

Letters of Support
Hinsdale, NH – Brattleboro, VT TIGER 9 Grant Application

State of NH, Governor Christopher Sununu

US Senator, State of NH, Senator Jeanne Shaheen

US Senator, State of NH, Senator Margaret Hassan

US Congress, State of NH, Congresswoman Ann McLane Kuster

State of NH, Senator Jay Kahn

State of Vermont, Secretary of Transportation, Joe Flynn

Southwest Regional Planning Commission, Executive Director Tim Murphy



STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

CHRISTOPHER T. SUNUNU
Governor

October 16, 2017

Secretary Elaine L. Chao
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Re: New Hampshire DOT TIGER Grant Application for Hinsdale, NH – Brattleboro, VT NH Route 119 Bridge Replacement Project

Dear Secretary Chao:

I am writing in support of the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER 2017) Discretionary Grant proposal in the amount of \$20 million submitted by the New Hampshire Department of Transportation for the "*Hinsdale, NH – Brattleboro, VT NH Route 119 Bridge Replacement Project*." The project addresses the needs of this rural portion of the state by bypassing two functionally-obsolete bridges with a new bridge just south of their current location. These critical "interstate" bridges carry NH Route 119 over the Connecticut River and connect the communities of Hinsdale, New Hampshire and Brattleboro, Vermont.

Built in 1926, the existing bridges, Anna Hunt Marsh and Charles Dana Bridges, are experiencing advanced, widespread deterioration of the truss, floorbeams, stringers, and substructure systems. Due to their age and the heavy use of de-icing agents in the harsh northern climate, the deterioration has progressed to the point that significant rehabilitation or replacement is required for continued vehicular and truck travel on the highway. A new bridge will be built to convey vehicles and trucks over the river. The existing bridges will be rehabilitated, preserving a historic resource, and will be maintained for pedestrian and bicycle use only.

This new proposed bridge is a critical facility for the movement of people and goods locally, regionally and internationally. NH Route 119 connects Cheshire County and the Monadnock Region in New Hampshire to the international trade corridor of Interstate 91 in Vermont, which then connects the entire region to the Canadian trade market to the north as well as larger New England ports to the south. If the existing bridges are down-posted or closed, traffic would be detoured an additional 9 miles to the north through NH Route 9 in Chesterfield or an additional 19 miles to the south through Massachusetts on NH Route 10. Likewise, the nearest medical facility (Brattleboro Memorial Hospital in Brattleboro) serves the entire region. Should the bridges be down-posted or closed, the next nearest medical facility is the Cheshire Medical Center 20 miles to the northeast, 12 miles further.

This proposed new bridge is also critically important to the connectivity, economic vitality, and quality of life for both New Hampshire and Vermont citizens that live in the region. Businesses in the area utilize these bridges daily to facilitate delivery of goods and services throughout the area. Nearly 50% of the residents of Hinsdale commute to Vermont for employment. This crossing, therefore, is critical to the quality of life and economic well-being of the region. This project will address regional transportation needs and ensure the continued economic vitality of these two communities and the region.

107 North Main Street, State House - Rm 208, Concord, New Hampshire 03301
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TDD Access: Relay NH 1-800-735-2964

The project is consistent with the state of good repair plans for both NHDOT and VTrans, and appears in both the New Hampshire's approved Ten Year Transportation Improvement Plan and Vermont's State Transportation Improvement Program.

This is a significant investment for the region that would maintain and enhance the quality of life of the area residents and promote economic development. I am pleased to offer my support for this application and hope you will look upon it favorably.

Sincerely,



Christopher T. Sununu
Governor

CC: Commissioner Victoria Sheehan, NHDOT
Secretary Joseph Flynn, VTrans

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 20, 2017

Secretary Elaine L. Chao
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Chao,

I write in support of the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER 2017) Discretionary Grant proposal submitted by the New Hampshire Department of Transportation for the “*Hinsdale, NH – Brattleboro, VT NH Route 119 Bridge Replacement Project.*” This project will address the needs of this rural portion of the state by replacing two functionally-obsolete bridges with a new bridge just south of their current location.

These critical “interstate” bridges carry NH Route 119 over the Connecticut River and join the communities of Hinsdale, New Hampshire and Brattleboro, Vermont. They connect Cheshire County and the broader Monadnock Region to Interstate 91 in Vermont, an international trade corridor that links the entire region to Canadian markets to the north as well as larger New England ports to the south. Traffic would be significantly detoured in the event these bridges are down-posted or closed.

