

Public Involvement Plan

Route 101 - Keene, NH

Project #41590

Federal Aid Project #X-A004(686)

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Prepared for:



Prepared by:



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1.0 PROJECT BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

1.1 Purpose of Public Involvement Plan

The purpose of this Public Involvement Plan (PIP) is to describe the public outreach activities that will be implemented as part of the Keene 41590; Route 101 Improvements Project. This PIP will:

- Provide contact information for the Project Team and Stakeholders;
- Outline the anticipated public outreach process;
- Provide an overview of the New Hampshire Department of Transportation's (NHDOT) Project Development Process;
- Communicate upcoming meeting dates and overall project schedule;
- List and describe the anticipated communication products and methods; and
- Provide timely current information through a variety of targeted means and methods.

This PIP will be updated periodically to reflect updates to the project schedule, project meeting dates, and other items that may change over the course of the project. This Plan will be considered a living document throughout the project. The latest project information will also be made available via the project website: [<https://www.nh.gov/dot/projects/keene41590/index.htm>]

1.2 Public Outreach Approach & Guiding Principles

The Project will aim to evaluate and incorporate principles of Context Sensitive Solutions and Design (CSS/D), which is defined by FHWA as a “collaborative, interdisciplinary decision-making process and design approach that involves all stakeholders to develop a transportation facility that fits its physical setting.” Stakeholders are defined as people and organizations, including agency staff and elected officials, organized groups, area residents, and business owners affected by the project. This may include local government, utility companies, groups associated with environmental or economic concerns, emergency services, etc. Additional information on the CSS/D process can be found at the following link: (<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/csd/qualities.htm>).

Consistent with CSS/D, the core principles of the design will include:

- A design that improves safety for all users;
- Using a shared stakeholder vision as a basis for decision making;
- Add lasting value to the community, the environment, and the transportation system;
- Effective and efficient use of resources.

1.3 Project Overview

The Route 101 project begins east of Optical Avenue and continues approximately one mile to Branch Road. Much of the corridor parallels, or is in the proximity of, the Branch River, and the Otter and Minnewawa Brooks. The corridor serves as one of the gateways into the City of Keene, and the abutting

properties reflect the diverse zoning along Route 101, which includes the City's industrial, commerce, high density, and rural zones. The objective of the project is to provide safety improvements, pavement and bridge rehabilitation, and improve drainage. Various alternatives for the corridor will be evaluated and will undergo a thorough review and analysis of their impact to traffic flow, right-of-way, and environmental resources.

The project will provide better pedestrian and bicycle facilities, improve the Route 101 roadway structure, improve the condition of the bridge over the Branch River, and improve the safety at the intersection at Swanzey Factory Road. Route 101 upgrades may require rehabilitation/widening or replacing the existing bridge over the Branch River. According to 1933 as-built plans, the roadway base includes a 20-foot wide reinforced concrete pavement.

One of the primary design considerations is to improve the intersection sight distance deficiencies at the intersection of Swanzey Factory Road and Route 101. The design development will include an alternative evaluation of improving the intersection's safety and may include relocating the intersection. Swanzey Factory Road is also dedicated as a "Bicycle Street" in the City's complete streets guidelines and this project may be a means to improving bicycle operations in the area.

The Project Working Group (PWG) described later, will help define the project's purpose and need and assist in guiding the alternatives analysis as the project moves forward.

1.4 Project Team and Stakeholders

The project objectives will be achieved through collaboration of several key groups. These groups may include the City of Keene, Southwest NH Planning Commission, local organizations, and private citizens. The project will be led by NHDOT. The NHDOT has retained a consultant, CHA Consulting, Inc., to assist them. The Project Team is tasked with advancing the project through the Preliminary Design and Environmental Documentation phase of the project.

The point of contact for all inquiries is the NHDOT Project Manager, David Smith.

