

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

CONFERENCE REPORT

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

DATE OF CONFERENCE: September 10, 2008

LOCATION OF CONFERENCE: Charlestown Silsby Library/Municipal Building

ATTENDED BY: **Project Lead Team**

Nate Miller, Upper Valley Lake Sunapee RPC
Donald Lyford – NHDOT Project Manager (PAC Member)
Michael Dugas – NHDOT Chief of Preliminary Design
Jon Evans – NHDOT Bureau of Environment (PAC member)
C.R. Willeke – NHDOT Preliminary Design Engineer

Project Advisory Committee

Fred Poisson, Charlestown Citizen Representative & Abutter
William Sullivan, Charlestown Economic Development Authority
Aare Ilves, Charlestown Citizen Representative
Debra Livingston, Fall Mountain Regional School District
Jon LeClair, Charlestown Selectboard
Richard Holmes, Charlestown Conservation Commission
(Absent) Bruce Putnam, Charlestown Business Rep & Highway Advisory Board
(Absent) Robert Beaudry, Charlestown Business Representative
Albert St. Pierre, Charlestown Citizen Representative
David Edkins, Charlestown Planning and Zoning Administrator
Eric Lutz, UVLSRPC Commissioner (Charlestown)
Keith Weed, Charlestown Highway Superintendent
(Absent) Ed Smith, Charlestown Police Chief
Sharon Francis, Connecticut River Joint Commissions
J.B. Mack, SWRPC (formerly Tim Garceau)
Christine Walker, UVLSRPC
Patrick Kiniry, North Walpole Village Commissioners
Jim Terrell, Walpole Selectboard Designee
(Absent) Jeff Miller, Walpole Planning Board
(Absent) Marcia Galloway, Walpole Conservation Commission
(Absent) Donald Lennon, Walpole Business Representative
Charlie Lennon (for Donald Lennon)
(Absent) Ken Alton, TransCanada Corporation
(Future member) Mike Lawyer, New England Central Railroad
(Absent) Douglas Ring, Charlestown Planning Board

SUBJECT: **Project Advisory Committee (PAC) Meeting #6 Minutes**

NOTES ON CONFERENCE:

On September 10, 2008 approximately 21 people gathered at the Silsby Library in Charlestown for a meeting facilitated by the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) and the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission (UVLSRPC). The intent of the meeting was to review and discuss a series of four design alternatives for the reconstruction of NH 12 from Main Street in North Walpole to the intersection of NH12/NH 12A in South Charlestown.

Introduction

Donald Lyford, project manager for the NHDOT, welcomed everyone and asked the participants to introduce themselves. After audience introductions, Nate Miller from Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission reviewed the meeting agenda.

Confirmation of Screening Criteria

Nate reviewed the Screening Criteria developed at the June meeting of the Project Advisory Committee, and asked if there were any concerns. The Committee expressed no concerns, and confirmed their consensus on the Screening Criteria.

“Option #2 - Railroad as a Control”

C.R. Willeke explained the “Railroad as a Control” alternative, noting that this option would see the railroad location held as is, with road construction happening to the west (toward the Connecticut River). The lanes would be 12’ wide with 4’ shoulders, and some areas would require retaining walls to avoid disruptions to the railroad tracks. C.R. noted that NHDOT has received strong feedback from the Natural Resource agencies against this alternative because of its potential impacts to the Connecticut River.

Question: Did NHDOT drill as part of a geological study of the area?

Yes, drilling occurred in August. NHDOT technicians found steeply angled ledge in some areas of the project, which limits the types of retaining walls that can be built. In one sample, technicians found 4 feet of pavement thickness.

Question: Has a representative of the railroad commented on this alternative?

The New England Central Railroad employee who was to participate on the Committee has retired. NHDOT is seeking a new representative; however, NHDOT has Railroad experts on staff in the Bureau of Rail and Transit who assisted in providing specifications for the development of the alternatives.

Nate Miller asked if NHDOT and the Project Advisory Committee agreed that this alternative was not feasible for environmental reasons. Everyone agreed that the alternative was not feasible, and that the alternative should not be pursued further.

“Option #3 - River as a Control”

C.R. Willeke explained the “River as a Control” alternative, noting that this alternative would see all the road construction happening to the east with minimal impacts to the Connecticut River. This alternative would require nearly the entire railroad track in the project area to be relocated. C.R. explained that this alternative would require significant cuts into the hillside because the railroad requires a distance of 14’ between sets of tracks and 18’ for a service road. In some cases, the alternative would require 40’ vertical cuts.

C.R. noted that this alternative would also see NH 12 moved to the east in the southern area of the project to avoid slope stability issues with the Connecticut River, but that north of the railroad track switch, the road can be moved back closer to its existing location. Jon Evans explained that while this alternative minimizes impacts on the Connecticut River, it could impact multiple potential archeological sites along the hillside.

Question: Is slope stability an issue north of the track switch?

