

**Hampton Harbor Bridge Project  
Summary of Meeting with Abutters  
Seabrook Community Center  
311 Lafayette Road, Seabrook  
December 12, 2018 – 6:30 PM**

At the first public information meeting, held in late September, residents who live near the bridge that spans Hampton Harbor (Sun Valley area) had asked to meet with the project team to have a dialogue about potential impacts of a new or rehabilitated bridge. NHDOT responded it would meet with residents in December, once the team had an opportunity to conduct more study to identify potential bridge options.

On December 12, 2018 the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) attended this open house meeting with Hampton Beach and Seabrook Beach residents

The project team brought large aerial maps that illustrated potential bridge alignments and their land impacts. Options included:

- Bridge Replacement that increases the roadway height by 10'-15' at existing abutment locations
- Bridge Replacement that increases the roadway height by 7' at existing abutment locations
- Bridge Replacement that increases the roadway height by 5' at existing abutment locations

Additionally, the maps showed two different locations:

- Off-line: east of existing bridge
- Off-line: west of existing bridge

Three stations were set up within the meeting room, each with identical maps. As the public filtered into the room they chose a station to speak with and ask questions of the team representative at the table - Jennifer Reczek, NHDOT Project Manager, James Murphy, HDR consulting engineer and Bob Landry, NHDOT Bridge Bureau Administrator. After about 30 minutes of open session at the stations, where members of the public spoke with project engineers, attendees gathered in a circle and asked questions and shared opinions with the project team. The following is a summary of what the team heard at the public open house meeting.

### **West vs East Alignment**

Overall, meeting attendees preferred the west alignment because it had less impact on residences.

Some expressed hope that the small business rentals on the northwest corner could be saved through the use of retaining walls. There was some concern that the western alignment would be eliminated because there are endangered species located on the west side. A resident responded that she believed environmental mitigation would likely occur at another location so presence of protected species would not preclude a new bridge being built on the west side. Another resident stated if the east side is selected access to Campton St needs to be maintained.

Several attendees focused on what homes were impacted under the various east alignment bridge options illustrated on the map. They wondered about how takings would work. NHDOT responded there was a process the State follows when it is necessary to take a property for a project, but it is too soon to determine if that would be necessary. NHDOT prefers to be conservative in its approach during preliminary engineering. Impacts may be far less when the project undergoes final engineering, particularly through the use of retaining walls. Even with the use of retaining walls, certain properties could be adversely affected by the road moving closer. The NHDOT will coordinate with these property owners about what their options are.

### **Visual Impact of a New Bridge**

Many had questions about the visual impact a new bridge would have on residences if the roadway was raised to accommodate a bridge higher than the existing bridge. The map shown at the stations indicated the grade change may impact up to six homes, depending on the increase in height at the abutments and alignment location selected. A common question was, "What will it look like in front of my house when the roadway is raised?"

People focused on the potential appearance and heights of potential retaining walls that could be used to minimize the impact of raising the elevation of the roadway. They asked the team about exactly how high it would be in front of their particular home as they understood the height would vary, tapering in size, the further it extended from the bridge. NHDOT staff explained the impacts and stated that more information including renderings would be provided at future public informational meetings. NHDOT was also asked to show at the upcoming public informational meeting potential impacts to properties on the north side of the bridge of various alignments.

### **Keeping the Existing Bridge**

One resident asked if the existing bridge would have to be kept because it is historic. The response from NHDOT was no, it could be replaced with a new bridge though mitigation for its loss would be required.

Another individual suggested a span or two of the existing bridge be could be saved as a fishing pier (in this case NHDOT would be looking for an outside entity to assume ownership and future maintenance responsibility).

An additional comment was to remove the bridge and build boat slips or build a new bridge over the existing bridge

**Who Decides and When? When will Construction Begin?**

Residents were eager to know when a decision would be made and by whom. They asked, “Who makes the decision about the alignment? What is the earliest we’ll know a decision is made on east vs west? Doesn’t the bridge decision come down to the US Coast Guard?”

NHDOT staff responded that it would be ready to make a preliminary recommendation on bridge type and location by the spring of 2019. The Coast Guard will have to permit the project and will be interested to hear community views. The preferred alternative and its impacts and alternatives will be outlined in the environmental report, which will require the Federal Highway Administration’s approval for the project to move forward.

Construction would not begin until 2023.