

August 30, 2016

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

CONFERENCE REPORT

PROJECT: WALPOLE-CHARLESTOWN 14747
Reconstruct NH Route 12 from Main Street in North Walpole north,
approximately 3 miles, to NH Route 12A in South Charlestown

DATE OF CONFERENCE: June 8, 2016

LOCATION OF CONFERENCE: North Walpole School

ATTENDED BY:
See attached sign in sheet

SUBJECT: Public Informational Meeting

NOTES ON CONFERENCE:

This Public Informational Meeting Meeting was held to provide an update on the project status. D. Lyford started the meeting with a brief introduction describing revisions since the previous Public Hearing on July 29, 2010. He indicated that the alternative presented at the previous hearing (referred to herein as the "current design"), which included shifting the roadway and railroad to the east, was no longer the supported option due to a significant increase in rock excavation costs associated with blasting adjacent to an active railroad. The updated unit price for rock excavation created an increase of the total estimated construction cost from \$15-20 Million to \$33 Million. He clarified that there is only \$16.9 Million currently programmed for this project. D. Lyford also explained that the revised scope, as presented at this meeting, was reviewed by the Natural Resource Agencies on March 16, 2016, and the Project Advisory Committee on April 12, 2016.

Following, S. Fifield reiterated the purpose of the project, which is to increase the safety of the corridor by widening the roadway, installing guardrail and improving the roadway travel surface. She also highlighted the constraints of the project, including the proximity of the roadway to the Connecticut River and the railroad, as well as the prevalence of ledge within the area. She also explained issues that occurred during further development of the current design, which included difficult coordination with New England Central Railroad regarding track relocation, blasting coordination and impacts to the construction phasing and timeline, utility relocations and the presence of mildly contaminated railroad ballast within the rail bed.

S. Fifield continued her presentation by summarizing the investigation performed by the Department to provide an alternative design. This included development of a new alignment that avoids significant rock blasting and impacts to the railroad tracks, supports traffic control and a reduced construction timeline, provides riverbank stability and minimizes construction costs. As part of the new alignment, two riverbank design features were considered, an armored slope with surface vegetation, and a retaining wall structure. However, after both options were evaluated, the armored slope with surface vegetation was selected, based on providing a more natural context, less long term maintenance, and easier construction, as well as a lower construction cost (herein referred to as the “proposed design”). S. Fifield closed the presentation acknowledging that the proposed design does result in an increase in environmental impacts to the river over the current design, although both the current and proposed designs require wetland permitting. Additionally, the proposed design will require a hydrologic and hydraulic (H & H) study of the rivers base flood elevation, as a result of the proposed armored slope filling into the river.

Following the presentation, questions were taken from the Public. Below is a summary of the public’s comments and or questions and the Department’s responses to the questions:

1. What type of traffic control will be utilized on this project, and has the potential economic impact to businesses been considered with anticipated traffic control operations? It was noted that the area has already been impacted by other closed bridges.

Response: The Department anticipates one lane alternating two-way traffic patterns. The constraints of the project do not offer many options for traffic control. As the Department will maintain use of the roadway during construction it is anticipated that the economic impacts will be minimal.

2. Can the new design support a typical with 12’ travel lanes and 5’ shoulders, instead of 11’ lanes and 5’ shoulders?

Response: The Department will investigate the impacts associated with the wider lane to determine if it is feasible to include the additional travel lane width.

3. Will the proposed surface vegetation include deep rooted trees and shrubs for the armored slope with surface vegetation option?

Response: The Department was advised by the Natural Resource Agencies to utilize local plant species to re-vegetate the armored slopes, which is the Departments intent. The armored slopes can be designed to allow for tree wells and other deep rooted species of plants. Research completed on rock slope systems supports the use of deep rooted plant life to provide long term dynamic stability to the slopes.

4. Victor and Michael Spigarolo (Parcel 14) expressed concern with additional impacts to their property and requested that the Department consult with them during the final design process. They also requested that their drive be relocated north of its current location. They also requested the elimination of passing zones through this stretch of roadway and a reduction in the speed limit to 30 mph.

Response: The Department will investigate options to minimize additional impacts to Parcel 14, as well as consider options to relocate their driveway. The Department will also review the current passing zones and speed limit within the project. It was noted that speed limits are typically based on the context of the road, as well as the speed at which 85 percent of the public would have to be travelling. To legally reduce the posted speed limit, 85 percent of the vehicles would need to be driving at 30mph or less, otherwise a reduction in the posted speed would not necessarily result in lower traveling speeds, and could place an undue burden on the local authorities to enforce. The Department will consider completing a speed study on NH Route 12 that inventories the traveling speed of cars, to compare it to the current posted speed limit.

