

# BUREAU OF ENVIRONMENT CONFERENCE REPORT

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

**DATE OF CONFERENCES:** March 9, 2023

**LOCATION OF CONFERENCE:** Zoom Meeting

**ATTENDED BY:**

**NHDOT**

Timothy Dunn  
Jill Edelmann  
Jon Evans  
Sarah Healey  
Marc Laurin  
Dan Prehemo  
Jennifer Reczek  
Rhona Thomson  
Matt Urban  
Hans Weber  
Trent Zanes

**ACOE**

Michael Hicks

**FHWA**

Jamie Sikora

**VTrans**

Judith Ehrlich  
Lee Goldstein  
Al Honsinger

**Dubois & King**

Dan Mallach  
Megan Ooms  
Michael Riccardi

**McFarland Johnson**

Christine Perron

**WSP**

Timothy Higgins

**Preservation**

**Consultant**

Jim Garvin

**NH Rails and Trails**

**Coalition**

Dave Topham

**NHDOS**

Richard Bailey  
Jeff Oberdank

**City of Keene**

Don Lussier  
Brett Rusnock

**NHDHR/NHDNCR**

Laura Black  
David Trubey

**Lebanon Historical  
Society**

Nicole Ford Burley

**PROJECTS/PRESENTATIONS REVIEWED THIS MONTH:**

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**Keene Pedestrian Safety Improvements for the Stone Arch RR Bridge, Keene Transportation Heritage Trail Project (no NHDOT project number; R&C 14579)**

Participants: Jim Garvin, Preservation consultant; Don Lussier and Brett Rusnock, City of Keene; Dave Topham, NH Rails & Trails; Mike Hicks, ACOE; Jon Evans, Marc Laurin, NHDOT

Continued consultation to address the Keene Stone Arch Bridge pedestrian safety improvements and overall trail improvements. NHDOT, is responsible for aspects of a rehabilitation project on the adjacent NH Route 101 and audited the discussion.

This meeting responded to a Request for Project Review (RPR) Form that was developed in consultation with the City of Keene and submitted, after review by the city, to the NHDOT Bureau of Environment on February 2, 2023. This project has no FHWA/NHDOT project number yet. No federal funding has yet been provided for the proposed project.

The discussion began with a joint conclusion that no Wetlands Permit should be required for this project. With the possible exception of the lifting of a few toppled granite blocks from the bank of the river for replacement in their original positions at the top of the bridge, no aspect of this project is expected to touch the waters of the Branch River.

Using Screen Share, Keene City Engineer Donald Lussier began the discussion by reviewing the details of the proposed Transportation Heritage Trail (THT) as previously presented at the meeting of October 13, 2022. He noted that construction of the portion of the trail that is now being discussed is not imminent, but that the City of Keene is seeking early guidance in any aspect of the proposed project that will require more detailed review prior to the beginning of work. The THT will extend 1.1 miles from Eastern Avenue to the municipal boundary with Swanzey, and the portion from Eastern Avenue to Route 101 (west of the Stone Arch Bridge) is funded and ready for detailed engineering. Immediately to the west of the Stone Arch Bridge, spanning NH Route 101, the city will install the Robert J. Prowse Memorial Bridge (1963), which is currently stored in the median of I-93 in Londonderry. East of the Stone Arch Bridge, an existing Bailey bridge, in place for forty years over the Ashuelot River at Island Street, will be moved and rehabilitated as an overpass above Swanzey Factory Road to maintain the THT at a consistent elevation for the benefit of trail users.

City Engineer Lussier reviewed the evolution of the Stone Arch Bridge from its original design (1847) to the present. In 1903, two courses of large granite blocks, forming the cap of the original parapet, were removed to provide clearance for wider rolling stock on the bridge. At that time, a steel pipe railing was installed for safety, but this has subsequently deteriorated to a state of disrepair. Today, the trail surface of the bridge is only 4-6 inches below the granite curbing at the edges of the trail and provides no safety for persons or animals crossing the bridge some 50 feet above the river.

Lussier and Garvin discussed three possible options for bringing the bridge into compliance with AASHTO standards for pedestrian or bicycle safety:

- Rebuilding granite parapets similar in design to the originals. Replacement of two courses of granite, each conforming to the 14-inch height of the original parapet stones, would not bring the parapet to the 42-inch height required by AASHTO standards and therefore would require either thicker courses of stone or an added rail on top of the granite.

