

**Hampton Harbor Bridge Project
Summary of Meeting
Public Advisory Committee (PAC) Meeting
Virtual Meeting
January 6, 2021, 4:00 p.m.**

Public Advisory Committee

Kate Bashline, Hampton Resident
Eric Feldbaum, New Hampshire Division of Parks and Recreation
Chris Jacobs, Hampton Department of Public Works, Director
Johanna Lyons, New Hampshire Division of Parks and Recreation
Bill Manzi, Seabrook Town Manager
Seth McNally, NH Seacoast Greenway
Betty Moore, Hampton Historical Society
John Nyhan, Hampton Area Chamber of Commerce
Chuck Rage, Hampton Beach Village District, Chairman
Sen. Thomas Sherman, District 24
Catherine Silver, Hampton Resident
Nancy Stiles, Hampton Beach Area Commission, Chair
Jamie Sullivan, Hampton Town Manager
David Walker, Rockingham Planning Commission

Other

Austin Bashline, Hampton Resident
Nate, Eastman's Fishing Fleet

New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT)

Jennifer Reczek, NHDOT Project Manager
Bob Juliano, Senior Project Manager
Marc Laurin, Senior Environmental Manager
Jill Edelmann, Cultural Resources Manager
Maggie Baldwin, NHDOT

HDR Consultant Team

Roch Larochelle, Consultant Team Project Manager (HDR)
John Stockton, Structural Lead (HDR)
Nick Caron, Project Engineer (HDR)
Kenny Howe, Project Engineer (HDR)
Stephanie Dyer-Carroll, Historic and Environmental Resources (FHI)
Marcy Miller, Public Involvement Manager (FHI)
Laura Parete, Public Involvement Specialist (FHI)

NHDOT hosted the sixth PAC meeting for the Hampton Harbor Bridge Project (NH Route 1A) on Wednesday, January 6, 2021, from 4:00 – 5:30 PM via the Zoom Online Meeting platform. Ms. Jennifer Reczek, NHDOT Project Manager, and Ms. Marcy Miller, Public Involvement Manager, welcomed the PAC members. Ms. Miller introduced key project team members, reviewed the meeting agenda, and gave instructions about how to participate in the virtual PAC meeting.

Ms. Reczek provided an overview of the project's background, Purpose and Need, the alternatives considered, and the Type, Size, and Location Study. Ms. Reczek explained that the purpose of the Hampton Harbor Bridge Project is to provide a safe, reliable, and structurally sound crossing while improving mobility for the traveling public. The current bridge is structurally deficient and functionally obsolete, the electrical system is outdated, and the shoulder and sidewalk widths are not to current design standards. She discussed the alternatives that were considered, including Rehabilitation (with a Widened Bridge), a Twin Bridge (with Rehabilitated Bridge), Replacement with a Bascule Bridge, and Replacement with a Fixed Bridge. The Ms. Reczek said the preferred alternative is Replacement with a Fixed Bridge, as it allows vertical clearance for all vessels that are known to use the harbor, eliminates roadway traffic delays, has the shortest construction duration, and has the lowest lifecycle cost of the alternatives, amongst other benefits.

Ms. Stephanie Dyer-Carroll then provided an update on environmental and cultural resources for the project. She reviewed aquatic, avian, and State-listed plant species coordination that is occurred to date. She mentioned that in-water construction would be restricted to between November 15 and March 15 to protect aquatic species. Biological Assessments and an Essential Fish Habitat Assessment have been prepared and submitted to the regulatory agencies. A mitigation plan will be developed with NH Natural Heritage Bureau to relocate plants away from the work areas prior to construction. Ms. Dyer-Carroll also gave an overview of cultural resources coordination on the project. She explained that cultural resources have been documented, and historic properties and Section 4(f) resources have been identified. She said the identification of mitigation measures to address the loss of the Neil R. Underwood Bridge is being undertaken together with the New Castle-Rye Bridge Project, as the Neil R. Underwood Bridge and the NH 1B Bridge over Little Harbor are the last remaining bascule bridges in the state.

