

DANBURY BOARD OF SELECTMEN

MAY 2, 2018 PUBLIC OFFICIALS MEETING W/NHDOT

Jim Phelps opened the meeting at 6PM. Representatives from The New Hampshire Department of Transportation were at the meeting to discuss a bridge replacement /rehabilitation project for the Route 4 bridge over the rail trail near Spear Hill Road. Along with the Board of Selectmen and the NH DOT officials, also present were Road Agent Jeremy Cornell, Rick Swift representing the Danbury Fire Department, George Heaton and Lindy Heim representing the Friends of the Northern Rail Trail and about 14 other Danbury residents.

David Scott, In House Design Chief, Bureau of Bridge Design, NHDOT introduced the other NHDOT officials -

Jason Tremblay, Senior Project Engineer, Bureau of Bridge Design

Jon Hebert, Roadway Section Design Engineer

The purpose of this meeting is to present citizens and public officials with information regarding this proposed project, and to solicit public input. The bridge is a steel beam 3 span concrete deck that carries US Route 4 over the rail trail.

Mr. Scott read an environmental statement. A copy of the statement is available upon request.

Mr. Scott stated that the flow of the meeting was changed due to information that came to light just prior to the start of the meeting. The Board of Selectmen had responded to a NHDOT letter dated January 30, 2014 stating their preference that a new bridge, west of the existing bridge, be constructed to give a new and straighter alignment to the highway.

The purpose of the meeting was to get input on the repair/replacement of the bridge. They will take the feedback back to Concord.

A formal public hearing will be held if property rights acquisitions for temporary easements or right of way acquisitions. Right now the project is expected to begin in 2021, but that is subject to change.

Jason Tremblay described the bridge the needs and the idea behind the project.

The purpose of the project is correct structural and safety deficiencies associated with the bridge while continuing to accommodate the multi level use of the Northern Rail Trail. The bridge deck is in poor condition, which puts in on the state's red list of bridges. The horizontal/vertical lines, although they are good for the proscribe speed limit, it is sometimes difficult to see.

The rehabilitation of the existing bridge would have presented problems and did not seem feasible.

A conceptual design was presented shifting the roadway slightly to the west with a straighter alignment. A fill over structure would allow the passage of the Northern Rail Trail thru a pre cast concrete frame similar to the one in Potter Place where Route 11 goes over the Rail Trail. Fill over structures are easier to maintain and will last longer. Accommodations can be made if rail traffic were ever to come back. The approach to the bridge would be less steep than it is now with a better sight distance. The old grade was about 7% and the new grade will be about 5% with better sight distances.

Mr. Scott asked the Selectmen if the plan met with their expectations or if there were other ideas or things that needed to be considered. Jim Phelps stated that it looked like a great concept. Lyn England agreed and stated that the current Board of Selectmen wrote the letter to NHDOT in 2014. Jessica Hatch asked how moving the road would affect the property owner near the old Cross Road. Mr. Tremblay said it looks like about it would encroach about 100 feet onto that property.

Jeremy Cornell, Road Agent, said it makes sense to move the road over as far as public safety and access. There have been a lot of accidents on or approaching that bridge. Rick Swift, of the Danbury Fire Department, was hopeful that when the project is complete, the road be wider and straighter with the ability

DANBURY BOARD OF SELECTMEN

MAY 2, 2018 PUBLIC OFFICIALS MEETING W/NHDOT

to see oncoming traffic. Mr. Hebert stated it is a tricky location and it's hard to be able to fix everything. The design is a balance to improve sight distances, improve tie ins with Spear Hill Road, add shoulders to allow for pedestrian access and to do everything possible to make it a better, safer corridor. The lanes will be 12 feet with a four foot shoulder.

The intent is to maintain traffic on the existing bridge during construction. At no time will the bridge be blocked off.

George Heaton and Lindy Heim of the Friends of the Northern Rail Trail asked if the trail will be impacted during construction. A detour would have to be in place when the footings are poured. NHDOT will coordinate with the Friends of the Rail Trail to establish the detour. Mr. Heaton also brought up the subject of ditching along the trail. The high point of the trail is close to the bridge project so it should not negatively impact the ditches.

The project is tentatively scheduled for 2021. It should take a season to complete.

Linda Wilson stated that the design of the bridge looked excellent and she was grateful for the respect shown for the function and the history of the rail trail. However, she did express concern about the access to Spear Hill Road and Huntoon Farm. Delivery trucks need access to the farm. Mr. Hebert responded that an extra long platform has been designed so that a fire truck or delivery truck can make the turn. Additionally there is currently a sharp skew with Spear Hill Rd to US Route 4. With the proposed alignment there is more of a 90 degree crossing so that you can safely enter from either direction. There will be no time that Spear Hill Road will be inaccessible to vehicles that need to get in and out of the road.

Donna Sprague, of Huntoon Farm, generally liked the new design, but is concerned about the actual construction. Her farm stand is open in the summer season and wondered how the construction will impact people trying to making the turn. She expressed concern that the straightening of the road will embolden traffic to go faster thru the area. Visibility could also be an issue turning from Spear Hill Rd onto US Route 4. Mr. Hebert stated that there will be more sight distance than there is currently. Also, they assume that traffic is moving faster than the speed limit.

Mr. Scott asked if the Board would be amenable to skipping the public official/public information step of the process. This meeting was intended as a public official meeting. However, with the public comment and input obtained during this meeting, it would be redundant to hold the public official / public information meeting. It could speed up the process to eliminate it. Jim Phelps asked those in attendance if they had any issue with skipping the next public official/public information meeting. The next gathering would be a public hearing.

Wayne England stated that it looks like a pretty good design. He works for the state DOT and has run a plow truck through there several times and it can be pretty sketchy. The four foot shoulder would be it safer. He say that the alignment shift is good and looks great.

Lyn asked if eliminating the public official/public information meeting would speed up the process. Mr. Scott stated that it might not, but no new information would be presented between now and then.

The group was in agreement to skip the next public official/public information step of the process.

Jim Phelps thanked the NHDOT officials for coming and the public officials meeting with the NHDOT was completed.