- Installing a steel railing that would meet AASHTO standards by having vertical balusters spaced six inches on centers, with top and bottom rails and a third “rub rail” for the safety of cyclists. Although this design would recreate the concept of the 1903 steel bridge rail, it would vary in design from the older open railing.
- A hybrid design using a stone parapet on the upstream side of the bridge and a steel railing downstream, with corresponding interpretive signage explaining changes to the bridge as railroad rolling stock evolved.

Laura Black responded to these options by reviewing the *Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*. She observed that a project needs to select and follow one of the four *Standards* based on the underlying goals of the project. She observed that the change from granite parapets to a metal railing reflected a significant chapter in the development of railroad technology and in the evolution of the bridge and should be recognized.

She suggested that the *Secretary’s Standards for Rehabilitation* would be the most appropriate guidelines for the project. She advised the City not to consider a re-creation of any of the now-lost historical features of the bridge, but rather to regard the required safety railing as new construction added to the existing historical fabric, avoiding the creation of a hybrid design that never existed at any point in history. This new construction should meet AASHTO standards and be compatible with the historic fabric yet be reversible (removable) without damage to the historic material. She noted that retrieval and replacement of the few toppled parapet stones would be appropriate. An interpretive exhibit like the panel already created to interpret the Prowse Memorial Bridge would be the simplest and most appropriate way to explain the design evolution of the Stone Arch Bridge to trail users and others.

Jill Edelmann mentioned the possibility of pulling the proposed railing in from the edges of the bridge rather than anchoring it in the stone edges of the bridge on the alignment of the 1903 railing. Laura concurred, noting that idea is common when adding an addition to a building to differentiate the new and make the addition subservient to the original.

Don Lussier noted that with these suggestions, the City of Keene will employ a consultant to begin to develop designs for further review and discussion as the project approaches implementation.

### **Lebanon 43821, R&C 14307**

Participants: Jon Evans, Rhona Thomson, Matt Urban, Hans Weber, NHDOT; Richard Bailey, Jeff Oberdank DOS; Timothy Higgins, WSP; Nicole Ford Burley, Lebanon Historical Society; Dave Topham, NH Rails & Trails

Continued consultation regarding the improvements at the Rest Area that require the removal of the weigh station building. M. Urban gave a brief project overview of the project to refresh everyone’s memory. M. Urban explained that this is a joint DOT/DOS/DMV project using US Dept. of Treasury Funds. The crux of the project is to expand the paved area at the Lebanon Rest Area Weigh Station to accommodate a new CDL testing location. M. Urban explained that to

construct this improved testing location the Department would need to demolish the existing weigh station, which was previously identified as culturally significant.

M. Urban went on to summarize that the original RPR was submitted in September of 2022 with an initial response that indicated there were no archaeological concerns. He explained that there were also recommendations made to further explore the Section 106 public involvement component of this project with the suggestion of reaching out to the Lebanon Heritage Commission. M. Urban also explained that at our prior meeting it was recommended that the Department provide additional information regarding what alternatives to demolition and site selection were considered.

M. Urban indicated that in Late November of 2022, the Department circulated a memo summarizing the various site selection alternatives that had been evaluated.

M. Urban also explained that the Department had reached out to the City of Lebanon, Lebanon Historic society/Heritage Commission, DRED, and DOS to determine if there were any interested parties able and willing to relocate the weigh station to preserve its usefulness elsewhere.

M. Urban indicated that in late January 2023, the Department completed a field review with the representatives from the groups listed above to assess the feasibility and interest in moving the structure. The outcome of that field meeting determined that while there was interest by the Heritage Commission, there was no feasibility to accommodate it due to logistics and financial constraints.

M. Urban also noted that at the last Cultural Resource Agency Meeting there had also been discussion about the proposed tree clearing that was approved at that meeting. M. Urban updated the group that the clearing had begun last week and was anticipated to be completed by the end of this week.

M. Urban concluded his project summary/update by going over what he believed the next steps to be, seeking concurrence from DHR. M. Urban expressed that it was his belief that in the absence of an interested party being able to feasibly move the weigh station that the next course of action would be to move forward with the preparation of an Adverse Effect Memo and MOA for Mitigation. M. Urban asked for concurrence on that matter and opened the conversation up to the rest of the group to talk about mitigation options.

Jill Edelman and L. Black confirmed that those would be the logical next steps.

