the bridge where the Contractors staging area currently is?

A: The bridge rehab contractor will leave the site as they found it.

Sincerely,

*Charles E. Blackman*

Charles Blackman, P.E.  
NHDOT ITS Project Manager