

BUREAU OF ENVIRONMENT CONFERENCE REPORT

SUBJECT: Monthly SHPO-FHWA-ACOE-NHDOT Cultural Resources Meeting

DATE OF CONFERENCES: October 12, 2023

LOCATION OF CONFERENCE: Zoom Meeting

ATTENDED BY:

NHDOT

Sheila Charles
Meli Dube
Jill Edelmann
Jon Evans
Kristopher Kozlowski
Dzijeme Lazares
Marc Laurin
Curtis Morrill
Anthony Puntin
Kevin Russell
Tobey Reynolds
Bill Saffian
David Scott
David Smith
John Stockton
Trent Zanes

NHDHR/NHDNCR

Laura Black
Marika Labash

FHWA

Jamie Sikora

Town of Jaffrey

JoAnne Carr

CHA

Robert Faulkner
Ellen Moshier

Hardesty & Hanover

Kimberly Smith
Sean Brown

McFarland Johnson

Christine Perron

Underwood Engineers

Billy Kitchen
David Mercier

VHB

Frank Koczalka
Chuck Gregory
Sarah Gaulty
Quinn Stuart

Peter Walker

Toole Design

Karen Fitzgerald

**Independent
Archaeological
Consulting**

Jesse Cofelice

Preservation Co.

Reagan Ruedig

NH Rail Trails Coalition

Dave Topham

Consulting Party

Robert Stephenson

PROJECTS/PRESENTATIONS REVIEWED THIS MONTH:

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Charlestown-Springfield 41478, X-A004(651), RPR 15230

Participants:

- NHDOT: Meli Dube, Bill Saffian, David Scott
- Hardesty & Hanover: Kimberly Smith, Sean Brown
- McFarland Johnson (MJ)J: Christine Perron

Christine Perron introduced the project. Bridge 135/052 carries NH Route 11 (Springfield Road) over the Connecticut River between Charlestown, NH and Springfield, VT. The bridge is known as the Cheshire Toll Bridge. It is a 500 foot, three-span rivet-connected, Pennsylvania or Petit through truss bridge constructed in 1930. The bridge was determined eligible for the National Register as part of the NHDOT Historic Bridge Inventory. The deck of the bridge is currently listed as being in satisfactory condition (condition level 6) and the superstructure and substructure are listed as fair condition (condition level 5). The substructure has severe mortar loss, and there are varying degrees of deterioration in the stringers. Other components of the superstructure, such as the floor beams, bracing, trusses, and gusset plates, are in fair to poor condition. The purpose of this project is to address deteriorating elements of the bridge to extend its service life. This is a bridge preservation project, which is a project type that is typically completed before a more extensive rehabilitation project is required.

Sean Brown provided an overview of the preservation work that is proposed, which was summarized as follows:

Deck

- One stringer repair (Bolted Bottom Flange repair) - Install 6" x 0.25" repair plate on bottom flange
- Priming and painting to match superstructure

Steel repairs

- Batten Plates:
 - Removal of welded batten plates at L10 (Spans 2, 3)
 - Removal of welded batten plates at L0 (Span 3)
 - Replacement of all batten plates in kind using bolted connections
- Lattice Bars:
 - Significant portions of the lattice bars on truss bottom chords to be replaced
 - Replaced lattice bars will have bolted connections
 - Bottom Sway Bracing
 - Isolated replacement of bottom sway bracing angles with holes

Substructure concrete patching, masonry repointing

- Major repairs are anticipated from the mean low water level to the top of the nosing on both piers
- Repairs will include removal of existing delaminated concrete, drilling rebar dowels, and placing new reinforcing and concrete.
- Repairing grout at stone masonry blocks will include the removal of existing mortar and replacement of new mortar.
- Replacing 2 missing stone blocks with concrete (each side of east pier)

Replacement of wood utility supports with steel supports

- All utility supports (2 per span) to be replaced
- Replacement brackets are likely to be steel or aluminum