5. Does the Department have Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) approval and jurisdictional permitting approval for this new design?

Response: The Department has presented this proposed design to the Natural Resource Agencies, including the ACOE, on two separate occasions and received a favorable response. The Agencies have stated that they will permit the design as long as the Department has followed the required process for evaluating alternatives.

6. What are the limits of the project?

Response: The project begins adjacent to the intersection of NH Route 12 and Main Street in North Walpole and proceeds north approximately 3 miles to just south of the intersection of NH Route 12 and NH Route 12A.

7. What is the current width of the pavement and what is the proposed width of the pavement?

Response: The current width of the pavement is between 22 and 24 feet. The proposed typical is 11 foot travel lanes and 5 foot shoulders for a total width of 32 feet. As previously indicated, the Department will investigate increasing the travel lane width to 12 feet for a total pavement width of 34 feet.

8. Does the Department know if the NH Department of Environmental Services (DES) has any plans to address flooding in the Village of Walpole?

Response: The Department is unaware of any DES projects that address flooding and/or resultant bank erosion in the Village of Walpole.

9. Will this project create downstream flooding or riverbank erosion?

Response: The Department will complete a hydraulic and hydrologic (H & H) study to determine if armoring the riverbank slopes within the project limits will negatively impact downstream riverbanks and properties. Preliminary investigations have indicated that this project will not create negative impacts downstream.

10. Nicholas Poselli (Parcel 1), whose property is located just south and outside of the project limits, noted that in 1997, a \$1 million grant became available that could have addressed the erosion caused by flooding that occurred approximately 20 years ago. He noted that the

grant became unavailable when the Department assessed that the flood damage did not destabilize NH Route 12. He noted that riverbank stabilization is an issue for properties located just south of the project limits.

Response: Noted.

11. Where does the armored surface end and does it terminate at the waterline?

Response: The armored slope extends to the toe of slope (below the waterline) to provide a stable foundation. The slope is 1.5 feet horizontal for every 1 foot vertical to minimize impacts to the river and wetlands.

12. Reducing riverbank erosion should be a main objective for this project and should include the riverbank south of the limits of work.

Response: The Department will investigate downstream impacts due to the project.

13. Current Bellows Falls Dam records and operation procedures should be reviewed as part of the H & H Study, as TransCanada is a relatively new owner of the dam, and may follow different operating procedures that could affect the water elevation.

Response: The Department will review the Dam operations as part of the H & H study.

14. It was mentioned that the Bellows Falls Dam is undergoing relicensing and that erosion should be one of the components that is evaluated during the process.

Response: Noted.

15. How much blasting will be needed to build the proposed design?

Response: Rock removal will be limited to what is needed to build the roadway structural box and drainage. It is likely that the blasting shots will be relatively small, if blasting is used. Mechanical means of removing the rock may be utilized as well.

16. There was previously a “No Wake Zone” sign on the river in the southern portion of the project. Can the Department consider replacing the sign, as the wakes from boats may be contributing to the continued erosion of the riverbank.

Response: The Department will look into having the sign replaced.

17. What is the redesign timeframe?

Response: This proposed design is anticipated to be advertised in the fall of 2017, with the construction completion in the fall of 2019.

18. What will be the capacity of NH Route 12 after construction?

Response: The capacity of the roadway will be between 10,000 – 12,000 vehicles per day. Projected traffic numbers for 2033 is approximately 8,500 vehicles per day.

19. It was mentioned that Trans Canada is completing an H & H study as part of the relicensing process and that the Department may be able to use some of the study's information on this project.

Response: The Department is uncertain if and when the information would be available from Trans Canada, but will attempt to coordinate the effort.

20. What is the depth of the rock for the proposed armored slope?

Response: Two sizes of stone will be used to construct the armored slopes. The larger of the two will be a minimum of 3 feet thick and extend from the toe of slope to approximately 2 feet above ordinary high water (OHW). The smaller stone will extend up the remaining portion of the slope, and will be placed in a layer 2-foot thick with 6-inches of humus on top to allow for vegetation. It was noted though that the typical shown for the armored slopes corresponds to a preliminary design and that the thickness of the stone may change as the design is refined.