The existing bridges – the Anna Hunt Marsh and Charles Dana Bridges – were built in 1926 and are experiencing advanced, widespread deterioration of the truss, floorbeams, stringers, and substructure systems. Due to their age and the heavy use of de-icing agents in our harsh New England winters, their deterioration has progressed to the point that significant rehabilitation or replacement is required for safe and continued vehicular and truck travel. A new bridge will be built to carry vehicles and trucks over the river. The existing bridges will be rehabilitated and preserved as historic resources and will be maintained for pedestrian and bicycle use only.

This proposed new bridge is also critically important to the connectivity, economic vitality, and quality of life for both New Hampshire and Vermont citizens that live in the region. Businesses in the area utilize these bridges daily to facilitate delivery of goods and services throughout the area. Nearly 50% of the residents of Hinsdale commute to Vermont for employment. This crossing, therefore, is critical to the quality of life and economic well-being of the region.

The project is consistent with the state of good repair plans for both NHDOT and VTTrans, and appears in both the New Hampshire’s approved Ten Year Transportation Improvement Plan and Vermont’s State Transportation Improvement Program. This is a significant investment for the region that would maintain and enhance the quality of life of the area residents and promote economic development. I am pleased to offer my support for this application and hope you will look upon it favorably.

Sincerely,



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

CC: Commissioner Victoria Shaheen, NH DOT
Secretary Joseph Flynn, VTTrans

United States Senate

October 20, 2017

The Honorable Elaine L. Chao
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Re: New Hampshire DOT TIGER Grant Application for Hinsdale, NH – Brattleboro, VT NH
Route 119 Bridge Replacement Project

Dear Secretary Chao:

I write to support the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER 2017) Discretionary Grant proposal in the amount of \$20 million submitted by the New Hampshire Department of Transportation for the “*Hinsdale, NH – Brattleboro, VT NH Route 119 Bridge Replacement Project*.” The project addresses the needs of this rural portion of the state by bypassing two functionally-obsolete bridges with a new bridge just south of their current location. These critical “interstate” bridges carry NH Route 119 over the Connecticut River and connect the communities of Hinsdale, New Hampshire and Brattleboro, Vermont.

Built in 1926, the existing bridges, Anna Hunt Marsh and Charles Dana Bridges, are experiencing advanced, widespread deterioration of the truss, floorbeams, stringers, and substructure systems. Due to their age and the heavy use of de-icing agents in the harsh northern climate, the deterioration has progressed to the point that significant rehabilitation or replacement is required for continued vehicular and truck travel on the highway. A new bridge will be built to convey vehicles and trucks over the river. The existing bridges will be rehabilitated, preserving a historic resource, and will be maintained for pedestrian and bicycle use only.

This new proposed bridge is a critical facility for the movement of people and goods locally, regionally and internationally. New Hampshire Route 119 connects Cheshire County and the Monadnock Region in New Hampshire to the international trade corridor of Interstate 91 in Vermont, which then connects the entire region to the Canadian trade market to the north as well as larger New England ports to the south. If the existing bridges are down-posted or closed, traffic would be detoured an additional 9 miles to the north through New Hampshire Route 9 in Chesterfield or an additional 19 miles to the south through Massachusetts on New Hampshire Route 10. Likewise, the nearest medical facility (Brattleboro Memorial Hospital in Brattleboro) serves the entire region, but should the bridges be down-posted or closed, the next nearest medical facility is the Cheshire Medical Center 20 miles to the northeast- an additional 12 miles further away.

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The Route 119 Bridge Replacement Project is consistent with the state of good repair plans for both NHDOT and VTrans, and appears in both the New Hampshire's approved Ten Year Transportation Improvement Plan and Vermont's State Transportation Improvement Program.

This is a significant investment for the region that would maintain and enhance the quality of life of the area residents and promote economic development. I am pleased to offer my support for this application and hope you will look upon it favorably.

With every good wish,



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator

CC: Commissioner Victoria Sheehan, NHDOT
Secretary Joseph Flynn, VTrans

ANN McLANE KUSTER
SECOND DISTRICT, NEW HAMPSHIRE

www.kuster.house.gov

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

RANKING MEMBER:

SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT & INVESTIGATIONS

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COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON CONSERVATION & FORESTRY

SUBCOMMITTEE ON BIOTECHNOLOGY,
HORTICULTURE, AND RESEARCH



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

October 13, 2017

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P: (603) 595-2006

NORTH COUNTRY OFFICE:
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P: (603) 444-7700

Mr. Robert Mariner
Deputy Director
United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington D.C. 20590

Dear Mr. Mariner,

I write in support of the Town of Hinsdale's application for the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) Grant program. This funding will be used to revamp the Hinsdale – Brattleboro Route 119 Bridge Replacement Project that connects New Hampshire and Vermont over the Connecticut River.