NW corner granite approach curb repair

- Filling of isolated erosion below granite approach curb
- Resetting of granite curb

Approach rail replacement

- It appears the original railing was reinstalled as part of 1992 rehabilitation
- Portions of the rail are disconnected from the concrete

Guardrail repairs at southeast and southwest approaches

- Replacement of southwest guardrail terminal with current standard
- Replacement of northwest w-beam approach guardrail, 3 posts are bent away from roadway

Painting of structural steel

- Truss members, floor system, and all bracing members

The following is a summary of key discussion points:

Sheila Charles asked if there would be any excavation required for construction access and noted the site's archaeological sensitivity. It was noted that access would be from a barge launched from an existing boat ramp just downstream of the project. A vacant lot in the southeast quadrant of the bridge could potentially be used for construction staging, which could result in some compaction and rutting. A better understanding of potential impacts is needed to determine if an archaeological survey is necessary.

Jill Edelman noted that she reached out to VTrans about the project but has not received a response.

Laura Black commented that the first step of reviewing potential impacts to the bridge would be to identify character defining features to determine if proposed work impacts those features.

The railing was discussed. S. Brown noted that the metal railing doesn't meet any current standards and the intent is to replace it but to leave the existing concrete. It was noted that the existing metal railing is a portion of the original railing that was placed on the concrete as part of the 1992 rehab. L. Black commented that this goes back to understanding what is character defining on the bridge and understanding what was done as part of the rehab. Additionally, if replacement of the decorative bridge approach rail is intended, then the new railing should match the existing railing in kind. A replacement steel approach rail which does not match the existing railing should not be used.

L. Black asked if the missing blocks in the pier could be replaced with stone instead of filled with concrete. J. Edelman noted that this could be assessed as design progresses.

Keene 41590, X-A004(686), RPR # 15379

Participants:

- CHA: Robert Faulkner, Ellen Moshier
- NHDOT: Marc Laurin, Tobey Reynolds, Curtis Morrill, Kristopher Kozlowski, David Smith
- Preservation Co.: Reagan Ruedig
- Independent Archaeological Consulting: Jesse Cofelice

Initial consultation on Keene 41590, Route 101 roadway and Otter Brook Bridge over the Branch River (166/050) project. Goals are to provide better pedestrian and bicycle facilities, improve the Route 101 roadway structure and condition of the bridge over the Branch River, and improve the safety at the intersection of Swanzy Factory Road. Route 101 upgrades may

require rehabilitation, widening or replacing the existing bridge over the Branch River. The discussion will include the results of investigations by Preservation Company and Independent Archeological Consulting.

Robert Faulkner (Faulkner) provided a project introduction and presented several slides: He noted that this was the first Cultural Resource presentation for the Keene 41590 project and that the project is currently in the Preliminary Engineering and Environmental Documentation phase. He continued that the purpose of the meeting was to provide a general overview of the project and the assessments conducted to date and findings of those assessments. The presentation will also provide overview of the project outreach plan and schedule.

Faulkner described the project limits and purpose: The project begins east of Optical Avenue and continues east along NH Route 101 approximately 1 mile to Branch Road. The project crosses the Branch River and is near the Cheshire Rail Trail's stone arch bridge. The purpose of the project is: pavement rehabilitation, drainage improvements, improve bicycle and pedestrian accommodations, address the NH Route 101 Bridge over the Branch River, and address safety issues at the Swanzey Factory Road (SFR) Intersection. He further noted the need of the project as follows: Route 101 is 1 of 2 major east-west routes in southern NH which is vital to commerce, commuting and tourism; It is a gateway to City of Keene; the pavement condition is poor with a concrete slab under the pavement; there is poor drainage with no water quality treatment; the Branch River bridge is on the State's Red List; there are safety concerns at the SFR intersection; and the corridor is challenging for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Faulkner continued the presentation noting that improvements to Route 101 would include providing 12-foot travel lanes and widening the shoulders to 5 feet. There are no significant changes to the Route 101 alignment anticipated as part of this project and all attempts will be made to avoid slope impacts to the Branch River. He continued to describe initial concepts to address the safety concerns at the SFR intersection: there are two alternatives on either side of the Cheshire Rail Trail stone arch bridge that would include new bridge crossings over the Branch River; one alternative that relocates the SFR intersection approximately 700 ft. west of the existing intersection, also requiring a new bridge crossing over the Branch River; keep the existing SFR alignment, looking at geometric improvements along Route 101 and the existing bridge crossing; and realigning SFR to the east behind the Fastener Mill building along the abandoned railroad spur line.

