

Walpole - Charlestown #14747 Public Involvement Plan



Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission
New Hampshire Department of Transportation
Town of Charlestown, New Hampshire
Town of Walpole, New Hampshire

Adopted: October 10, 2007
Revised: June 11, 2008



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1.0 BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

1.1 Purpose of Public Involvement Plan

The purpose of this Public Involvement Plan (PIP) is to communicate information about a wide range of activities that are involved in the Walpole-Charlestown 14747 NH Route 12 improvement project. This PIP will:

- Communicate the principles of the Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) process that will be incorporated on the Walpole-Charlestown 14747 project;
- Communicate information about the project team;
- Communicate upcoming meeting dates; and
- Describe the communication methods that will be implemented to inform the community.

The Public Involvement Plan will be updated periodically to reflect updates to schedule and other items that change over the course of the project, and will not be considered a completed document until the end of the project's design.

1.2 Principles of Context Sensitive Solutions

The Walpole-Charlestown 14747 project will incorporate the principles of Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS). This is a process endorsed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and is defined by FHWA as "a collaborative, interdisciplinary approach that involves all stakeholders to develop a transportation facility that fits its physical setting and preserves scenic, aesthetic, historic and environmental resources, while maintaining safety and mobility." A stakeholder is defined as a person or group affected by and/or with an interest in the outcome of the project. Stakeholders in the Walpole-Charlestown 14747 project include:

- Citizens who live, work and/or travel along NH Route 12, and other ancillary roads connected to NH Route 12 in Charlestown and Walpole;
- Municipal, regional, and state government elected and appointed officials;
- Groups with environmental, economic, or other concerns;
- Local utility companies;
- Resource agencies such as the NH Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) and NH Division of Historic Resources (NHDHR);
- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA);
- NH Department of Transportation (NHDOT).

The CSS process has 15 guiding principles that have been divided into two groups: 1) Qualities of Excellence in Transportation Design and 2) Characteristics of the Process Contributing to Excellence (<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/csd/qualities.htm>). The 15 principles are listed below:

Qualities of Excellence in Transportation Design

1. The project satisfies the purpose and needs as agreed to by a full range of stakeholders. This agreement is forged in the earliest phase of the project and amended, as warranted, as the project develops.
2. The project is a safe facility for both the user and the community.
3. The project is in harmony with the community, and it preserves environmental, scenic, aesthetic, historic, and natural resource values of the area.
4. The project exceeds the expectations of both designers and stakeholders and achieves a level of excellence in people's minds.
5. The project involves efficient and effective use of the resources (time, budget, community) of all involved parties.
6. The project is designed and built with minimal disruption to the community.
7. The project is seen as having added lasting value to the community.

Characteristics of the Process Contributing to Excellence

1. Communication with all stakeholders is open, honest, early, and continuous.
2. A multidisciplinary team is established early, with disciplines based on the needs of the specific project, and with the inclusion of the public.
3. A full range of stakeholders is involved with transportation officials in the scoping phase. The purposes of the project are clearly defined, and consensus on the scope is forged before proceeding.
4. The highway development process is tailored to meet the circumstances. This process should examine multiple alternatives that will result in a consensus of approach methods.
5. A commitment to the process from top agency officials and local leaders is secured.
6. The public involvement process, which includes informal meetings, is tailored to the project.
7. The landscape, the community, and valued resources are understood before engineering design is started.
8. A full range of tools for communication about project alternatives is used (e.g., visualization).

1.3 Project Overview

The project is located in the towns of Walpole and Charlestown and seeks to address safety concerns along the NH Route 12 corridor from approximately the NH 12A intersection in Charlestown to approximately the Main Street intersection in North Walpole. The project was initiated through the regional Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) process at the request of local officials in Charlestown, and is included in the State's Ten-Year Transportation Improvement Plan (2007-2016). Currently, the project is funded for a phased construction beginning in 2011 at a cost of approximately \$8.5M.

