

Meeting Notes

Project: Hampton 40797 - NH Rte. 1A, Ocean Boulevard

Subject: Ocean Boulevard Emergency Access Accommodations

Date: Tuesday, December 05, 2023

Location: Hampton Town Office, Board of Selectmen's Meeting Room

Attendees: **Town of Hampton**

Alex Reno, Chief of Police
Michael McMahon, Fire Department Chief
Jen Hale, Director of Public Works

NHDOT

Tobey Reynolds, Assistant Director of
Project Development
Loretta Girard Doughty, Program
Administrator, Bureau of Highway Design

NH Department of Safety

Paul Hatch, Homeland Security,
Emergency Management
Candi Tibbetts, Senior Field
Representative

HDR

Keith Cota, Senior Technical Advisor
Audrey Beaulac, Senior Highway Engineer

1. Introductions

- Keith C. opened the meeting with introductions and noted the purpose of the meeting was to have an open discussion on how emergency accessibility can be maintained within the Ocean Boulevard corridor and to review modifications that will allow for continued emergency access.

2. Project Overview

- Keith C. provided a project overview for NH Department of Safety attendees due to this meeting being their first exposure to the project and project team.
 - He explained that the project is in the Department's Ten-Year Transportation improvement plan with the objective of improving mobility for traffic, pedestrians and bicyclist along NH Rte. 1A from the Hampton Harbor Bridge through High Street in the town of Hampton.
 - He noted early in the initiation of the project, HDR organized a local committee of town members to assist with the project development and to get local perspectives. The Police Chief, Fire Chief and Director of Public Works are members of this Public Advisory Committee (PAC).
 - One of the first objectives of the PAC committee was to develop the project's "purpose and need" statement which involved improving pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, safety and traffic operations.
 - Keith C. pointed out that the emphasis of traffic operations improvements was to manage the heavy traffic flow versus accommodating peak vehicle capacity.
- Keith C. explained that at prior PAC meetings and Public Informational meetings, Chief Reno expressed concerns for maintaining emergency access through the corridor and the ability for the Police Department to address seasonal peak traffic during special events like 4th of July and firework events and potential threats at Seafood Festival. One area of concern is north of Church Street where the proposed design would reduce the four lanes to a single lane northbound and two southbound lanes from Church Street to Great Boars Head Avenue and a single lane northbound and southbound from Great

Boars Head Avenue to High Street to accommodate bicycle shoulders and wider sidewalks.

- Chief Reno expressed his strong concern for losing the four lanes within this segment. He explained that these lanes have been critical to moving traffic out of the beach during heavy traffic events. He also noted the importance of the two northbound lanes north of Church Street through Winnacunnet Road which could accommodate traffic flow for a catastrophic event requiring evacuation of Hampton Beach.
 - Paul H. also expressed his agreement that the four lanes north of Church Street through Winnacunnet Road is critical with the State Emergency (Seabrook) Evacuation Plan. He noted that this plan is currently being updated. He noted that everything south of Boar's Head is within the 2-mile radius of the Seabrook Nuclear Plant (critical zone area).
 - Keith C. agreed that the Chief's concerns for the ability to move traffic through the corridor during an emergency event is critical. Having the ability for two lanes of traffic flow northbound and the ability to send exiting traffic westbound onto Church Street to NH Rte. 101 are very important. He pointed out that the traffic volume drops off north of Church Street (by 50%) due to the heavy demand for left turning traffic onto NH Rte. 101 westbound. The volume of traffic north of Church Street during the average summer peak flow does not require the four-lane capacity. To meet the project's purpose and need of improving pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, safety and traffic operations through enhanced multi-modal accommodations, the four lanes is recommended to be reduced to one lane northbound from Church Street and one lane southbound from Great Boars Head Avenue northerly.
3. Boars Head Emergency Access and Dumas to Winnacunnet Emergency Access
- Within the proposed single lane operation, Keith C. noted HDR developed concept cross-sections depicting how two-lane northbound emergency access can be maintained within this corridor by the Police and Fire Departments for localized emergency responses and for coordinated evacuation events. Keith C. provided an overview of the attached concepts as follows:
 - The single NB and SB lane configuration north of Great Boars Head Avenue is proposed to accommodate a minimum curb to curb width of 20 ft. with a center raised island to restrict left turning traffic into the local properties (reverse access will be accommodated via the roundabout at Dumas Avenue and at the central parking lot south of Great Boars Head Avenue).
 - For general emergency access, the 20 ft. curb to curb section will accommodate the police department enforcement with ability for traffic to bypass to the left. This section will also allow for fire and ambulance access allowing traffic to pull over onto the shoulder to allow emergency vehicle bypass.
 - For a controlled catastrophic emergency event, the emergency responders have the authority to control traffic for this event and will be able to cone off two northbound lanes within the 20 ft. curb to curb travelway. In addition, the emergency responders will have the ability to close the southbound traffic from Winnacunnet Road and contra-flow a third northbound lane if needed for a mass exodus event.
 - Chief Reno noted he and his staff have experience in managing the traffic during heavy traffic events, having two northbound traffic lanes through Winnacunnet Road is critical. He explained that during heavy traffic management, his officer's cone off the left northbound lane between Highland Avenue to Church Street for dedicated left turning traffic to westbound NH Rte. 101 and maintains a single lane northbound of Church Street where it will open back up to the two-lane flow. He noted that northbound traffic

