

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

CONFERENCE REPORT

PROJECT: Jefferson-Randolph
13602C

DATE OF CONFERENCE: August 15, 2019

LOCATION OF CONFERENCE: Jefferson Town Hall

ATTENDED BY:

NHDOT:

Jennifer Reczek	Stephanie Micucci
Tobey Reynolds	Michelle Zhang

Others:

See sign-in sheet

SUBJECT: US Route 2 Public Informational Meeting

NOTES ON CONFERENCE:

Jennifer Reczek opened the meeting with a brief history of the project and an overview of its current design. The project was conceived following a corridor study in 2001. A public hearing was held in 2005. Several revisions to the design were made based off public feedback. Subsequent to that meeting funding constraints resulted in segmentation of the project. Construction on the first segment was completed in 2010.

J. Reczek explained that the intent of the project is to increase safety and mobility of US Route 2, a critical rural freight corridor and bicycle route. Given the amount of time elapsed since the last public meeting, the NEPA document for the project must be updated, new properties may qualify for cultural district designation, and new endangered species may have been discovered. The purpose of this meeting was to refresh the design of the project with the public and solicit public input with the new design team assigned to the project.

Stephanie Micucci described the existing details of the project. The project area along US Route 2 is approximately 2.5 miles long and runs easterly from just east of Black Velvet Road to just west of Valley Road. The current roadway deficiencies include; narrow shoulders, poor pavement quality, and deficient stopping sight distance in a few locations. The Carter Spring area is of particular concern for its history of crashes. Residents expressed their concern about the high traffic speeds and volumes at Carter Spring.

S. Micucci further explained the proposed design details of the project.

- Shoulders will be widened to 4 ft. Travel lanes will be 11 ft along the historic district and 12 ft elsewhere along the project. Total pavement width will be 30 ft in the historic district and 32 ft elsewhere.
- The roadway will be reconstructed to alleviate rutting and cracking and improve the ride surface.
- The alignment will be improved. Focus will be on improving the geometry at Carter Spring.
- Guardrail and drainage will be improved.

Easements will be required on certain properties for road and drainage work. The locations of stormwater treatment have not been determined yet, which may result in further impacts than what were shown at the time of the 2005 public hearing.

J. Reczek explained that construction cost of the project is estimated at \$11.7 million. Including engineering costs, total cost of the project is estimated at \$14.3 million. The Ten Year Plan allocates \$8.9 million for this project. To fit within funding constraints, the limits of the project may be shortened to the Jefferson Highlands Historic District to address the area of highest crash history and most deficient geometry.

The public was encouraged to participate in the Ten Year Plan hearings that will be happening soon. The Department is working to complete updates to the NEPA document and determine storm water treatment leading up to final design. Advertising date is currently planned for October 2022. Construction is anticipated for 2 seasons, in 2023 and 2024.

Open Discussion

The meeting was then formally opened for discussion.

- A resident asked if the project limits included the location where seven motorcyclists were killed.
 - J. Reczek explained that the location of the incident was within the area of the 2010 improvements to US Route 2, east of the current project limits.
- A resident asked if the cutbacks to the forest were to improve sight line issues.
 - S. Micucci responded that the cuts were not intended for that purpose and primarily associated with the proposed slope and drainage work, but can also be beneficial to sight lines.
- Several residents requested clarification on the pavement planned for the road. One resident expressed concern that 11 foot lanes would not be wide enough for an area heavily trafficked by large trucks.
 - S. Micucci explained that overall pavement in the historic district will increase. The road in the historic district will be 11 foot wide with 4 foot shoulders on both sides, and the 11 foot lanes should not pose a problem for trucks.
- A resident asked what kind of asphalt would be used on the project, mentioning another nearby road that used a type of pavement that allegedly reduced noise.
 - Tobey Reynolds responded that the Department generally uses a few standard types of pavement and that no special asphalt was being anticipated for this project.
- Several residents were concerned about the lack of funding to complete the entire project. Residents noted the long span of time from project start to construction end, the status of the road as a complex cultural resource, and the multitude of visitors to the region.
 - J. Reczek responded that construction on the first segment of the road has been completed. Funding since then has varied greatly.