21. What will the Department do if the vegetation is washed off of the slopes prior to being established?

Response: The Department will utilize Best Management Practices (BMPs) to minimize the potential for erosion of the vegetation, with applications of rolled erosion control products as well as hydraulically sprayed mulches to support permanent stabilization. However, the standard contract documents include language that mandates that the Contractor address any erosion or stability issues prior to the Department accepting the project as completed.

22. How long will the Department monitor the project limits for invasive species and who will address the removal of the species if found?

Response: Typically, the contract has language built into it that instructs the Contractor how to address invasive species (Best Management Practices for Roadside Invasive Plants, as well as Invasive Species Control and Management Plan and Invasive Species Control Items). Any subsequent management of the invasive species will be the responsibility of the Department through Highway Maintenance.

23. When would construction activities actually begin?

Response: The Department anticipates advertising the project in September of 2017. The bid period, bid opening and Governor and Council (G & C) award of the contract typically takes two to three months. Notice to Proceed could potentially be granted in Winter 2017, but it is likely construction would not begin until the Spring 2018.

24. Victor and Michael Spigarolo (Parcel 14) expressed concern that blasting operations near their property will negatively impact their well. They asked for their well to be tested before and after completion of blasting operations. They also expressed concerns about changes to the existing drainage within their property, and asked if drainage that had been included in the current design would also be included in the proposed design.

Response: The Department will follow the appropriate protocol for blasting near existing wells and will include items in the Contract that allows for well testing. Usually wells are monitored before, during and after blasting operations have been completed. Relative to proposed drainage, to avoid impacts to the railroad corridor, the proposed design will require the Department to perpetuate the existing railroad drainage to the maximum extent practical. However, all drainage included in the current design will need to be reviewed relative to the proposed design.

25. Victor and Michael Spigarolo noted that they have Right-of-Way (ROW) impact agreements with the Department and would like to verify that what had already been agreed to would be honored.

Response: The Department anticipates limiting proposed impacts to what was identified in the current design, however, if new impacts are determined as necessary, the Department's ROW Bureau will coordinate with the property owners.

26. It was mentioned that the Department had previously installed monitoring wells and was asked if the wells had been monitored after installation.

Response: The monitoring wells were installed to determine water table fluctuations to evaluate the use of permanent Stormwater BMPs. Stormwater BMPs are engineered water treatment areas that are designed to treat pavement runoff in an effort to reduce the release of pollutants into the environment. However, it was noted early in the design process that the existing soils and topographical constraints were not conducive to constructing a BMPs as part of this project.

27. It was noted that many of the design questions posed by the public cannot be answered until the project enters into Final Design. Another Public Informational Meeting was requested once the design has been refined.

Response: The Department will bring this project to another public informational meeting once the design has advanced.

28. Kevin Belanger (NHDOT District 4) mentioned that the construction schedule will most likely be driven by utility relocations. A significant number of poles will have to be relocated before work could begin on the slopes, which will impact the overall construction schedule.

Response: The Department will continue to coordinate with the utility companies for relocation timeframes, as the design advances.

29. Who determines where the utilities are to be located and who pays for the relocations.

Response: As the project enters into final design, verification of existing utilities usually occurs, followed by coordination between the Department and the utility companies relative to conflicts between the proposed design and existing facilities, resulting in final approved relocation plans. In general, payment for relocation depends on where the utility is relative to the state owned ROW. If the utility is within the state owned ROW, it is there by

sufferance and the cost of the relocation is the responsibility of the utility company. If the utility is located outside of state owned ROW or if the utility is located in a utility easement within the ROW, then the relocation costs are the responsibility of the Department. Specifically in the case of this project, the Department anticipates the utility companies to pay for the cost of relocations.

30. When is the completion of the H and H study expected?

Response: The Department will have to review the design schedule with the Consultant.

31. It was noted that although the Department did not anticipate downstream impacts to the river due to the armored slopes, the flow characteristics of the river would change.

Response: The Department acknowledged that this may be the case, and will review as part of the H & H study.

32. Where will the Contractor stage materials and equipment for the project?

Response: Staging will be considered once the proposed design progresses. However, typically the Department does not stipulate staging locations, which falls under the Contractors means and methods.

33. It was mentioned that if local residents are concerned about riverbank erosion caused by river elevation fluctuations due to the Bellows Falls Dam operations, they should get involved in the relicensing process.

Response: Noted.

34. This portion of NH Route 12 is considered a Connecticut River Scenic Byway, it would be beneficial to the Byway for the utilities to be relocated to the east side of the road.