L. Black asked to go back and briefly discuss the why it was determined unfeasible for the interested party (Heritage Commission) to move the structure. M. Urban indicated that it was his understanding that it was due to financial and logistical constraints regarding how to physically move it. L. Black asked if the funding source for the project could pay for the move as a form of mitigation for the project. M. Urban explained that the funding source coming from the US Dept. of Treasury was narrowly tailored such that it could only be used for the construction of the CDL sites. This was further confirmed by Jeff Oberdank, who also mentioned that the rising cost of the project as it was, was already jeopardizing their ability to fully fund all the projects this funding is allocated for.

M. Urban indicated that it was his recollection that there was an email from the Heritage Commission that expressed support for the possibility of an Interpretive panel as a form of Mitigation. M. Urban indicated that if that were the case that would be something DOT would also likely be in support of pursuing. L. Black indicated that based on the existing Individual Inventory that there may not be sufficient photos and research to complete an effective panel. As such, it is her recommendation that the Department hire a consultant/obtain additional photos and have more research completed with a focus on preserving images (interior/exterior), develop a better documentation for the history of rest areas and with specifics to weigh stations (when did they come about etc.) as well as local site-specific research on the specific history of this weigh station at this location.

L. Black also posed the question if this was the best location for the panel to reside. Consensus was that rest areas are often good locations for reaching the public and that it would likely be a good location.

M. Urban looking for clarification asked to verify that if we were quick to initiate obtaining the photo documentation necessary to support the update to the individual inventory, and assuming the Effect Memo and MOA get signed, that it would be okay for the demolition to proceed even if the research end of the mitigation were to be ongoing post demo. The group confirmed that would be an acceptable practice.

J. Edelman recapped that everyone agreed that we would proceed with preparing the Effect Memo and MOA and that updated research, photos and an interpretive panel would be acceptable mitigation. All agreed and there was no opposition. Jill indicated that as such there likely would be no need for any additional meetings and that this could all be completed outside the monthly meeting forum.

#### **Chichester 40631, X-A004(441), R&C 14197**

Participants: Sarah Healey, Marc Laurin, Dan Prehemo, Rhona Thomson, Hans Weber, Trent Zanes, NHDOT; Christine Perron, MJ; Dave Topham, NH Rails & Trails

Continued consultation to review the design alternatives for the intersection of Route 28 and Main Street/Depot Street. Goal will be to determine inventory efforts following the Architectural Survey Plan.

Hans Weber presented the proposed intersection improvement project, located at the intersection of Main Street and Depot Road with NH Route 28. NH 28 travels north-south through the project. Main Street comprises the biggest part of intersection, with an unconventional configuration that has two legs intersecting with NH 28. Depot Road is a local road that intersects with NH 28 across from Main Street.

A Corridor Safety Study was completed in 2009 and identified this intersection as a concern. The project was added the 2017-2026 Ten Year Plan and design work was initiated in 2020. A Public Officials Meeting was held on September 21, 2021. Since that meeting, design alternatives have been developed and a Public Informational Meeting is planned for April/May 2023. The project is currently scheduled to advertise on August 26, 2025.

The goals for today's meeting were to review the project details and proposed impacts within the Area of Potential Effect (APE); obtain DHR and FHWA input; and discuss outstanding evaluations to determine effects on the potential historic resources.

Existing conditions of the project area were summarized. Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) is 14,800 vehicles per day on NH 28 and 7,000 vehicles on Main Street. The posted speed limit is 50 mph on NH 28, 35 mph on Main Street, and 30 mph on Depot Road. Between 2010 and 2019, there were 64 reported crashes, with 55% of those identified as intersection related. An aerial view of the intersection was reviewed to explain the unconventional configuration, property access, and traffic patterns that likely contribute to the crash history.

An Architectural Survey Plan was completed and identified a number of known and potential historic resources in the APE: village of Chichester; Chichester Country Store (257 Main Street); 263 Main Street; 74 Suncook Valley Road; and Pine Ground Cemetery on NH 28.

Design alternatives were reviewed. A roundabout was studied conceptually and would require two lanes on NH 28 northbound, a single lane on NH 28 southbound (with a designated slip onto Main Street), and single lane on Main Street. This hybrid design would be operationally confusing due to capacity needs and it would be difficult to accommodate driveways. Also, substantial right-of-way impacts would be required to incorporate Depot Road into this design. For these reasons, the roundabout alternative will not be progressed further.

An alternative named Signals (A) was explored. This would mostly mirror existing pavement width, consolidate the two Main Street legs into a single opening, and add a southbound NH 28 right turn lane onto Main Street. This design would provide safer conditions for Main Street traffic entering NH 28. However, it would create longer queues on NH 28 than desired, and would also perpetuate safety concerns with the single shared use lane on NH 28 northbound. For these reasons, this alternative will not be progressed further.

