

**Route 101 Widening
Federal Project X-A004(686)
NHDOT Project Keene 41590**

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**PROJECT: Route 101 Improvements
Keene 41590**

DATE OF CONFERENCE: March 15, 2024; 9:30 AM

LOCATION OF CONFERENCE: 2nd Floor Conference Room - City Hall, Keene, NH

PURPOSE OF MEETING: Project Working Group Meeting

Attendees:

- David Smith, NHDOT
- Curtis Morrill, NHDOT
- Rob Faulkner, CHA
- Ellen Moshier, CHA
- John Parrelli, CHA
- Don Lussier, City of Keene
- Stephon Mehu, Town of Swanzey
- JB Mack, Southwest Region Planning Commission (SWRPC)

Agenda: Attached

Meeting Overview:

- Dave Smith (Smith) kicked off the meeting with the meeting guidelines and expectations.
 - The purpose of the meeting was to:
 - Review comments received from the 2/8/24 Public Information Meeting;
 - Review and refine the Swanzey Factory Road (SFR) Alternatives based on feedback received to date;
 - Review Archaeological findings to date;
 - Discuss next steps and future meeting dates.
- Ellen Moshier (Moshier) went through the PowerPoint presentation that was presented at the 2/28/24 public information meeting (PIM) for those members of the PWG that were not in attendance. Don Lussier (Lussier) noted a typo in the draft purpose and need statement that was corrected. The archaeological findings were reviewed that noted resources near the Stone Arch Bridge and the Fastener Mill parking lot. Moshier continued to review a summary of the comments received at the PIM. There seemed to be general support for Alternative 2, behind the Fastener Mill building and no support for Alternatives 3, 4A and 4B (parallel to the Stone Arch Bridge). Alternative 1, which preserves the existing Swanzey Factory Road intersection and mitigates the sight distance deficiencies by installing a traffic signal, was liked but only as

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a second Alternative 2. There were also several comments related to complete streets and bicycle and pedestrian accommodations which spurred a discussion among the group.

- It was discussed that there are several “generators” of bicycle and pedestrian traffic including the transitional / low-income housing east of the project limits near the Cheshire County Correctional Facility and the Town of Marlboro.
- It was noted that there is a need to provide better multi-modal accommodation through the corridor. J.B. Mack (Mack) stated that transit options are being looked at.
- Smith asked what the City’s policy / vision is regarding complete streets initiatives on this segment of Route 101. Lussier noted that per the City’s Complete Street Guidelines, a roadway classified as an arterial would require sidewalks on both sides. It was noted that Route 101 was not included in the City’s Complete Street Guidelines. Lussier did state that the City would prefer sidewalks along Route 101 if given the option and that a lower speed along Route 101 is desirable. Maintenance of the sidewalks would be the responsibility of the City if built. If sidewalk was provided, Lussier stated that a connection to Marlboro Street should be made.
- There was a discussion of off-road accommodations for pedestrian and bicyclists – the abandon rail bed north of Route 101 and logging roads along the south of Route 101 are challenging, not maintained, and provide limited connectivity.
- Rob Faulkner (Faulkner) asked if the Town of Marlborough had a policy or vision for multimodal accommodations along Route 101. Mack stated that the Town does have a complete streets policy which looks to improve accommodations along Route 101 (*following the meeting, Mack did forward to the group a copy of Marlborough’s Complete Streets Policy, Design Guidelines and Implementation Plan*).
- Moshier and John Parrelli (Parrelli) displayed and discussed three example cross sections within the corridor that demonstrated the challenges of providing the currently proposed 12 foot travel lanes with 5 foot shoulders/typical section. One cross section was in the vicinity of the Alternative 3 tie-in to Route 101, where driveways and existing slopes to the north limited widening and widening to the south impacted wetlands and floodplain areas; another was just east of the Alternative 2 tie-in where the close proximity of existing buildings limited the extent of widening; and the third was further east along Route 101 where the Branch River and houses limited widening.
- Examples of where buffered shoulders and bicycle / pedestrian accommodations had been provided in similar contexts were referenced: along a recently completed section of Route 30, north of Brattleboro, VT, there was a 2 ft. striped buffer separating the 12 ft. travel lane from a 5 ft shoulder used for bicycles - the posted speed limit in this area was 40 MPH; the segment on Route 101 through the Dublin, NH village had been reconstructed several years ago which included narrow shoulder, curbing and a sidewalk – the posted speed limit through this area was thought to be 30 MPH.
- Revising the proposed typical section to include 12-ft travel lanes, 2-ft stripped buffers and 5-ft shoulders was discussed. Curtis Morrill (Morrill) noted that this typical section was not readily constructable due to the widths of standard paving machines. Other variations of alternative typical sections were also discussed. It was noted that the typical section should be appropriate to accommodate the large truck traffic volume along Route 101.

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- The Swanzey Factory Road Alternatives were discussed further:
 - Based on the feedback from the PIM and the cultural resource sensitivities in the area, it was agreed that Alternative 4A and 4B would not be advanced any further.
 - Alternative 1 had very little support and was only viable if a traffic signal was installed at the intersection to mitigate the sight distance limitations.
 - Alternative 3 also had very little support due to the natural resource impacts and costs associated with constructing a new bridge. Smith noted that the alternative should not be discounted yet because it does provide traffic control benefits; the Alternative 3 alignment could be used as a detour during construction of the replaced / rehabilitated Route 101 bridge.
 - Previous archaeological studies were revisited.
 - Alternative 2 appears to be rising to the top as the preferred alternative. There was a discussion on the next steps to further refine the design and impacts:
 - There have been email discussions with the Fastener Mill property owner. A face-to-face meeting should be scheduled;
 - The question was raised regarding discontinuing the SFR ROW if the road is relocated. Lussier stated that the ROW would revert to the abutting owner(s) and that the City would not want to retain it.
 - There was a discussion on developing site plans related to Alternative 2 that would show access to the parcels in the vicinity of the existing intersection as well as parking and site circulation around the Fastener Mill.
 - It was further noted that if the parking area was impacted, additional archeological investigations would need to be conducted to assess any impacts to remnants to the old mill and canal facilities. It was further noted that the 1933 as-built plans for Route 101 show a small bridge and at-grade railroad crossing at the Alternative 2 intersection with Route 101. NHDOT is researching their records to see if there is any information regarding the disposition of the bridge and railroad. CHA has also reached out to IAC and PC for their input.
 - It was agreed that CHA would perform a higher-level evaluation of a roundabout at the Alternative 2 intersection location and verify that a single lane roundabout would work.
- Smith reviewed future meeting dates and milestones as follows:
 - Development/Study of Supported Alternatives
 - Project Working Group meeting (June 2024, if needed)
 - City Council / Public Informational meeting (July 2024)
 - Project Working Group meeting (August 2024, if needed)
 - Public Hearing (Spring 2025/TBD based upon ROW prep timeframes)
- The meeting concluded with the following **action items**:
 - Lussier will send CHA CAD files of the improvements proposed at Thompson Road;
 - Mack will forward the Town of Marlboro's Complete Streets policies (completed);
 - NHDOT to investigate former old mill canal structure (completed);
 - NHDOT to schedule meeting with Fastener Mill owner;
 - CHA will coordinate next steps to further refine Alternative 2;
 - CHA will investigate construction sequencing of Branch River Bridge to determine if Alternative 3 Bridge is beneficial to address potential construction detours.

Prepared by:

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Robert J. Faulkner, PE
Principal