Reagan Ruedig, of Preservation Company (Ruedig) continued the presentation to discuss the historic resources along the corridor. She stated that a Request for Project Review (RPR) report was prepared for the project, noting that the area was historically an industrial area referred to as South Keene that included a rail spur off the Cheshire Rail to access industrial buildings. She noted that there was not much left of the historical buildings – buildings that are still standing were identified in the slides, comparing the historic maps to current aerial imagery. She further noted that there is little integrity remaining to designate this area as a historic district. She continued stating that there are still some residential buildings remaining along Route 101 and SFR, many of which have been altered, but some still have some integrity. She noted that the Cheshire Rail Trail is in the Area of Potential Effects (APE), portions of which have been surveyed in the past and that additional research may be required to make a determination of eligibility.

Jesse Cofelice from Independent Archaeological Consulting (Cofelice) continued the presentation and summarized the Phase 1A archaeological investigations that IAC conducted in the spring of

2023. IAC identified seven sensitive areas for archaeological sensitivity, designated on the graphic as SAs 1-7. SAs 1-6 were considered sensitive for Pre-Contact Native American cultural deposits and SA 7 was considered sensitive for Post-Contact Euroamerican cultural deposits associated with the former Grist Mill canal system and two Page family residences. These areas were based on the proximity of the road alignment alternatives noted previously. Cofelice continued summarizing the subsequent Phase 1B investigations at SAs 1-6 that were conducted in the Summer 2023 which included 72 shovel test pits and two Test Units (TU). IAC found that areas SA1-3 and 6 had negative results but testing in SA-4 and SA-5 did recover Pre-Contact artifacts. While avoidance is preferred, if ground disturbance is unavoidable, an Archaeological Phase II Determination of Eligible would be needed to establish site boundaries and determine National Register eligibility. Given the level of disturbance, IAC did not conduct a Phase IB investigation of SA-7, which encompasses the eastern most roadway alignment alternative. If impacted, IAC recommended Phase IB mechanic trenching if the chosen alternative encroaches into the area of sensitivity.

Faulkner continued the presentation and noted that alternatives are still being evaluated. Faulkner then provided an overview of the public outreach efforts anticipated which included outreach letters already sent to nearly 50 entities. He noted that there was a City of Keene Public Officials Meeting held on September 27, 2023, a Natural Resource Agency Meeting held on September 20, 2023 and a kick-off meeting with the City of Keene to begin forming the Project Working Group held in late July. He concluded the presentation noting that the Preliminary Engineering and NEPA phase is to be completed by 2025 which will culminate with a Public Hearing and that Final Design is anticipated to be completed between 2026 and 2028.

The following questions and comments were made:

- Dave Topham, NH Rail Coalition (NHRC) stated that there is a large group of active users of the Cheshire Rail Trail and that the NHRC will be closely monitoring the public process for this project. He advised that there will be comments forthcoming from the public on the trail.
- Laura Black, NH Division of Historical Resources (NHDHR) noted that comments were provided on the submitted RPR. She requested that the APE be expanded noting that the current area seemed tight around the project. She expressed concerns that non-physical impacts such as visual impacts should be included. She further requested that an Architectural Survey Plan (ASP) be conducted as there are several alternatives and will narrow down what inventory is needed for this project. She also noted that the ASPs have been very successful and some new guidance will be coming on the website in December but will send this an advance to the Department to use. (*The new ASP guidelines were forwarded to CHA by Jill Edelman on 10/13/23*).
- Marika Labash commented that NHDHR had not yet received the End of Field Letter (EOF). IAC noted that the EOF letter has been drafted for Phase 1A and Phase 1B. The EOF will be provided to NHDOT for review in the upcoming weeks.
- Jill Edelman noted her opinion that the alternatives next to the stone arch bridge could be detrimental to the setting of “such a magnificent bridge”. Faulkner understood the concern and replied that these alternatives were included as there is a wide existing ROW that could accommodate a new road.