The preferred alternative is named Signals (B). This alternative requires some widening and slope work on NH 28 in order to accommodate left turn lanes in both directions and a right turn lane in the southbound direction. This design would process NH 28 traffic more efficiently than the Signals A alternative, provide safer conditions for Main Street traffic entering NH 28, and provide refuge for left turning vehicles on NH 28. This alternative will also include measures for access management. There is currently a large expanse of pavement at the Chichester Country Store. Combined with the odd configuration of the adjacent intersection and the high speed of vehicles commonly seen when entering Main Street from NH 28, the excessive access to the store causes safety concerns. A one way in one way out access point will be introduced for the store property. Also, the town is considering future sidewalks on Main Street, so sidewalks will be included at the proposed intersection.

The status of Section 106 consultation was reviewed. A Request for Project Review was submitted to DHR on August 2, 2022. The response received on September 15, 2022 included a recommendation for an Architectural Survey Plan (ASP). The ASP was sent to DHR on December 29, 2022. There are no consulting parties identified to date.

The need for additional historic resource evaluations was reviewed. The Architectural Survey Plan identified the following potential surveys in the project area:

- Three Individual Inventory Forms: 74 Suncook Valley Road (NH 28); 263 Main Street; and 257 Main Street (Chichester Country Store)
- One Historic District Area Form (North Chichester Historic District)

Additional potentially historic properties exist outside the limits of impacts anticipated from the preferred alternative. The individual properties were reviewed on the design plan. 263 Main Street is located just north of the Chichester Country Store. 74 Suncook Valley Road is across from the cemetery on NH 28. There is potential for some slope work or tree clearing adjacent to this property. After discussion, it was determined that an Individual Inventory Form would be completed for each of the three properties, and inventory of properties on Depot Road that would not be impacted would not be necessary.

David Trubey noted the need for an archaeological monitor during construction if there would be any ground disturbance within 25 feet of the cemetery. He also noted that the proximity of the project to the Suncook River was an initial concern for archaeological sensitivity; however, he now thinks the APE is far enough from the river to be outside the area of sensitivity. Jill Edelman noted that the big grassy area at the intersection was an old parade ground. It was agreed that it would be worthwhile to complete a Phase IA survey with some soil coring in this area.

J. Edelman noted that the potential historic district is much bigger area than the small intersection being addressed. Laura Black responded that an inventory of the district would give an understanding of the overall resource and the types of elements/resources that comprise the district; period of significance and boundary, patterns of developments, and patterns and trends in architecture, design, and materials. This would provide a more holistic understanding of the area. The section on individual properties could be limited to those within the APE, with only broad statements of other properties noting contributing vs noncontributing status.

L. Black stated that Section 4(f) considerations need to be incorporated into the decision on surveys. The need for additional surveys for 4(f) reasons should be discussed with FHWA. J. Edelman agreed that this would be discussed with the project team and FHWA.

Dave Topham commented that he liked the preferred alternatives as a bicyclist, and he was glad to see pedestrian accommodations. He asked what was proposed for paved shoulders on NH 28. H. Weber responded that there would be a 4' shoulder where no guardrail or curb existed. Some areas of the project may need curbing and those areas would have 5' shoulders.

#### **Littleton-Waterford 27711, A003(594)**

Participants: Dan Mallach, Megan Ooms, Michael Riccardi, Dubois & King; Jon Evans, Jennifer Reczek, Rhona Thomson, NHDOT; Judith Ehrlich, Al Honsinger, Lee Goldstein, VTrans; Dave Topham, NH Rails & Trails/Granite State Wheelers Bike Club

Initial consultation to get feedback related to historic and archeological impacts of the recommended alternative for rehabilitation or replacement of Bridge 109/34 Route 18 over the Connecticut River.