Project Team

Name	Organization	Telephone	Email
David Smith	NHDOT Project Manager	(603) 271-2165	David.S.Smith@dot.nh.gov
Curtis Morrill	NHDOT Bureau of Highway Design, Lead	(603) 271-2105	Curtis.A.Morrill@dot.nh.gov
John Stockton	NHDOT Bureau of Bridge Design, Lead	(603) 271-2731	John.G.Stockton@dot.nh.gov
Marc Laurin	NHDOT Bureau of Environment, Lead	(603) 271-4044	Marc.G.Laurin@dot.nh.gov
John Kallfelz	NHDOT District 4 Engineer	(603) 352-2302	John.P.Kallfelz@dot.nh.gov
Robert Faulkner	CHA Consulting, Inc. Principal-in-Charge	(603) 460-5006	RFaulkner@chasolutions.com
Ellen Moshier	CHA Consulting, Inc. Project Manager	(603) 357-2445	EMoshier@chasolutions.com

Project Working Group

Name	Organization	Telephone	Email
Don Lussier	City of Keene, City Engineer	603-352-6550	dlussier@keenenh.gov
Jesse Rounds	City of Keene, Community Development Director	(603)-352-5440	jrounds@keenenh.gov
J.B. Mack	Southwest Regional Planning Commission	(603) 357-0557	jbmack@swrpc.org
Stephon Mehu	Town of Swanzey	(603) 352-7411	planner@swanzeynh.gov

2.0 PROJECT PROCESS

2.1 *NHDOT Project Development Process*

Most NHDOT projects, including the Keene 41590 project, are developed through a seven-step project development process illustrated below.

1. Project Scoping / Data Collection / Coordination
2. Preliminary Engineering Studies / Environmental Evaluation
3. Identification of Preferred Alternative / Draft Environmental Documentation
4. Formal Public Hearing Process
5. Selected Alternative / Final Environmental Documentation
6. Final Design (Project Construction Plan Development) / Right-of-Way Acquisition
7. Project Construction

This process is described in more detail in the Citizen's Guide to Transportation Series that can be found at the following link: <https://www.nh.gov/dot/projects/plans.htm>

The Project Team will use the CSS/D process to help gather critical input in the early phase of this project, and ultimately developing a shared vision as a basis for decisions and problem solving. During the design development process, alternatives will be presented and discussed with the PWG and with the public at Public Officials and Informational meetings. As a result, the collaboration within the Project Team and PWG will be early in project development before a "Preferred Alternative" is selected.

Once a Preferred Alternative is selected, the design team will proceed to the Preliminary Design phase of the project. In addition, a draft National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document will be prepared and presented at the Public Hearing. The formal Public Hearing will be held to procure approval for the project's layout and confirm that the alternative, as presented, is the preferred alternative. The Hearing will be overseen by a Hearing Commission that is tasked with deciding on the layout of the alternative that has been identified for the project. All issues and/or comments raised at the Public Hearing or during the hearing comment period will be documented and addressed. The Public Hearing and subsequent layout approval represent a major milestone in the project development phase as it solidifies the major aspects and right-of-way requirements of the project's design.

The Final Design phase of the project commences at the completion of Preliminary Design. This phase entails development of the final engineering plans, the permitting process, acquisitions of right-of-way/easements, and preparation of construction contract documents. Final Design is complete when the project is advertised for construction and is awarded to a contractor.

2.2 *Preliminary Schedule*

It is anticipated that the Preliminary Design will occur from Spring 2023 to Summer 2025; followed by Final Design from Fall 2025 to Spring 2027. Pending funding availability, the Project Advertisement is anticipated in FY 2027 with construction to commence in FY 2028.

2.3 *Project Meetings*

The NHDOT will hold a series of meetings with local officials, public agencies, abutters, and other stakeholders as needed. A formal Public Hearing will also be held to present the recommended alternative. The overall purpose of these meetings will include:

- Introducing the project;
- Disseminating information and providing a setting for discussion and gathering feedback that will help form the alternatives and impacts;
- Complying with the NEPA process which calls for public involvement during the process of evaluating the environmental, social, economic, and cultural resource impacts from the project;
- Presenting and describing the potential alternatives and associated impacts of each;
- Providing adequate opportunity for public comments and public involvement throughout the multi-year process; and
- Addressing concerns of the public, officials, agencies, and stakeholders.