Jaffrey 16307, X-001(234), RPR 9564

Participants:

- VHB: Quinn Stuart, Peter Walker, Sarah Graulty, Chuck Gregory
- Town of Jaffrey: Jo Anne Carr
- NHDOT: Marc Laurin, Jon Evans, Dzijeme Lazares
- Toole Design: Karen Fitzgerald
- Consulting Party: Robert Stephenson
- NH Rail Trail Coalition: Dave Topham

Continued discussion on the interpretive panels included in the project mitigation. Panel topics were previously approved, but the conversation needed to continue regarding location and design.

Quinn Stuart (VHB) outlined the three discussion goals for the conversation: interpretive panel orientation (landscape vs. portrait); panel locations; and branding preferences (color schemes, logos, etc.). Quinn and Sarah Graulty (VHB) offered examples of recent interpretive panels for discussion. Jo Anne Carr (Town of Jaffrey) explained that the Town was looking at a small triangle area near the former *Lab 'N Lager* site for a “welcome kiosk.” She suggested that the Town might create three panels to be placed on the reverse side of the three NHDOT panels. One of the panels would concern wetlands and riverine values, and a second might explore railroad history, a fitting complement to the transportation panel planned as part of the mitigation package. Karen Fitzgerald (Toole Design) suggested that she might prefer a tilted-table design for the panels, rather than a 2-sided vertical panel.

Next, the group engaged in a discussion of panel locations. One option would be to locate all of the interpretive panels at the planned welcome kiosk. However, during the discussion, the group determined that placing the interpretive panels as specific locations may increase their interpretive value. For example, Quinn indicated that the *Historic and Extant Contoocook River Crossings* panel should be sited by the river. Jo Anne suggested this panel could be paired with the Town’s wetlands panel and located by the detention basin, which would permit views toward the site of archaeologist Robert Goodby’s research. Laura Black (NHDHR) agreed that this sounds like a suitable location for the archaeology panel. Laura added that ideally the *Residential Architecture/Neighborhoods* panel would be in a neighborhood, possibly near the buildings that might be removed as part of this Traffic Intersection Improvement Project. Laura also said that siting the *Roadway & Transportation* panel near the juncture of the five roadways that meet in the village would allow people to understand the history and significance of the road system in a concrete way. Jo Anne asked whether the panel would have a railroad focus, and Sarah explained that while the panel might touch on railroads as a complementary concept, the focus would be on roads. Laura reinforced that the focus on roadways is fitting because it relates to the resources being affected by the Project. Concerning the location of the *Residential Architecture/Neighborhoods* panel, Quinn suggested that River Street might be a good location given the concentration of intact, high style residential buildings. She noted that the panel location must be pedestrian friendly. Karen suggested there might be space at the 4-way stop intersection in this neighborhood. Pete Walker (VHB) clarified that the decision appears to have been made that it is preferable NOT to collocate all the panels at a single location. Quinn and Sarah will plot potential panel locations on a color map and distribute via email for comments.

Quinn requested that VHB focus on a landscape layout/orientation. Pete asked Jo Anne whether the Town has specific thoughts or requirements for branding, layout, colors, *etc.* If not, VHB could offer a draft design for comment. Jo Anne indicated that she likes the idea of a timeline for the *Roadway & Transportation* panel and the use of maps for the *Residential Architecture/Neighborhoods* panel.