Ms. Reczek said that Section 6(f) properties have also been identified in the vicinity of the site, and NHDOT is coordinating with NH State Parks, the NH Port Authority, and the National Park Service about a potential 6(f) conversion and replacement mitigation. A possible walkway connection between the Hampton State Pier and Hampton Beach State Park is being evaluated as mitigation.

Ms. Reczek concluded the formal presentation portion of the meeting by explaining the next steps and project schedule. The next steps include advancing the preferred alternative to the selected alternative, publishing the Environmental Assessment (EA) and 4(f) evaluation for agency and public review, a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Hearing, finalization of the EA based on agency and public comments, and the conclusion of the NEPA process.

Ms. Reczek thanked the PAC for attending the meeting. She said that the Project Team looked forward to seeing everyone at the Public Meeting on Thursday, January 14.

Throughout the presentation, PAC members asked questions and offered other comments. Questions are noted below in italics with responses made by NHDOT or consultant team members. Comments are included at the end.

Q – Will the bridge be taken out of use when construction starts? Or will there be limited use of the bridge during construction?

A – The existing bridge will be open throughout construction, except briefly when traffic is being transferred to the new bridge.

Q – Are you recommending two separate sidewalks on the north side of the bridge? Right now, are there no plans to have an official crosswalk between Hampton Beach State Park and the State Pier?

A – The current design proposes sidewalks on both sides of the roadway across the bridge, as well as sidewalks at grade on the north side. The Hampton Harbor Bridge Project ties down at the State Park entrance. A crosswalk at the State Park entrance is not part of this project, but a pedestrian path may be constructed under the bridge adjacent to the north abutment to connect the east and west sides of the road.

Q – Will there be an off-ramp for the State Park driveway? Won't people taking right turns into the park backup traffic on the bridge?

A – There will not be any specific changes to the State Park driveway as part of this project. Upon completion of the new bridge, the lane configuration will be the same as it is today. The State Park driveway is being evaluated under the Ocean Boulevard Project. There were several alternatives mentioned in the Master Plan, which are not within the scope of the Hampton Harbor Bridge Project. The bridge project will not restrict the future configuration of the State Park driveway.

Q – Will a navigable channel be maintained throughout construction?

A – The channel will remain navigable throughout construction, except for small windows when working directly over the channel. These closures will be coordinated with the US Coast Guard and scheduled to minimize impacts to the marine community. The project team is also hoping to be able to maintain an opening between spans on one side.

Q – How does the 2023 start of construction work in conjunction with the Ocean Boulevard Project?

A – Depending on the time it takes to choose a design for Ocean Boulevard, there may be construction overlap in years two and three of the Hampton Harbor Bridge Project. Construction signage will be coordinated between the two projects.

Q – How long will construction take?

A – The construction is anticipated to take approximately three years, which includes the time required for removing the existing bridge.

Q – What mitigation measures are being considered for historic resources?

A – Potential mitigation measures include a kiosk with interpretive panels containing information about the existing and previous bridge. The Project Team has spoken with the Hampton Historical Society about posting historic information about the bridge on their website.

Q – People try to cross the roadway near the bridge. Will a crosswalk be moved to the corner of Ocean Boulevard?

A – That will be considered under the Ocean Boulevard Project. The Project Team is using StreetLight Data to identify locations where people cross the road.

Q – With the height increase of the new bridge, is there anything that can be done to slow cars down as they cross?

A – The grade is only five percent, so there is not a great incline. No traffic calming is currently planned, but it is something that can be investigated during final design. In addition, the natural narrowing of the road as you go through the intersection at the State Park driveway may slow some cars.

Comments

- A PAC member recommended lighting under the bridge.
- A PAC member suggested that right angles in sidewalks are difficult for pedestrians to navigate.
- PAC members expressed concerns about traffic congestion coming off the bridge into Hampton.
- A PAC member said that the Division of Parks and Recreation has been utilizing an online registration system for guests. This has changed the traffic flow into the State Park.
- A PAC member suggested that NHDOT could observe how people are socially crossing during construction and then retrain people about how to cross once the project is complete.
- A PAC member was happy to hear that a sidewalk would be placed under the bridge.

The meeting adjourned at 5:30 PM.