

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

July 28, 2009

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: July 22, 2009

LOCATION OF CONFERENCE: Charlestown Silsby Library/Municipal Building

ATTENDED BY: **Project Lead Team**

Nate Miller, Upper Valley Lake Sunapee RPC
Michael Dugas – NHDOT Chief of Preliminary Design
C.R. Willeke – NHDOT Preliminary Design Engineer

Project Advisory Committee

Donald Lyford – NHDOT Project Manager
Jon Evans – NHDOT Bureau of Environment
(Absent) Fred Poisson, Charlestown Citizen Representative & Abutter
William Sullivan. Charlestown Economic Development Authority
(Absent) Aare Ilves, Charlestown Citizen Representative
(Absent) Jane Stansbery, Fall Mountain School District (for Debra Livingston)
(Absent) Jon LeClair, Charlestown Selectboard
(Absent) 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, UVLSPRC Commissioner (Charlestown)
(Absent) Keith Weed, Charlestown Highway Superintendent
(Absent) Ed Smith, Charlestown Police Chief
Sharon Francis, Connecticut River Joint Commissions
(Absent) J.B. Mack, SWRPC (formerly Tim Garceau)
(Absent) 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 & Abutter
Ken Alton, TransCanada Corporation
(Absent) James Dahlke, New England Central Railroad
(Absent) Douglas Ring, Charlestown Planning Board

Citizens & Officials

Loren A. Reed, Charlestown Resident
Alta Wilcox, Charlestown Resident (Parcel #22)
Michael Augustinowicz (Parcel #25)

SUBJECT: Project Advisory Committee (PAC) Meeting #9 Minutes

NOTES ON CONFERENCE:

On July 22, 2009 approximately 16 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:

- Discuss the preliminary design of Options: #322, 323, and 322A, and,
- Begin screening alternatives using revised screening criteria.

Introduction

Donald Lyford, project manager for the NHDOT, welcomed everyone and asked the participants to introduce themselves. After audience introductions and a review of the agenda, Don turned the meeting over to C.R. Willeke to discuss the design of the new alternatives.

New Alternatives: #322, #323, and Component #322A

C.R. described the new alternatives in relation to the 3 major areas of the project:

- The southern segment,
- The middle segment, and
- The northern segment

The southern segment of the project begins near the Len Tex building and proceeds north until it reaches the residences near Meany's Cove (approximately 5000 feet).

The middle segment (approximately 5000 feet) includes both the residential area of Meany's cove and the area north of the homes where the cove meets NH 12 and the railroad is elevated above NH 12.

The northern segment includes both the flat area where the river and railroad are close to the highway and the NH 12A overpass area (also approximately 5000 feet).

The numbering of the alternatives relates to the option used in the three segments of the project. Option #322 has an alignment similar to Option #3 in the southern end and similar to Option #2 in the middle and northern segments. Option #323 utilizes an alignment similar to option #3 in the southern and northern segments and an alignment similar to Option #2 in the middle segment. Component #322A looks at an idea to relocate the intersection of NH 12 and NH 12A to avoid the narrow lateral clearance below the existing NH 12A overpass bridge and would tie into Option #322.

C.R. Willeke presented plans, profiles, cross sections, and pictures for the various options and described the layout and issues along the various segments of the project.

Option #322 – Southern Segment

C.R. indicated that this option attempts to avoid impacts to the Connecticut River in the southern section of the project by shifting the railroad to the east and re-aligning the highway to approximately where the railroad tracks sit today. The easterly shift of the highway is proposed to occur north of the Len Tex property to avoid impacts to the Len Tex building and parking lot. Based on some recently received geotechnical information, the horizontal and vertical alignment of Option #322 will need to be modified in two areas to increase the offset between the proposed highway and the Connecticut River. One of the

areas of concern (Station 5009+00 to 5015+00) is close to the Len Tex building and therefore makes shifting the alignment of the highway and railroad more difficult. C.R. indicated that more study in this area would be needed to determine how much of a shift in the alignment is possible and how close to the river the road can safely be located. The alignment near the other area of concern (Station 5026+00 to 5034+00) can be shifted further east and/or lowered to increase the offset from the river.

Option #322 – Middle Segment

C.R. indicated the intent in the middle segment is to move the alignment back to near the existing alignment to provide driveway connections to the houses along Meany's Cove and avoid pushing the railroad tracks into the very steep hillside to the east. In order to provide 4 ft paved shoulders and an improved ditch line between the railroad and the highway, the horizontal alignment was shifted 4 to 6 feet to the west of the existing alignment. The vertical profile was set to match the existing profile near the homes and raised approximately 3 feet near Station 5071+00 to correct the deficient drop north of the homes. This approach results in approximately 600 feet of linear impacts to the cove. C.R. indicated that the NHDOT would look to refine this proposed alignment to move as close to the railroad as feasible and to minimize impacts to the cove. Sharon Francis, Connecticut River Joint Commissions, asked if a retaining wall could be used to hold up the railroad and allow the highway to move closer to the tracks and farther away from the cove. C.R. indicated that early geotechnical advice suggested avoiding impacts to the slope that holds up the railroad in this area due to the active railroad line and the practicality of constructing a wall in this location. Don Lyford indicated that the NHDOT would investigate this question further and get back to the group with an answer.