Due to its age and year after year of tough regional weather, there are two bridges that will be combined into one bridge downstream through this project. This plan is consistent with state of good repair plans for both New Hampshire and Vermont and is included in the New Hampshire Ten Year Transportation Improvement Plan.

Since my first term in office, I have been committed to making sure New Hampshire has the resources it needs to support a thriving and growing economy. Many of our towns and cities throughout the Granite State and across the nation have suffered economic setbacks over recent years. This project is critical for the movement of people and goods locally, regionally and internationally.

If I can do anything more to help with the town of Hinsdale's application process, please do not hesitate to contact Bobby Graham in my office at (603) 595-2006 or Robert.Graham@mail.house.gov. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress



The Senate of the State of New Hampshire

107 North Main Street, Concord, N.H. 03301-4951

October 16, 2017

Secretary Elaine L. Chao
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

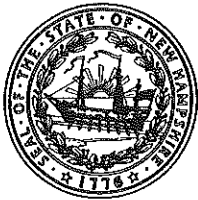
Re: New Hampshire DOT TIGER Grant Application for Hinsdale, NH – Brattleboro, VT NH
Route 119 Bridge Replacement Project

Dear Secretary Chao:

I strongly support the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER 2017) Discretionary Grant proposal in the amount of \$20 million submitted by the New Hampshire Department of Transportation for the "*Hinsdale, NH – Brattleboro, VT NH Route 119 Bridge Replacement Project*." The project addresses the needs of this rural portion of the state by bypassing two functionally-obsolete bridges with a new bridge just south of their current location. These critical "interstate" bridges carry NH Route 119 over the Connecticut River and connect the communities of Hinsdale, New Hampshire and Brattleboro, Vermont.

Built in 1926, the existing bridges, Anna Hunt Marsh and Charles Dana Bridges, are experiencing advanced, widespread deterioration of the truss, floorbeams, stringers, and substructure systems. Due to their age and the heavy use of de-icing agents in the harsh northern climate, the deterioration has progressed to the point that significant rehabilitation or replacement is required for continued vehicular and truck travel on the highway. A new bridge will be built to convey vehicles and trucks over the river. The existing bridges will be rehabilitated, preserving a historic resource, and will be maintained for pedestrian and bicycle use only.

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The Senate of the State of New Hampshire

107 North Main Street, Concord, N.H. 03301-4951

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The project is consistent with the state of good repair plans for both NHDOT and VTrans, and appears in both the New Hampshire's approved Ten Year Transportation Improvement Plan and Vermont's State Transportation Improvement Program.

This is a significant investment for the region that would maintain and enhance the quality of life of the area residents and promote economic development. I am pleased to offer my support for this application and hope you will look upon it favorably.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jay Kahn".

Senator Jay Kahn

CC: Commissioner Victoria Sheehan, NHDOT
Secretary Joseph Flynn, VTrans

State of Vermont
Office of the Secretary
One National Life Drive
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vtrans.vermont.gov

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Agency of Transportation

October 16, 2017

Secretary Elaine L. Chao
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

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I strongly support the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER 2017) Discretionary Grant proposal in the amount of \$20 million submitted by the New Hampshire Department of Transportation for the “*Hinsdale, NH – Brattleboro, VT NH Route 119 Bridge Replacement Project*”. The project addresses the needs of this rural portion of the state by bypassing two functionally-obsolete bridges with a new bridge just south of their current location. These critical “interstate” bridges carry NH Route 119 over the Connecticut River and connect the communities of Hinsdale, New Hampshire and Brattleboro, Vermont.

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Secretary Elaine L. Chao
October 16, 2017
Page 2

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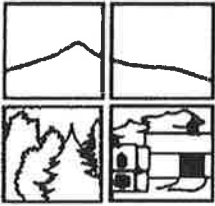
This is a significant investment for the region that would maintain and enhance the quality of life of the area residents and promote economic development. I am pleased to offer my support for this application and hope you will look upon it favorably.