Response: Utility relocations to the east side of the roadway may be problematic due to the Railroad's required minimum horizontal offset distance (25-feet from the center of the tracks to the relocated overhead utility pole location).

35. What is the minimum distance required between the railroad tracks and the roadway?

Response: The desired horizontal offset between the railroad and the roadway is between 15 and 20 feet, based on New England Central Railroad (NECR) guidance. The minimum horizontal distance provided in the proposed design is 14.5 feet, which is an improvement over the existing condition.

36. How much will this project cost local taxpayers?

Response: 80% of the cost will be paid for by the Federal Highway Administration with the remaining 20% cost paid for by the New Hampshire Highway Fund, which is primarily funded by the State's gas tax. This project will have no direct cost to local taxpayers.

Submitted by:

Samantha D. Fifield

Samantha D. Fifield, P.E.
Consultant Supervisor

SDF/sdf

NOTED BY: MAB, D. Lyford

cc: D. Lyford, File

SAHighway-Design(TOWNS)\Walpole\14747\CONF-RPTS\PIMeetingMinutes06-8-16.docx

Public Informational Meeting

PROJECT: Walpole-Charlestown 14747

DATE: June 8, 2016

LOCATION: Walpole, NH

NAME	ORGANIZATION	TELEPHONE	E-MAIL
Richard Lincourt	Charlestown PB	603-826-0295	r.lincourt@att.net
Rep Lucy Weber	Cheshire DI	603-756-4338	LWMEVER@COMCAST.NET
Rep Tara Erickson	" "	756-4861	tara-erik@gmail.com
JOEL McCarty		835-2577	
Thomas Cobb	Charlestown Selectman	558 8281	CobbT@ gmail.com
Steve Neill	selectboard Charlestown	826-4460	—
Brandon Kibbe	TransCanada	508/475-6773	brandon_kibbe@transcanada.com
David Edkins	Town of Charlestown	826-5368	
Jen Griffin	TransCanada	603-966-077	jennifer-griffin@transcanada.co
Karen Mader	neighbor	603-445-7050	ka.madr@comcast.net
Diane + Moe Hartly	Neighbor/Resident	603-445-5365	mhartly2@yahoo.com
Albert St. Pierre			cedarhedge@myfairpoint.net
JOHN PESKA	WALPOLE CONSERVATION COMMISSION	603-756 9210	PESKAJ@MYFAIRPOINT.NET

Public Informational Meeting

PROJECT: Walpole-Charlestown 14747

DATE: June 8, 2016

LOCATION: Walpole, NH

NAME	ORGANIZATION	TELEPHONE	E-MAIL
Aare Ilves	Town of Charlestown	603-826-3126	aareilves@comcast.net
Michael Abbott	NH state representative	603-336-7090	amsabb@hotmail.com
ROGER THIBODEAU	CHARLESTOWN	826-5115	twinsteng@aol.com
GERALD BRADY	NO. WALPOLE	445-5636	—
Jania + Matt	No Walpole	445-5456	
Sharon Francis	Charlestown P Bd	826-5565	You have it
William Fowle	Charlestown NH	826-3118	wwfowle@comcast.net
Richard Holmes	Charlestown NH	445-5209	
J.B. Mack	SWRPC	357-0557	jbmack@surpc.org
Ann Shaghey	No Walpole	445-2418	shagand@gmail.com
Moe Biran	Mr G's / Discount Food	445-2412	mogs@yahoo.com
John Bruno	Res. Charlestown	445-2307	lmbruno7@gmail.com
HERB WERDEN	NO. WALPOLE	445-5267	

Public Informational Meeting

PROJECT: Walpole-Charlestown 14747

DATE: June 8, 2016

LOCATION: Walpole, NH

NAME	ORGANIZATION	TELEPHONE	E-MAIL
Kevin Belinger	NH DOT District 4	352-2302	kbelinger@dot.state.nh.us
Don Provencher	North Walpole	445-2064	
Rob Spivack	North Walpole Village Commission		
Victor Spigarello	Resident	603-313-1276	La Fayette 1959@yahoo.com
Michael Spigarello	256 Bellows Falls Rd		
Steven Smith	State Rep. Sullis	826-5976	
Tom Lawan	St. Rep. Charlestown	826-3137	
SAMANTHA FIELD	NH DOT	271-1591	sfield@dot.state.nh.us
Don Lyford	NH DOT	271-2165	dlyford@dot.state.nh.us
Margaret Baldwin	NH DOT	271-6675	mbaldwin@dot.state.nh.us