Option #322 – Northern Segment

C.R. mentioned that previously option #2 utilized the existing profile in the northern segment as a starting point during the beginning of the CSS process. When developing option #322 in this area an attempt was made to improve the existing profile due to the very flat existing grades. C.R. noted that the combination of the flat grades, low railroad elevation, and narrow horizontal clearance between the railroad and the highway make an engineered profile and engineered ditch line very difficult. Ideally the NHDOT likes grades to be no flatter than 0.5%. C.R. noted that even using grades as flat as 0.25%, the ditch line for the highway would still be above the elevation of the railroad tracks and not be a practical solution without additional shifting of the alignment to the west (towards the river). C.R. noted that it appears the existing highway, although flat, is elevated above the railroad in this location and acts similar to a causeway. Water leaving the highway drains into the river on the west side and percolates into the ground between the railroad and highway on the east side as no closed drainage system exists. C.R. indicated that the NHDOT is still looking at this area to determine how flat the grades could be and how far west the alignment would need to shift towards the river in order to make the facility safe and drain effectively. With option #322 the westerly shift of the highway needs to be back near the existing centerline to avoid the NH 12A bridge pier located near the NH 12 southbound edge of pavement.

William Sullivan, Charlestown Economic Development Authority mentioned that the limited horizontal and vertical separation between the highway and railroad in this northern segment is a safety issue. The lights from the trains can confuse drivers at nighttime, especially those not familiar with the area. He also mentioned that many people fish the river in this location and this presents a safety hazard as well. He suggested greater horizontal and/or vertical separation between the highway and the railroad would be appropriate in this area.

Sharon Francis, Connecticut River Joint Commissions, suggested looking at a recent project in Colebrook that uses engineered logjams as a slope treatment along the Connecticut River.

Option 323 – Northern Section

C.R. mentioned that option #323 varies from #322 only at the northern end. Rather than shifting west, this option shifts the railroad east to make room for the additional roadway width similar to Option #3. Impacts associated with this option include the granite retaining wall near the Augustinowicz property (parcel # 25) and the wetland from Station 5102+00 RT to 5108+00 RT. C.R. noted that there is room to shift the railroad approximately 10 to 12 feet to the east where the tracks go under the NH 12A overpass and that ideally the railroad would be shifted easterly until the roadway and tracks veer away from each other north of the overpass bridge at approximate Station 5140+00. The 323 alternative would result in a wider typical section under the NH 12A overpass bridge if the railroad can be shifted easterly.

Albert St. Pierre, Charlestown Citizen Representative, stated that the impacts to the river in the northern section may be necessary as part of a long-term solution to stabilize the area between the highway and the shore regardless of the railroad location.

Loren Reed, Charlestown Resident, asked if the railroad would need additional right-of-way if the tracks were shifted to the east. He indicated that there might have been a double set of tracks in this location in the past. Don Lyford indicated that the NHDOT would need to coordinate with the railroad company about the space they would require to shift the tracks and the necessity of a service road next to the track.

Component 322A – Relocate NH 12 west of NH 12A

At the previous PAC meeting in June, Albert St. Pierre (Charlestown Citizen Representative) suggested utilizing the very northern segment of option #4 that realigns NH 12 and connects to NH 12A near the NH 12A Overpass Bridge. However, rather than continuing NH 12 onto the overpass bridge, the alignment would stay west of the bridge. NH 12 would need to be elevated to meet the elevation of NH 12A near the overpass bridge and then come back down to near its existing elevation to minimize impacts to the river. The advantage of this option is that it avoids having to fit the desired wider typical section (12 ft lanes, 4 ft shoulders and improved ditch lines) beneath the NH 12A overpass bridge where the bridge piers and the railroad constrain the available width.

C.R. presented a concept plan for an elevated 3 way “T” intersection and approach lanes. C.R. indicated that the concept is feasible but the horizontal geometry elements are near the limits of design standards and the sight distance at the NH 12 / NH 12A intersection would need a closer look to make sure acceptable sight lines are available.

C.R. then turned the meeting over to Nate to discuss Screening Criteria.

Review of Screening Criteria and Option #1 Screening

Nate Miller presented revised screening criteria based on comments from the last meeting. Additional criteria were added to address:

Access to local schools,
Economic affects to local business (short term and long term), and
Quality of life for local residents

Nate asked for concurrence and/or comments prior to beginning the screening of alternatives. The PAC concurred with the revised screening criteria.

With the limited time remaining, the PAC finished screening Option #1 – Do Nothing. The results of the completed Opt #1 Screening Criteria will be posted on the projects web site.

The next PAC Meeting was scheduled for:

Wednesday, ~~September 23, 2009~~ (**9/30/09 subsequent to the meeting**)
Starting @ **6:30 pm**
Charlestown Silsby Library/Municipal Building

Submitted by,

C.R. Willeke, P.E.
Preliminary Design Engineer
New Hampshire DOT

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