Sincerely,



Joe Flynn
Secretary of Transportation

cc: Commissioner Victoria Sheehan, NHDOT



Southwest Region Planning Commission
37 Ashuelot Street, Keene, NH 03431 603-357-0557 Voice 603-357-7440 Fax

October 16, 2017

Secretary Elaine L. Chao
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Re: New Hampshire DOT TIGER Grant Application for Hinsdale, NH - Brattleboro, VT Bridge Replacement Project

Dear Secretary Chao:

On behalf of the Southwest Region Planning Commission (SWRPC), I am writing in support of the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER 2017) Discretionary Grant proposal in the amount of \$20 million submitted by the New Hampshire Department of Transportation for the "*Hinsdale, NH - Brattleboro, VT NH Route 119 Bridge Replacement Project.*"

The Hinsdale-Brattleboro Bridge replacement has been at or near the top of SWRPC's list of priority transportation infrastructure projects for 30 years. The existing bridges are functionally obsolete and exhibit structural deterioration from over 90 years of use in the often harsh northern New England climate. The current configuration also involves an at-grade railroad crossing that creates on-going disruptions in accessibility and emergency response capabilities. This critical link over the Connecticut River connects two communities, two regions, and two states in everyday activities including employment, commerce, public safety, access to services, etc. Access to I-91, located immediately west of the river in Vermont, serves as the economic lifeblood of several municipalities comprising the western two-thirds of Cheshire County in New Hampshire.

The Hinsdale-Brattleboro Bridge replacement is addressed in several formal planning documents adopted by SWRPC as well as recent and on-going activities in which the agency is directly involved. Some of these are referenced and summarized as follows:

Monadnock Region Future - adopted in 2015 and serving as the regional plan for Southwest, NH.

Findings (p. 43):

- *High performing and reliable infrastructure is a vital component of a robust regional economy. In Southwest NH, our infrastructure needs are great; however, we are severely challenged in our ability to repair, maintain, and upgrade these systems and structures.*
- *Mobility is one of the most fundamental and important characteristics of economic activity . . . Much of (our) infrastructure is aging and needs to be repaired or replaced.*

Strategy (p. 48):

- *Identify and advocate for community transportation needs and pursue funding solutions which may include . . . federal funding programs.*

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TDD Access: Relay NH 1-800-735-2964
web site: www.swrpc.org

Southwest Connects: Southwest Region Transportation Plan - updated in 2015.

- Hinsdale-Brattleboro Bridge replacement project is featured in the Regional Transportation Improvement Program (p. 9).
- *Chesterfield and Hinsdale's proximity to I-91 and the New England Central Railroad, both of which are transportation-related economic engines, perhaps provides the best position in the Southwest Region for economic growth opportunities. Some new employers have been attracted to the communities' location at the trisection of New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Vermont including Walmart and Fed Ex (pp. 57-8).*
- Challenges (p. 61):
 - *1920s-era Anna Hunt Marsh and Charles Dana Bridges require NH and VT coordination and massive investment leaving project on hold for decades.*
 - *Closure of either existing bridge would require detour of 23 miles to the north or 30 miles to the south.*

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for Southwest NH - adopted in 2005 in conjunction with the U.S. Economic Development Administration; most recently updated in 2015.

- *Goal: Prepare for future development.*
 - *Objective: Support a quality transportation system, both locally and regionally, to provide capacity for desired economic development.*
 - *Task: In collaboration with NHDOT and other entities, improve road conditions and access management to support safe and efficient movement of people and goods.*
- The Hinsdale-Brattleboro Bridge replacement identified as a Priority Project within the CEDS (p. 122).

Vermont Yankee Closure Report

In 2015, the Vermont Yankee nuclear facility located in nearby Vernon, VT ceased power generating operations and began closure activities to result in the loss of approximately 600 relatively high-paying jobs. One-third of these jobs, plus the same proportion of nearly 800 largely service-sector jobs as a result of secondary and induced economic impacts, are being felt in Southwest NH resulting in approximately \$35 million in lost wages annually.

Tri-State Partnership

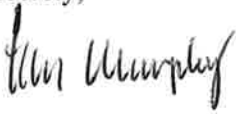
SWRPC has entered into a memorandum of understanding as a commitment to collaboration with its counterparts including Windham Regional Commission (VT) and Franklin County Regional Council of Governments (MA). This Tri-State Partnership endeavors to develop joint strategies in effectively addressing shared socioeconomic challenges and opportunities. One initiative of note is an on-going assessment of cross-border mobility among employment and service centers in the tri-state region in which the Hinsdale-Brattleboro Bridge reconstruction is certainly a key element.

Please find additional statistics and descriptive information pertinent to the bridge replacement project in the attached addendum to this letter.

This proposed new bridge is critically important to the connectivity, economic vitality, and quality of life for New Hampshire and Vermont citizens that live in the area. Nearly 50% of the residents of Hinsdale commute to Vermont for employment. This crossing is therefore critical to the quality of life, economic well-being, and public safety of the region. The project is consistent with the state of good repair plans for both NHDOT and VTrans, and appears in both state's approved transportation improvement programs.