1.4 Project Team

The project team consists of:

- The Project Lead Team (PLT);
- The Project Advisory Committee (PAC).

The Project Lead Team (PLT) consists of NHDOT staff representing the anticipated types of disciplines that will likely be required and UVLSRPC staff to facilitate the CSS process. The PAC members are comprised of citizens, who live in Charlestown and Walpole and others who represent the elderly, schools, churches, and business interests in the area; along with town officials representing the Selectboard, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Conservation Commission, Historical Society, Town Administrator's Office, Planning Director's Office, Police, and Fire Departments. Also the NHDOT and UVLSRPC staff represents state and regional transportation interests. The PAC serves in an advisory role (tasked with making recommendations to the NHDOT) and is anticipated to be involved with the project from the project planning phase through the end of the project's design.

PROJECT LEAD TEAM			
NAME	ADDRESS	TELEPHONE	BUREAU, POSITION
Don Lyford	7 Hazen Dr, Concord	271-2171	Bureau of Highway Design, Project Manager
Charles 'CR' Willeke	7 Hazen Drive, Concord	271-1687	Bureau of Highway Design, Preliminary Design Engineer
Nathan Miller	30 Bank Street, Lebanon	448-1680	UVLSRPC

PROJECT ADVISORY COMMITTEE	
Name	Representing
Fred Poisson	Interested citizen and abutter
William Sullivan	Charlestown Economic Development Authority
Aare Ilves	Citizen Representative (Charlestown)
Debra Livingston	Fall Mountain Regional School District
Jon LeClair	Charlestown Selectboard
Richard Holmes	Charlestown Conservation Commission
Bruce Putnam	Business Representative (Charlestown)
Robert Beaudry	Business Representative (Charlestown)
Albert St. Pierre	Citizen Representative (Charlestown)
David Edkins	Charlestown Planning and Zoning Administrator
Eric Lutz	UVLSRPC Commissioner (Charlestown)
Keith Weed	Charlestown Highway Superintendent
Ed Smith	Charlestown Police Chief
Sharon Francis	Connecticut River Joint Commissions
J.B. Mack	Southwest Region Planning Commission
Christine Walker	UVLSRPC
Don Lyford	NHDOT
Jon Evans	NHDOT - Environmental Coordinator
Patrick Kiniry	North Walpole Village Commissioners
Jim Terrell	Walpole Selectboard Designee
Jeff Miller	Walpole Planning Board
Marcia Galloway	Walpole Conservation Commission
Donald Lennon	Business Representative (Walpole)
Ken Alton	TransCanada Corporation
Mike Lawyer	New England Central Railroad

2.0 PROJECT PROCESS

2.1 NHDOT Project Development Process

All NHDOT projects, including the Walpole-Charlestown 14747 project, are developed through a seven-step project development process illustrated below.

- Project Scoping / Data Collection / Coordination
- Preliminary Engineering Studies / Environmental Evaluation
- Identification of Preferred Alternative / Draft Environmental Documentation
- Formal Public Hearing Process
- Selected Alternative / Final Environmental Documentation
- Final Design (Project Construction Plan Development) / Right-of-Way Acquisition
- Project Construction

This process is described in more detail in the '*Project Development making transportation projects a reality*' guide that is available on the Department's website at the following link: <http://www.nh.gov/dot/public/reports.htm> under the Citizens Guide to Transportation Series section. The CSS process seeks to gather critical community-level input into the first three phases of the project development process prior to identifying a "Preferred Alternative" for presentation, as well as, requesting layout approval at the formal Public Hearing.

Currently, the project is in the Project Scoping, Data Collection, and Coordination Phase. The project team through the PAC, will hold a "public workshop" to help create a vision for the project area, and subsequently develop a problem statement, vision statement, and alternative screening criteria. The aforementioned will be used in the development of project alternatives, identification of the preferred alternative, as well as, the environmental documentation for the project.