flow begins to stabilize north of Dumas Avenue. He continued to express concerns for loss of lane capacity for managing emergency situations. Paul H. concurred and agreed that the priority should be to maintain the two northbound travel lanes.

- Keith C. and Audrey B. noted that Police Department has their hands full with managing heavy traffic and exiting parking lot traffic with heavy mix of pedestrian interference. The social atmosphere further complicates the management of people. Keith C. pointed out that the improvements to control pedestrian crossing movements, the reduced and controlled parking lot access points and traffic signal controls at Highland Avenue and Church Street will significantly improve the management of traffic and people within this section of Ocean Boulevard. T. Reynolds asked how an emergency at the Seabrook Power Plant would unfold as it relates to evacuation of the beach area. Chief McMahon explained that an event at the power plant would likely progress over the course of several hours for a fast-moving emergency and it is more likely that an emergency event would take a day or more before immediate danger to the beach area was realized.
- Chief Reno and Public Works Director Hale suggested a second egress and access point be provided within the central parking lot located between Highland Avenue and Church Street. This will allow for alternative egress and access in case a crash mishap happens in the parking lot. Audrey B. noted a secondary point of egress/access can be accommodated like the access layouts in the center parking areas north of Church Street. Keith C. cautioned that this addition would result in loss of parking spaces to accomplish and can be reviewed with DNCR, who manages the center parking lots.
- Chief Reno, supported by J. Hale, commented that a single lane SB and 2 lanes NB would be preferred over the 2 lanes SB and the single lane NB.
- Director Hale noted that the town has a long history of sidewalk management along the businesses. She noted the challenges with providing walkway accommodations while the local businesses attempt to put merchandise in front of their businesses. She reiterated the position of the town that they do not provide maintenance of sidewalks within the State ROW nor State drainage systems. T. Reynolds mentioned the State maintains the drainage systems. She noted when maintaining sidewalks within the town roads during the winter, maintenance is started at the schools and progressed outward until finished or until another storm hits where they would then start back at the schools.

Keith C. explained that NHDOT and HDR are proceeding to present the project's recommended improvements at a Public Informational Meeting in February 2024 and to proceed to a formal Public Hearing in late summer 2024. The town requested the meeting happen mid-February after already planned town meetings. Tobey R. expressed the Department's appreciation for meeting with the Hampton emergency leadership to discuss their concerns and suggestions. Paul H. expressed his agency's appreciation in being brought in on the discussion and will look forward to working with NHDOT on development of the State evacuation planning for this critical area.