The meetings will be open to all members of the public and are anticipated to consist of the following general formats:

- Project Working Group – These meetings will be scheduled throughout the alternative development process for the Project Team to present initial concepts for input from the PWG and to glean issues and concerns from the PWG. Alternatives are envisioned to be refined or revised following input from the PWG. It is envisioned the PWG meetings will be held prior to Public Information Meeting so that consensus on the alternative presented has been reached between the Project Team and the PWG.
- Public Officials Meetings: These meetings will be scheduled, as necessary, to inform the City and State elected officials, municipal staff, and other interested members of the public about the details of the project.
- Public Information Meetings: The objective of Public Informational meetings is to review the project alternatives that are acceptable to the community and public at-large. The meeting will be widely advertised within the community with notices posted in prominent public places, including local and regional newspapers, and on the City’s website. Invitations will also be sent by certified mail to all affected property owners.
- Public Hearing: Once a Preferred Alternative has been identified and the environmental documentation completed, a formal Public Hearing to secure layout approval for the project, will be scheduled. The purpose of the Public Hearing is to inform the public of the design

alternative that was selected for construction. This Hearing serves to meet the requirements of the NHDOT public information process. The Hearing will be widely advertised within the community with notices posted in prominent public places and on the City’s website. Invitations will be sent by certified mail to all abutting property owners directly impacted by the project.

The status and general sequence of the anticipated public meetings are detailed below. This Schedule will be updated as the project moves forward to reflect more specific dates. Materials presented will be available on the project website.

Public Meetings

Entity	Purpose	Date
Project Working Group (1)	Kick-off Meeting	7/12/2023
Public Officials Meeting (1)	Project Overview Project Schedule Develop Project Goals	9/27/2023
Project Working Group (2)	Alternatives Review	11/13/2023 Tentative
Public Information Meeting (1)	Present Problem & Vision Statements Review Existing Conditions Discuss Design Controls and Concerns Discuss Preliminary Alternatives & Investigations	1/8/2024 Tentative
Project Working Group (3)	Debrief on Public Information Meeting	2/19/2024 Tentative
Project Working Group (4)	Refined Alternative Review	8/12/2024 Tentative
Project Working Group (5)	Refined Alternative Review prior to Public Officials Meeting (2)	10/8/2024 Tentative
Public Officials Meeting (2)	Review Refined Alternatives coming out of PWG (5) prior to Public Information Meeting (2)	11/20/2024 Tentative
Public Information Meeting (2)	Review Refined Alternatives coming out of POM (2). Select Preferred Alternative	1/7/2025 Tentative
Public Hearing	Present Preferred Alternative	4/22/2025
Project Working Group (6)	Debrief on Public Hearing	5/20/2025

3.0 COMMUNICATION METHODS

Effective communication is essential to the ongoing success of the project. Below is a description of the communication methods that are planned for the project. As the project progresses, public involvement will be assessed periodically to determine if the methods of communication in use are effective or if adjustments are needed.

3.1 NHDOT Website

A web page for the Keene 41590 project has been created on the NHDOT website and is

used to post pertinent project information. The web page can be accessed at the NHDOT's Project Information Center at <https://www.nh.gov/dot/projects/keene41590/index.htm>. The purpose of the website is to keep the public informed about the project and provide another way for the public to provide input. The web page content will be updated at project milestones and, as necessary, after project meetings.

3.2 Meetings

Public Informational meetings and Public Officials meetings will be used to disseminate and discuss pertinent project related information. These meetings may be conducted either in-person or on virtual platforms.

3.3 Media Coverage

To help maximize the distribution of meeting notices for the Public Informational meetings and the Public Hearing, news releases and/or meeting notices will be provided to local and regional newspapers.

➤ Local Newspaper: Keene Sentinel

- **Publication Frequency:** Daily
- **Distribution:** Cheshire County, City of Keene New Hampshire
- **Address:** 60 West Street, Keene NH 03431
- **Phone:** 603-352-6391
- **E-mail:** classified@keenesentinel.com
- **Website:** <https://www.sentinelsource.com/>

3.4 Social Media

Social media has become the prime means for disseminating information to a large cross section of people. The NHDOT has a Facebook page and electronic newsletter that will be used to notify and inform the public regarding project related information and to notify the public of upcoming meetings.

3.5 Surveys

Use of surveys will be evaluated throughout the project development. These surveys will be used to help build consensus on design options.

3.6 U.S. Postal Service Notices to Abutters

The NHDOT will provide advance notice to the project abutters through the U.S. Postal Service for when the Public Informational meetings and Public Hearing will occur. The location, time and other details of each meeting will be included in the notice.