Once the "Preferred Alternative" has been identified and draft environmental documental completed, a formal Public Hearing will be held to procure approval for the project's layout. The Hearing will be overseen by a Hearing Commission that is comprised of three members appointed by the Governor and Executive Council, whom are tasked to a make a decision on the layout of the preferred alternative that has been identified for the project. At the Public Hearing, the Department will make a formal presentation and public testimony will be taken, recorded, and transcribed for the Hearing Commission to determine the occasion for the layout as presented. All issues and/or comments raised at the Public Hearing or during the hearing comment period will be documented and addressed in a report termed the *Report of the Commissioner* (ROTC). The project team will coordinate with the PAC to help address each issue raised at the Hearing prior to the finalization of the ROTC. Should the Hearing Commission vote in favor of the project's layout, then the project will advance to the Final Design / Right-of-Acquisition stage. The Public Hearing and subsequent layout approval represents a major milestone in the project development phase as it solidifies the major aspects and right of way requirements of the project's design.

2.2 Project Meetings

Several types of meetings are planned over the course of this project. They are described in the sections below.

2.2.1 *Project Advisory Committee (PAC) Meetings*

The purpose of the PAC meetings is to obtain input from the team and to facilitate the flow of information and ideas between the team, community, and public at-large. Presently, 6-8 PAC meetings are planned over the next 12 – 18 months.

Anticipated topics of discussion for Project Advisory Committee meetings:

PAC Meeting 1 –October 10, 2007:

- Discuss Context Sensitive Solutions Approach and Process
- Discuss Public Workshop
- Discuss Project Advisory Committee Roles and Responsibilities
- Discuss Draft Public Involvement Plan

PAC Meeting 2- Public Workshop - December 12, 2007

PAC Meeting 3 – March 12, 2008

- Review Workshop Results
- Discuss Draft Problem Statement
- Call for Consensus on Problem Statement
- Overview of Vision Statements

PAC Meeting 4 – April 9, 2008

- Develop Project Vision Statement
- Call for Consensus on Vision Statement
- Overview of Alternative Rating Criteria
- Discuss Short-term Low-cost Improvements

PAC Meeting 5 – June 11, 2008

- Discuss Alternative Rating Criteria
- Consensus on Rating Criteria
- Discuss Conceptual Alternatives

PAC Meeting 6- August, 2008:

- Review Alternatives
- Rate Alternatives

Public Informational Meeting- September 2008

- Present and Receive Public Feedback on Design Alternatives

PAC Meeting 7- October, 2008:

- Discuss Preferred Alternative
- Call for Consensus on Preferred Alternative

Public Hearing- Spring 2009

- Formal Presentation of Project Design to the Public and Abutters

2.2.2 Guidelines and Procedures

The PAC has an important and challenging task of providing public input to the New Hampshire Department of Transportation in several important areas for the Walpole-Charlestown 14747 NH Route 12 improvement project: a statement of problems and needs, a project vision statement, developing concepts to address the problems and needs to meet the vision, and advising the Department on selecting a preferred alternative for the project design.

Because of the significance and complexity of the issues with which the Project Advisory Committee will be dealing, it is important to make the most effective use of our meeting times. Therefore, as a group, we commit to the following guidelines and procedures:

A. How we treat each other:

- Each member has an equal right to speak and ask questions. There are no “dumb questions”.
- Each member is encouraged to share individual viewpoints. Individual opinions are valid whether others agree with them or not.
- We will listen to, respect and seek to understand the views of others, particularly those perspectives that differ from our own.
- Disagreements will be explored not suppressed. In some instances, however, disagreements may be discussed outside of the Project Advisory Committee meetings so that we are not distracted from achieving the purpose of the meetings.
- We will be courteous when addressing other members, staff and consultants.
- We will refrain from interrupting each other, staff or consultants.
- We will keep our comments relevant to the topic under discussion.