According to NHDOT geo-technicians, slope stability is not an issue in this area.

Question: What is the cost of this alternative?

A rough estimate indicates that the alternative would cost approximately \$15 -20 Million.

Question: How much does it cost to relocate a railroad?

The current cost of relocating a railroad is approximately \$1 Million per mile (rails, ties, and ballast).

Question: Would this alternative have any property impacts?

There may be impacts to the rear portion of the Augustinowicz property, and driveways accessing Meany’s Cove residences could easily be extended.

Question: What would happen to the existing roadway?

This will require further discussion. On the south end of the project, the road could possibly be used for recreation. On the north end, not much will remain.

“Option #4 - The Other Side of the Tracks”

C.R. Willeke explained the “Other Side of the Tracks” alternative, noting that this alternative would see Route 12 relocated east of the railroad. This alternative does not require the relocation of the existing tracks or existing service road; however as currently laid out it does encroach into the existing railroad right-of-way. The NHDOT purchased 2 parcels in the 1970s as part of a plan to relocate Route 12 as an extension of Route 12A. This alternative takes advantage of these previous parcel acquisitions.

C.R. noted that the alternative could be modified to place the road higher up on the slope possibly using the existing power line easement. C.R. explained that the road would be very tight in the southern part of the project area, especially near the Lentex building, where the proposed

road would affect the railroad right-of-way. North Walpole village would also see impacts, as Main Street would become the new Route 12, with Church Street becoming a local road.

Question: What would happen to the existing roadway in the project area?

The existing roadway could be used for walking, biking, and recreational access. Stability issues will continue to be problematic on the southern end and who maintains the roadway is still a question that needs to be answered. If the town is reluctant to accept it as a Class V roadway, the state would still need to maintain it. However, the legislature could abandon the road. Access would still need to be provided to the residents at Meany's Cove.

Question: The Russell Street underpass in North Walpole village is crucial for fire response. What would happen to this underpass?

It would be less desirable to keep the existing Russell Street underpass operational due to the geometry of the Main Street / Russell Street intersection and the proximity of abutters. It might be possible to live with the current geometric deficiencies as traffic calming features or upgrade the intersection near the Russell street underpass as part of the project. In addition, the underpass near Lentex could possibly be upgraded to mitigate this issue.

Question: What is the cost of this alternative?

A rough estimate indicates that the alternative would cost \$15-20 Million (similar to option #3).

Question: The area east of the existing railroad tracks is very steep. What is the maximum allowable grade on a road like Route 12?

NHDOT strives for a 6 and 8 percent maximum grade for this type of highway.

Question: Does the state have experience in purchasing utility easements for new roads?

Yes, it would be treated like any other right-of-way acquisition.

Question: Are the railroad concerns eliminated under this alternative?

Almost. NHDOT would prefer to avoid the railroad right-of-way entirely.

Question: Could sidewalks be included in Main Street as part of an upgrade? What would the minimum width of a sidewalk be?

Possibly. NHDOT generally uses a 5' minimum for sidewalk width.

Jon Evans noted that while this alternative minimizes environmental impacts to the Connecticut River, it would see substantial archeological and historical impacts. Historical impacts would be considered even though North Walpole village is only designated as a "potential" historical district. Jon explained that there are 14 sites with potential archeological significance in the project area.

"Stacked Viaduct"

C.R. Willeke explained the “Stacked Viaduct” alternative, noting that this alternative would see one lane of traffic stacked on top of the other lane of traffic via the construction of a viaduct-like bridge. This alternative does not save width in the tightest areas between the river and the railroad because the bridge structure would be at least 8’ wide on each side of a 20-foot roadway. Currently, the construction of new bridges costs approximately \$200/SF. Thus, the cost of this alternative would be approximately \$80 million, or 8 times the amount of money budgeted for the project.

Nate Miller asked if NHDOT and the Project Advisory Committee agreed that this alternative was not feasible for financial reasons. Everyone agreed that the alternative was not feasible, and that the alternative should not be pursued further.

Discussion

The Project Advisory Committee agreed that both “Option #3 - River as a Control” and “Option #4 - The Other Side of the Tracks” alternatives could be viable. It was agreed that these alternatives be evaluated in more detail. Potential variations on the “Other Side of Tracks” alternative, including placing the new road up the hillside in the power line easement should also be evaluated.

Mike Dugas noted that, because all of the options exceed the current budget for the project, the group should consider whether a particular option could be built in phases. Mike Dugas advised that Option #3 lends itself to phased construction more than option #4 because the proposed road is being shifted rather than relocated.

The next meeting was scheduled for:

Wednesday, November 12th, 2008
 Starting @ **6:00** pm
 Silsby Library / Municipal Building
 Charlestown NH

Submitted by,

Nate Miller
 UVLSRPC

cc: D. Lyford
 M. Dugas
 J. Evans
 W. Cass
 D. Graham – District #4
 Nate Miller – UVLSRPC
 J.B. Mack – SWRPC
 PAC Members