

BUREAU OF ENVIRONMENT CONFERENCE REPORT

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

DATE OF CONFERENCES: September 8, 2022

LOCATION OF CONFERENCE: Zoom Meeting

ATTENDED BY:

NHDOT

Sheila Charles
Jill Edelmann
Jon Evans
Bob Juliano
Marc Laurin
Jennifer Reczek

FHWA

Jamie Sikora

FHI

Stephanie Dyer-Carroll
Susan Bemis

**Consulting and Other
Parties**

Kate Bashline
Gary Bashline
Roger Groux (NH Port
Advisory Committee)
Dave Topham (NH
Rail Trails Coalition)

NHDHR/NHDNCR

Laura Black
David Trubey

HDR

Nicolas Caron

PROJECTS/PRESENTATIONS REVIEWED THIS MONTH:

(minutes on subsequent pages)

Seabrook-Hampton 15904, X-A001(026)1

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Participants: Stephanie Dyer-Carroll, Susan Bemis, FHI Studio; Jon Evans, Bob Juliano, Marc Laurin, Jennifer Reczek, NHDOT; Nicholas Caron, HDR; consulting parties including Kate and Gary Bashline; Roger Groux, NH Port Advisory; Dave Topham, NH Rail Trails Coalition

Continued consultation and the goals of the presentation are: (1) to provide an update on the status of the mitigation commitments; (2) present and discuss the storyboard outlines for the videos.

Jill Edelmann (NHDOT) asked everyone to introduce themselves and provided a meeting overview. She explained that the monthly Cultural Resource Agency Coordination meetings are held with FHWA and federal agency partners to review NHDOT projects from a cultural resource standpoint. She said that at this meeting they would be discussing mitigation for the Hampton Harbor Bridge project.

Stephanie Dyer-Carroll (FHI Studio) reviewed the meeting agenda and provided a presentation on the project status, the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) stipulations and progress, and storyboards that had been developed for the historic videos. She provided a brief overview of the selected alternative and project milestones, explaining that the MOA was developed based on the

selected alternative. She noted that a Mitigation Coordinator had been established for the project and bridge marketing is planned to occur in Winter 2022. She said digital photos of the bridge will be taken in Fall 2022. Ms. Dyer-Carroll noted that the new photos will include interior views of the operator house, among other features.

Ms. Dyer-Carroll then explained that the Hampton Heritage Commission had provided examples of interpretive panels to use as a guide for graphic consistency. The group discussed the type of panels that will be installed. Ms. Dyer-Carroll presented an image of a NHDOT project at Mount Washington and noted that while a taller three-sided kiosk was discussed previously for the bridge site, as the team has advanced the design and the layout, they think three low panels would potentially be better because they would allow for views of the bridge and the panels at the same time. Sheila Charles (NHDOT) commented that this works well to see the surrounding area and the viewshed and to look up from the interpretive panels and see the view. Laura Black (NHDHR) noted that we do not usually go into mitigation with a design and asked if that is what happened here. Ms. Dyer-Carroll replied that the kiosk came out of prior discussions. Jennifer Reczek, the NHDOT Project Manager, agreed it was suggested during a prior discussion, but said that it was not clear who provided the comment. Ms. Reczek stated that if the parties on the call agree with the rationale to keep it low and prioritize the viewshed, then they would move forward with that.

Ms. Dyer-Carroll then reviewed each video storyboard: (1) bascule bridge function and mechanics (2) movable bridges on the Seacoast and (3) Neil R. Underwood Bridge history and significance. Attendees provided comments on the storyboards.

Dave Topham (NH Rails Trails Coalition) asked how bicycles and pedestrians will be accommodated on the new bridge. More specifically, he asked how wide the travel lanes would be and if bicyclists would be on-road. Ms. Reczek explained that NHDOT has been working through this project for the last four years with the Project Advisory Committee (PAC), including Seth McNally with the NH Seacoast Greenway, and the community. She said the new bridge will include 8-foot shoulders for bikes and that the path referenced is a pedestrian connection between the State Pier and the State Park. However, she noted that the meeting was focused on cultural resources. She said if there were other questions, she would be happy to discuss them offline.

Ms. Edelman read an emailed question from Kate Bashline requesting that the bridge's opening bell warning sound be included in the videos. Ms. Edelman noted that she agreed it should be included. Ms. Dyer-Carroll said that the team has already captured openings and would confirm they have recorded the sound.