B. How we make decisions:

- The Project Advisory Committee will operate by consensus whenever possible. Consensus does not necessarily mean agreement or active support by each member. Those not objecting are not necessarily indicating that they favor, but merely that they can “**live with it.**”
- In the absence of consensus, a super majority of three-quarters (75%) of the Project Advisory Committee members present is required for approval of an action.
- Participation in the decision-making of the Project Advisory Committee shall be limited to its members.
- In order to provide continuity in the group’s discussions, members are asked to make every effort to attend all meetings. However, if a member cannot attend, he or she may designate an alternate to attend and participate in discussions of the Project Advisory Committee in his or her absence.
- Non-members shall attend as observers and may be invited to offer comments, if time allows.

C. How we communicate with those outside the Project Advisory Committee:

- As it is NHDOT's intent that the members of the Project Advisory Committee represent the interests of a wide cross-section of citizens who live and work in the project area, PAC members are encouraged to report on project issues to others who live and work in this area, particularly to groups or organizations to which they belong, and to bring input to PAC meetings that reflects the interests of these individuals and groups.
- It will be helpful if Project Advisory Committee members explain to others the process being used to develop the project concepts so they better understand how the project is progressing.

We believe that following these guidelines and procedures will help us to develop advice that is fully considered and will be well received by the Department, the public, and the appropriate Federal, State, and local government leaders and agencies whose support is essential for carrying out our recommendations.

2.2.3 Public Workshop

The objective of the public workshop is to review the roadway corridor using visual aids in a modified Placemaking type format. Using the visual aids participants will develop issues and opportunities throughout the corridor so that a project wide problem statement can be developed. Also any low cost, short-term opportunities to improvement corridor safety will be investigated. The meeting will be widely advertised within the community with notices posted in prominent public places and on the Town's website. Advertisements of the meeting will also be included in several local and region newspapers. Meeting notices will also be mailed to the abutters within the project limits, and local, region, and state Officials. The public workshop meeting is intended to be an afternoon / evening session to introduce the project and the design approach that will be used to the community. This initial public workshop will be the stepping-stone from which the project problem and vision statements will be developed.

2.2.4 Public Informational Meeting

The objective of the public informational meetings is to review the problem & vision statements, review the rating criteria, and receive feedback on the project alternatives that are acceptable to the community and public at-large. The meeting will be widely advertised within the community with notices posted in prominent public places and on the Town's website. Advertisements of the meeting will also be included in several local and region newspapers. Meeting notices will also be mailed to the abutters within the project limits, and local, region, and state Officials. The public informational meetings are intended to be an afternoon / evening session to discuss the various aspects of the project and gather input from the community as to the alternatives that they feel will help to solve the project problems and needs and fit with the community's vision for the project.

2.2.5 Public Hearing

Once a Preferred Alternative has been identified for the project and the environmental documentation completed, a formal Public Hearing to secure layout approval for the project will be scheduled. The Public Hearing will be held within the Town of Charlestown. The Hearing will be widely advertised within the community with notices posted in prominent public places and on the Town's website. Hearing notices will also be advertised in several local and region newspapers. Certified mailings will be sent to all abutting

property owners potentially directed impacted by the projects. Mailings will also be sent to local, regional, and state Officials, as well as, environmental and other interest groups. The Public Hearing and subsequent layout approval represents a major milestone in the project development phase as it solidifies the major aspects and right-of-way requirements of the project's design. The conclusion of a successful Public Hearing phase, which represents the project at a 30% stage, allows the project to proceed to final design and right-of-way procurement.

2.3 Project Schedule

The proposed project-meeting schedule is attached. The schedule is approximate and subject to change. Additional interim meetings may be necessary to reach consensus on certain items prior to advancing forward to the next step.