Megan Ooms introduced the project and summarized the existing bridge including its general location, surrounding landmarks and reviewed some photos of the site. Megan then summarized the details of the existing bridge, its deficiencies, and the project's purpose and need. The purpose of the project is to provide a safe and efficient vehicular crossing of the Connecticut River and to remove the structurally deficient bridge from the State Bridge Red List while providing timely access to the hospital and other emergency services. The existing bridge exhibits substructure and steel superstructure deterioration and does not meet current width or railing standards. The bridge is a vital crossing for community. Megan discussed seven (7) alternatives currently under consideration in high-level detail: 1) Do Nothing (Does Not Meet Purpose & Need), 2) Deck Replacement, 3) Full Superstructure Replacement, 4) Full Superstructure Replacement & Widening, 5) Convert to Multi-Use Path (Does Not Meet Purpose & Need), 6) Full Replacement and 7) Demolition and Addition of New Ramps. A summary table of the alternatives was presented including the relative degree of impact to various factors including environmental impacts, traffic, historical resources, and others such as cost and service life.

Megan summarized known cultural resources and other related findings about the project site based on initial Phase 1A review, due diligence, and field investigations. It was discussed that the only known historic resource is the Bridge itself with the haunched girders which would be removed under Alternatives 3 through 7. For Archeological resources it was presented that no known archeological sites exist within the APE however the area is inherently sensitive for pre-contact on the basis of being a terrace above the river and flanked by creek tributaries. It was discussed that the Phase 1A assessment had been completed but the report was not yet finalized. Potential 4f impacts were discussed as including the Boat Ramp and Fishing Trail impacts associated with Alternative 7 where removal of the existing abutment within this area and constructing a new abutment of similar but potentially different size would require construction access and possible permanent impacts.

The following questions and comments were made by participants in the meeting:

Jamie Sikora:

- The boat ramp would be considered 4(f) if it was publicly owned.

Laura Black:

- How was the APE determined? Answer was just physical impacts, didn't look at visual. The APE is more than just the physical impacts. Consider all impacts in addition to physical as part of the project area.
- You don't need to survey the whole APE is there is loss of integrity or other justification of a specific potential resource.
- On the NH side, is the Bridge the sole identified historic resource. Answer was no residences present on the NH side.



- What do we know about the dam? Any impacts or changes or temp/perm issues? Is it older than 50 years? It was answered that no physical impacts are associated with the dam, but the boat ramp is part of the dam owner's property. The dam is pretty far upstream of the bridge. Jon E. commented that in Walpole there was an issue with Great River Hydro owning essentially the entire riverbank so this should focus on the APE only but need to make sure there is no Fish and Game involvement.

Judith Ehrlich:

- Is the house on Route 18 and the house by Route 19 historic? Judith noted that VT was also concerned about visual impacts.

Jill E.:

- From the VT perspective, we want to look at the two houses mentioned and need to submit archeology so we can all look at this. From the NH side, there are no resources beyond the bridge itself. Once the alternative is determined we can revisit the archeological impacts in more detail.
- Asked more about alternatives from a section 106 perspective. Not much more that we can say before we narrow down the Alternatives. Jennifer responded that from a cost perspective, they are all very costly and the rehab and replacements are similar because of the magnitude of work being done. She is in discussions internally and soon to be with VT to discuss purpose of the project and which alternative really addresses that purpose and need. Jamie inquired about alternative 7 and Jennifer responded that the cost was about half the cost of all rehabilitation and replacement alternatives.
- Needs us to figure out the bicycle and pedestrian usage and then narrow down alternatives. For above ground resources- Hartgen will reach out to Judith to figure out what is needed in Vermont.

David:

- Asked who did the archeology which was answered as Hartgen. Megan confirmed that the report is being finalized and is expected in early March.

Dave Topham:

- Given relatively low ADT, and potential bridge removal, has there been any consideration of potential bike/ped current use? Note that cyclists would not use 93 if ALT 7 removal were selected. It was agreed more information is needed on bicycle and pedestrian counts.

Jamie Sikora:

- Asked about the historic nature of the dam. Jon responded that if we look at this from a property perspective, how far do we go? He does not feel like they should be looking at the property ownership as a whole.
- Jamie asked how the boat launch was established in the first place, and how does that affect what we are doing here. Jennifer clarified that Jamie's question is more about the boat launch and not the dam itself.

Jon Evans:

- Reiterated that we make sure there is no Fish and Game or any public entity involved here, and in discussion about FERC, mentioned that many times the boat launches are a condition as part of the dam permit.

Jamie Sikora:

- Summarized that the boat ramp might not be a 4(f) issue, but still an issue if we are affecting areas that the public uses, which everyone agreed with.

Jill

- Asked what has been done regarding public outreach. Jennifer responded that the project was presented in 2022 for a Public Officials Meeting at a Littleton Selectboard meeting where Waterford Selectboard was invited and 2 attended. Once we determine the alternative selected then we will conduct another public information meeting.