Ms. Black asked if the team had identified specific interviewees and talked with them to set up interviews. Ms. Dyer-Carroll explained that the team has ideas for interviewees but wanted to get some feedback here at the agency meeting before reaching out. She said this is an immediate next step. Ms. Reczek provided examples of interviewees that are currently recollections of the bridge's construction; and a ship captain. Ms. Black said that she did not have suggestions off the top of her head. She asked if the team had ideas for the general Seacoast historian. Ms. Dyer-Carroll said they didn't but noted that the team is considering the former state architectural

historian, Jim Garvin, as a potential interviewee. Ms. Black referenced a Seacoast history and said it might contain names of people to interview. She suggested Richard Candee might also be a good person to contact. David Trubey said Stefan Claesson (Nearview) has a strong NE maritime history background. He could also be a good contact.

Dave Trubey (NHDHR) asked if the videos would mention the river history prior to the bridge, including Native American use and how they crossed the harbor. He said that the team should include it in the Seacoast video and see if there is information available for the Neil R. Underwood Bridge video. Ms. Charles said the team could look at the Phase 1A Archaeological Assessment Survey and could briefly acknowledge known resources in the area. There are 14 sites within two miles of the APE, so there are sites in the vicinity, but none were found at the bridge location. Ms. Reczek and Ms. Black both noted that the Neil R Underwood video is specifically about the bridge. Since nothing was found for Precontact, it may not fit well here but it does fit well in the video on moveable bridges of the Seacoast. That video is meant to talk about land use and how the geography influenced how people lived, worked, and moved around which started well before European arrival. This story fits better there. Mr. Topham said that it makes sense to reference the pre-European settlers and state there has been navigation for centuries at the Harbor and then focus on the current historic content. Ms. Reczek noted that the intent is to say the Seacoast has been moving people and goods for many years. It didn't start with bridges, but that is where we are now.

Ms. Reczek read an email from Ms. Bashline stating that Dave Goethal of Hampton should be considered as an interviewee. He was a Captain for Les Eastman and his wife Ellen is a marine biologist and a great speaker. Peter Randall is a photographer and a Hampton historian. He was also doing drone work which could potentially be useful for the videos. Ms. Bashline also noted that in the 1900s an electric trolley ran across the new bridge, which was important for moving people and goods. She said this should be addressed in the video.

Gary Bashline asked if anyone will document the construction of the new bridge. Ms. Edelmann responded that it is not required for mitigation but often the bridge company may do it on their own. It is not in this scope of work; however, the DOT does take photos periodically for their files during construction. Ms. Reczek followed up to explain that for Memorial Bridge and the Ossipee Bridges there were webcams mounted on the bridge. She said it is not something NHDOT often does, but they can consider whether it makes sense here. Mr. Bashline explained that he brought it up because he saw his house in the Mile-Long bridge photo.

Ms. Black said that overall, the videos looked really promising and she looked forward to seeing how they progress. She also asked how NHDOT will promote the videos. Ms. Dyer-Carroll responded that the team would partner with the NH Preservation Alliance on a launch event and create a tool box (distribution plan and info packet) to help others promote and screen the videos (such as discussion prompts). NHDOT will also post the videos online and make them available for broadcast.

During the video storyboard discussion, the group re-visited the panel type discussion. Ms. Reczek read a question that Ms. Bashline emailed regarding the panels. She asked if seagulls would be an issue for the panels. Ms. Edelmann noted that this was a good point and that the

team would look into it. Ms. Charles asked about sand and the setting sun as they relate to low panels and visibility. She asked if upright panels would make more sense and noted the team should consider weather impacts. Ms. Black asked if there was an opportunity to eliminate the horizontal plane but keep the panels lower. She suggested the team investigate panel height requirements. Ms. Reczek asked if Ms. Black had a specific design in mind, but she did not.

The discussion concluded and Ms. Dyer-Carroll covered next steps for cultural resources mitigation. Jamie Sikora (FHWA) clarified that marketing the bridge is not a 4(f) requirement, but rather a Federal Highways Bridge Program requirement when replacing a historic bridge. He also let Mr. Topham know that information about the selected alternative is available on the project website. Ms. Edlmann closed the meeting by confirming there were no other comments and thanking all participants for their feedback and participation.