I am pleased to express support for this application and hope you will look upon it favorably. Thank you for this opportunity to provide comment. If you have questions or would like to discuss this matter further, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim Murphy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "T" and "M".

Tim Murphy
Executive Director

cc: Victoria Sheehan, Commissioner, NH DOT
Joseph Flynn, Secretary, VTrans

**NHDOT TIGER Application for Hinsdale-Brattleboro Bridge Replacement Project
Addendum to SWRPC Letter of Support dated October 17, 2017**

Commuting (US Census, 2015):

- 47.6% of Hinsdale workers are likely to use the bridge to get to work in Vermont or the Upper Valley in NH (Lebanon and Hanover).
- 8.6% of Brattleboro workers are likely to use the bridge to get to work in these southeast NH towns (Hinsdale, Winchester, Fitzwilliam, Rindge).

Population Loss (NH Office of Strategic Initiatives, 2016):

- Hinsdale's population is projected to decrease by 2% between 2015 and 2040.

Economic data (NH Department of Employment Security):

- In the last available 10-year period (2006-2015) Hinsdale's annual average labor force has decreased 14%, its number of employed have decreased 15% and its number of unemployed has increased 5%.

Economic data (Community Development Financial Institutions):

- Hinsdale is a federal New Market Tax Credit area. NMTC Eligible Census tracts include those that have either (1) Median Family Income at or below 80% of Area Median Income (AMI) in the period of 2006-2010 or (2) Poverty Rate of 20% or greater in the period of 2006-2010.
- Hinsdale is also a Severe Distress and Non-Metropolitan area. Meeting the NMTC Severe Distress or Non-Metropolitan criteria is based on whether or not a given Census tract meets basic NMTC Eligibility, plus one of the following factors: having a median family income at or below 60% of AMI in the period of 2006-2010; having a poverty rate at or above 30% in the period of 2006-2010; having an unemployment rate of at least 1.5 times the national unemployment rate in the period of 2006-2010; or being in a county that is not part of a metropolitan statistical area.
- Hinsdale qualifies for NHTC's because it is 68.9% of the area median family income.

Economic data (ACS 2015 5 Year Estimates):

- Median HH income: Hinsdale, \$50,217; Cheshire County \$57,782; NH, \$66,779; US, \$53,889
- Median Family income: Hinsdale, \$54,966; Cheshire County \$71,354; NH, \$81,726; US, \$66,011

Hinsdale's Planning Efforts:

- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Report (2016) via EPA Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities Program:
 - *Frequent bottlenecks on the narrow truss bridge over the Connecticut River hinders access to the nearby interstate and to the economic hub of Brattleboro, particularly for trucks, which are nearly as wide as the bridge, thus requiring other vehicles to stop and wait while they cross. A new bridge suitable for heavy-duty vehicle traffic is slated for construction in a few years, at which point the current bridge will be closed to vehicles but open for pedestrians and bicyclists. Hinsdale leaders are looking forward to the economic opportunities that will be generated by the new bridge configuration.*

Current manufacturers will have easier access to ship goods and materials, as will potential new businesses. Meanwhile, the old bridge is slated to be redesigned and improved for hikers and cyclists, which could increase the town's attractiveness to people touring the region's numerous parks and scenic roadways. The bridge's location next to the Brattleboro Amtrak station is a bonus, as cyclists can bring bikes on the Vermonter train that stops there. (p. 4)

- *When the (existing) truss bridges are closed to vehicle traffic, bicycle tourists on the Amtrak Vermonter (Washington, D.C., to St. Albans, VT) could ride from the Brattleboro station to the Connecticut River bikeway in downtown Hinsdale. (p. 5)*
- *Goal 3: Attract tourists, foster businesses, and build amenities for local residents that capitalize on the region's abundant rivers and forests. (p. 16)*
 - *Strategy: Develop a plan for Island Park and old bridges. Want to be proactive about planning for new bridge and making sure the island park is actively used and the old bridges become attractive bicycle pedestrian paths.*
- National Parks 3 Year Technical Assistance Program via Rivers Trails Conservation Assistance Program:
 - National Parks are helping Hinsdale promote its rail trails (Fort Hill Branch) and connectivity with old bridges to Hinsdale.
- Talking with Brattleboro about connectivity:
 - Brattleboro working to secure bike/ped easements on waterfront and connectivity to Hinsdale-Brattleboro bridges as well as railroad trestle bridge further south.