- New Hampshire District 1 Councilor Michael Cryans explained that the Ten Year Plan process is difficult, and encouraged residents to attend the GACIT meeting in Berlin on September 19th or in subsequent hearings in Laconia and North Conway to express their opinions and advocate for the proposal to raise the priority of the project.
- Paul Robitaille (Gorham Planning Board Chair) commented that he was on a committee with Canada, Vermont, and Maine to make US Route 2 a major connector highway. US Route 2 holds importance as the northernmost east-west highway in the United States. The current incarnation of the project, reduced from four lanes to two, is “a compromise upon a compromise.” The project’s re-inclusion on the Ten Year Plan is an achievement unto itself.
- A resident asked why Maine has more funding than New Hampshire.
 - J. Reczek explained the majority New Hampshire’s funding infrastructure improvements comes from the Federal Highway Administration, which allocates funding according to a formula that cannot be controlled by New Hampshire DOT.
- A resident inquired if newly-placed guardrail along the road would be replaced in this project.
 - S. Micucci responded with the Department’s intention to reuse the guardrail.
- A resident was concerned about easements on his land, and if the DOT would be taking the land.
 - J. Reczek responded that the formal Right-of-Way will not be changing and that owners would be compensated for use of their land.
- A resident asked if design will continue along the parts of the corridor not being funded under the new limits of the project.
 - J. Reczek responded that design will continue for the whole corridor until a final decision regarding the availability of additional funds is made.
- A resident asked if the remaining area of the project not being constructed would be a new project eventually.
 - J. Reczek responded that she would anticipate that it would be.
- A resident asked if the Department was replacing the entire depth of highway.
 - S. Micucci responded affirmatively.
- A resident asked for clarification on what changes will be made in the Carter Springs area, and if the spring will be affected.
 - S. Micucci responded that they were looking at cutting back the embankment and improving sight distance. There are no plans to disrupt the spring.
- A resident living near the scenic overlook area of the road commented that people have been dumping garbage to an area beyond a retaining wall on his property.
 - S. Micucci responded that the Department will take a look at it.
- Several residents expressed that they thought the 50 mph speed limit was too high and would prefer a reduction in the speed limit.
 - J. Reczek explained that the speed limit was legislatively set. The residents could request a speed study, but it was acknowledged that the process might not lead to the speed limit being lowered.

- A resident requested a public hearing after the NEPA document and storm water treatment plans have been finalized. Residents of the area know where the streams are, and need to have the ability to speak to what is planned.

Post-Meeting Discussion

J. Reczek concluded the meeting. Residents with specific questions about their property were encouraged to ask questions.

- Scott and Cynthia Guerin, Parcel 11, noted the historic wall located adjacent to their driveway, and wondered if it would be impacted. They also noted cars visibly being lost in the “gap” near STA. 8090+00 when making left turns out of their driveway, heading east.
- James Snyder, Parcel 10, noted many crashes near the spring and on the outside of the curve. He believed the curve may be banked in the opposite direction. Cars also park on the outside of the curve and drivers cross the street to the spring.
- J. Snyder noted the two private water lines cross US Route 2: Parcel 10 to 101 and Parcel 10 to 100 (1930s plans). He offered to share 1930s plans that he has, which show the approximate location of the water line, for the Department’s use.
- Dan Vaillancourt, Parcel 89, noted the well for the property is located close to the road and the drive configuration may not work as shown.
- Kevin and Trisha Arekelian, Parcel 15 (Water Wheel Restaurant), were concerned with the driveway layout shown on the plans. They have limited parking now and the driveway layout will limit it further. They are willing to work with the Department to come up with a solution that works for safer access to the highway, while maintaining the business parking.

FOLLOW-UP:

- Department to follow-up with J. Snyder regarding 1930s plans depicting the two private waterlines near Carter Spring.
- Update Public Info meeting plan (verify proposed impacts against 2005 hearing plan) and post to the project website. *Completed on September 9, 2019.*

Submitted by:

Michelle Zhang
Roadway Section
Engineering Intern

MZ/mz

Noted by: S. Micucci, T. Reynolds, J. Reczek

cc: R. Faul, M. Jones-Yellin