2.3.1 *Design Schedule*

- Preliminary Design (CSS Process)
- Public Hearing
- Layout Approval
- Final Design & ROW Procurement
- Construction

2.3.2 *Meeting Schedule*

The purpose of the PAC meetings is to obtain input from the team and to facilitate the flow of information and ideas between the team, community, and public at-large. Presently, six PAC meetings are planned over the next 12 – 18 months.

The first PAC meeting will be held on October 10, 2007. This meeting will serve as an orientation session as well as a project kick-off meeting. At the meeting, members of the PAC will be provided a brief history of the project, an overview of CSS, description of "placemaking", and explanation of how the CSS process would be implemented for the project. The CSS steps and public participation process will be described in sequential fashion with the first step involving a Public Workshop, followed by a meeting to reach consensus on a problem statement, meeting to reach consensus on a vision statement, meeting to develop and concur on screening criteria, meeting to brainstorm and screen alternatives, and meeting to reach consensus on a Preferred Alternative. Once a preferred alternative has been identified a formal Public Hearing to procure approval for the project layout would be held.

3.0 COMMUNICATION METHODS

Effective communication is essential to the on-going success of the project. Below is a description of the communication methods that are planned for the project. As the project progresses, public involvement will be assessed periodically to determine if the methods of communication in use are effective or if adjustments are needed.

3.1 NHDOT Website

As an element of the NHDOT Public Interest web page, the Walpole-Charlestown 14747 project has been added and will be used to post pertinent project information, meeting agendas, and meeting summaries or notes. The web page can be accessed via <http://www.nh.gov/dot/projects/walpole-charlestown-14747/walpole-charlestown-14747.htm>. The purpose of the website is to keep the public informed about the project and provide another way for the public to provide input. The website content will be updated at project milestones and, as necessary, after project meetings. For questions or comments on the material posted on the website, please contact the NHDOT Project Manager:

- Don Lyford, NHDOT Project Manager, at dlyford@dot.state.nh.us or (603) 271-2165.

3.2 Town Website

A link from the town website <http://www.charlestown-nh.gov> to the project's web page on the NHDOT website will be provided.

3.3 E-mail

A primary method of communication for the Project Advisory Committee will be via e-mail. Individual e-mail addresses for the PAC members are contained within the project files. Meeting agendas, meeting notes, and other pertinent project information will be disseminated to the Project Advisory Committee via this method of communication.

3.4 Meetings

Project Advisory Committee meetings, Public Informational meetings, and Workshops will be used as different avenues to disseminate and discuss pertinent project related information.

3.5 Media

In order to help maximize the distribution of meeting notices for the Public Workshops, Public Informational meetings, and Public Hearing, news releases and/or meeting notices will be provided to local and regional newspapers.

- **Keene Sentinel**
 - **Publication Frequency:** daily
 - **Distribution:** Southwest New Hampshire
 - **Address:** 60 West Street, Keene, NH 03431
 - **Phone:** (603) 352-1234
 - **Fax:** (603) 352-9700
 - **E-mail:** adassist@keenesentinel.com
 - www.sentinelsource.com
- **Valley News**
 - **Publication Frequency:** daily
 - **Distribution:** Southern Grafton County and Sullivan County, NH and Windsor County, VT
 - **Address:** PO Box 877, White River Junction, VT 05001

- **Phone:** (603) 727-3221
- **Fax:** (603) 298-0212
- **E-mail:** calendar@vnews.com
- www.vnews.com

- **Our Town**
 - **Publication Frequency:** monthly
 - **Distribution Area:** Charlestown, NH
 - **Address:** PO Box 881, Charlestown, NH 03603
 - **Phone:** (603) 826-5766
 - **Fax:** (603) 826-4034

3.6 Flyers

In order to help maximize interest and encourage Charlestown and Walpole residents and other members of the public to attend the Public Workshops, Public Informational meetings, and Public Hearing, flyers will be developed with the aid of the Project Advisory Committee members. Flyers will be posted in prominent public places within the Town of Charlestown and Town of Walpole, and sent to the local and regional newspapers.