Chuck Gregory (VHB) noted that the current ad date for this Project is July 2024 and stated that the team will need to identify any construction contractor responsibilities well before the ad date. Jill Edelmann (NHDOT) indicated that interpretive panels are relatively easy to install, and therefore NHDOT may be able to work out installation, *etc.* with the local DPW rather than the construction contractor.

Action Items

- › VHB (Quinn Stuart and Sarah Graulty) to plot potential panel locations on color map and distribute via email for comments.
- › Jo Anne Carr to provide design requirements/ideas for panel design and layout as the Town identifies them.

Conway 40638, X-A004(446), RPR 13468

Participants:

- VHB: Quinn Stuart, Frank Koczalka, Sarah Graulty
- Underwood Engineers: David Mercier, Billy Kitchen
- NHDOT: Kevin Russell, Tony Puntin, Jon Evans

Continue discussion as the Effects Memo is complete, discussion can begin on the MOA and mitigation.

It was determined that the proposed Project will result in an Adverse Effect to the Eastman-Abbott House at 6 Pleasant Street in Conway. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss mitigation. Before turning to the discussion, Laura Black (NHDHR) indicated that her office is not receiving hard copies sent by Jill Edelmann and NHDOT. Hand deliveries are preferable given these recent issues.

Quinn Stuart presented graphics from the completed Effect Tables that VHB prepared for the Eastman-Abbott House. She indicated that because of the partial property acquisition, vegetation clearing, and relocated sidewalk that will ensue from the Project, there will be an Adverse Effect on this historic resource. She explained that this project poses some challenges for mitigation opportunities, and a traditional mitigation measure like an interpretive panel on site is not the best fit in this situation. Instead, VHB suggests a less traditional mitigation approach, such as working with the local historical society to contribute content to a website or print newsletter. A possible topic could be the history and evolution of this corner (Pleasant and Main Streets). Quinn noted that VHB had not reached out to the historical society yet and asked the group if they had ideas for mitigation.

Laura agreed that this is a tricky site for mitigation, and congratulated VHB on a good solution. She added that the loss of trees is a physical impact to how the building functions (heat/shade/etc.) and suggested that VHB and the Town talk to the property owners about the trees, i.e.: Do they have preferences for future tree plantings (acknowledging that the trees cannot be located too close to the building foundation)? Tony Puntin (NHDOT) said he did not believe that anyone had spoken to the property owners about mitigation yet. Next Tuesday is a public hearing where the Town will be asked to issue a Finding of Necessity.¹ Meeting with the owners will come next. Laura suggested VHB and the Town explore landscaping and digital content for this historical society because there is no logical place for a panel at 6 Pleasant Street. Quinn said that VHB will explore the viability of the Pleasant/Main corner history/evolution topic for digital content. Laura likes this topic because it is connected to architectural history, so it is appropriate as mitigation for this Project.

Tony asked about how much of this needs to be in place before proceeding to final design. Jon Evans (NHDOT) explained that it is necessary to complete Section 106, but they don't necessarily need a final MOA for NEPA closure. Jill explained that NHDHR will sign the Effect Memo, then NHDOT will do e106 and the ACHP will have 15 days to let them know if they want to participate (which is unlikely). Then, an MOA can be executed. The ad date is January 2025.

Quinn asked if there is any reason to hold off on contacting the historical society until after the upcoming public meeting. Jon does not think so because everyone should be aware and there should be no issue with moving forward. Tony suggested that Frank Koczalka (VHB) talk with Paul DegliAngeli (Town of Conway) before Quinn and Sarah contact the historical society. Quinn added that Paul might have a preferred contact at the historical society and could facilitate an introduction for VHB.

Action Items

- › Sarah and Quinn (VHB) will look at mitigation content.
- › Frank (VHB) will look into tree/vegetation replanting and owner preferences.
- › Frank (VHB) will talk with Paul DegliAngeli (Town of Conway) about contacting the historical society to discuss mitigation.

¹ Directly following the October 17th Public Hearing, the Highway Layout Commission appointed by the Governor and Executive Council held a Finding of Necessity meeting and found in the affirmative.