

Frequently Asked Questions

East Thetford Road over Connecticut River Bridge Rehabilitation

Lyme, New Hampshire – Thetford, Vermont

February 2022

1. If the bridge is in poor condition, does that mean it is unsafe?

This bridge is posted for 15 tons and can safely carry vehicles that are below this weight limit. To ensure the safety for the traveling public, this bridge receives a routine bridge inspection twice per year and evaluated to check if any repairs or adjustments to the load posting are necessary.

The project will repair the areas of the bridge that are contributing to this load posting and after the work is complete, this load restriction can be removed.

2. Why is the bridge being rehabilitated rather than replaced?

The bridge, along with other adjacent properties, has been determined to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. This eligibility means that NHDOT and VTrans must comply with the requirements of Section 4(f) of the US DOT Act of 1966 and 23 CFR 774. The project is required to minimize impacts to eligible properties and to select the alternative that is least impacting to these properties.

In this case, the Federal Highway Administration had determined that it is feasible and prudent to rehabilitate the structure, and therefore rehabilitation is the selected alternative.

3. Can a sidewalk be added to the bridge similar to the ones on the Orford-Fairlee or Piermont-Bradford bridges?

The existing bridge and roadway in the vicinity of the bridge do not provide shoulder width for pedestrian use, nor are they designated pedestrian facilities. NHDOT investigated the feasibility of adding a sidewalk to the existing bridge and determined that the bridge cannot safely support the additional load.

The addition of a separate pedestrian bridge is beyond the scope of projects such as this one that are initiated as part of NHDOT's Bridge Rehabilitation and Replacement program.

4. Why can't a temporary bridge be installed rather than detouring traffic to the upstream or downstream crossing?

Currently, the bridge is posted for 15 tons and trucks are detoured north to the NH 25A bridge between Orford, NH and Fairlee, VT and south to the NH 10A bridge between Hanover, NH and Norwich, VT. The bridge must be closed during construction and local traffic between will be diverted to these same river crossings; Orford–Fairlee to the north and Hanover–Norwich to the south. This traffic control plan is consistent with what was presented and discussed at the project's two Public Information Meetings.

Installation of a temporary bridge would require significant additional funding, cause increased environmental impacts, necessitate relocation of major utility lines across the Connecticut River, and require the acquisition of private property, with a risk of needing to relocate residents and businesses. Permanent displacement of private property owners for a temporary purpose is not something that either agency would pursue when there are other options available.