

Record of Meeting

North Hero-Grand Isle Drawbridge Public Information Meeting

Purpose of Meeting: _____

Date: 11/15/2016

Location: North Hero Elementary School Gymnasium

Time Started: 6:00 PM

Time Ended: 7:20 PM

Participants

Todd Sumner, VTrans Project Manager	Marc Caldwell, Cianbro
Pete Davis, HDR Project Director	Tom French, HDR Project Director
Jacqueline Dagesse, EIV, Project Outreach Manager	Andrew Hallett, Cianbro
Adam White	Dwayne Cormier
Emily Clark	Michele Southwick
Lynne Graves	Bob Ayers
Marilyn Lagrow	Joe Poquette
Deborah Benson	Darlene DeHart
Jan Macinelli	Bob Camp
John Miller	Robert Miller
David Leslie	Ray Mitchell
Jim Cota	Mark Cobb Sr.

Topics to be discussed

- Introductions
- Project Status
- Updated Project Approach
- Project Schedule
- Discussion / Questions

Topic #	Presentation
1.	<p>Introductions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pete Davis, HDR, Project Director • Todd Sumner, VTrans, Project Manager • Marc Caldwell, Cianbro Project Superintendent • Jacqueline Dagesse, EIV, Project Outreach Manager

	<p><i>Todd Sumner:</i> Thank you for coming this evening. Please make sure that you sign in for the meeting. I'm Todd Sumner, project manager, Pete Davis and Tom French from HDR for design, Cianbro for constructability feedback, and Jacquie Dagesse for project outreach. We last held a meeting in January of this year, and completed some interim repairs this past Spring. One of the changes that we are proposing with the current design is to go from phased construction to temporary construction. I will now hand it over to HDR to discuss the project status.</p>										
<p>2.</p>	<p>Project Status</p> <p><i>Pete Davis:</i> I see some familiar faces from our last time in January, and it's good to see you again. This bridge was built in 1953, it's a dual bascule bridge. It has two 11-foot travel lanes with 4-foot shoulders. There is an 80-foot navigation channel and unlimited vertical clearance. The bridge has had some reliability issues that some of you are aware. This has become one of the major drivers for updating the construction approach.</p> <p>Jacquie Dagesse is the project outreach manager for this project. She will have this presentation, minutes of meeting and preliminary design plans posted to the project website: http://nhgi.vtransprojects.vermont.gov/</p>										
<p>3.</p>	<p>Construction Approach: Temporary Bridge</p> <p><i>Pete Davis:</i> The traffic delays and impacts experienced during the interim repairs this past Spring began a conversation to take another look at traffic management during this project. (Temporary movable bridge photo example shown). This way we can maintain 2-lanes of traffic <i>and</i> marine traffic while the replacement bridge is being constructed.</p> <p>We did an economic analysis of user costs (impacts / delays) and the cost of a temporary movable bridge (single leaf) with a 40-foot clearance.</p> <p><i>Mark from Cianbro:</i> (Temporary bridge layout shown). A temporary bridge will be constructed off alignment. The new bridge will be installed at the location of the existing bridge. The temporary bridge will then be removed, and the disturbed areas will be restored.</p> <p>Questions from meeting participants:</p> <p><i>Will you take any houses?</i> No, all of this work will be completed within the existing right-of-way. One of the goals of the project was to limit impacts to the lake and adjoining properties. The tender's house will remain in place.</p> <p><i>Will the new bridge be raised?</i> We were able to narrow the depth of the main girders, and we will now only increase elevation by 2 feet. One of the benefits of the new bridge is that it will have built in features to better allow it to be maintained. This is what requires the raise of 2-feet in elevation.</p>										
<p>4.</p>	<p>Schedule</p> <table data-bbox="228 1732 1546 1942"> <tr> <td><i>Project Kick off</i></td> <td><i>3/2014</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>Local Concerns Meeting</i></td> <td><i>5/2014</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>Scoping Report Development</i></td> <td><i>4/2015</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>Alternative Selection</i></td> <td><i>6/2015</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>Concept Design</i></td> <td><i>9/2015</i></td> </tr> </table>	<i>Project Kick off</i>	<i>3/2014</i>	<i>Local Concerns Meeting</i>	<i>5/2014</i>	<i>Scoping Report Development</i>	<i>4/2015</i>	<i>Alternative Selection</i>	<i>6/2015</i>	<i>Concept Design</i>	<i>9/2015</i>
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	<p>CMGC Selection 10/2015</p> <p>Repair Design Development 1/2016</p> <p>Interim Repairs 6/2016</p> <p>60% Design/Plans Completion 1/2017</p> <p>Final Design/Plans 1/2017-7/2017</p> <p>Contract Award 5/2018</p> <p>Install Temporary Bridge 10/2018-11/2019</p> <p>Demo Existing and Install New Bridge 11/2019-6/2022</p> <p>Remove Temporary Bridge 6/2022-12/2022</p> <p>Project Substantial Completion 12/2022</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Questions / discussion from meeting participants</p> <p><i>Will you blow up the bridge?</i> No, but we understand it has happened in the past.</p> <p>(Bridge plans shown in presentation)</p> <p>The operator’s house is a historic feature and they are looking for an end user to take. There will be a new operator house constructed as part of this project. <i>We should look into how we can keep it within the county.</i></p> <p><i>Can we just use the temporary bridge, or is there a certain life span?</i> There is a lifecycle cost to a bridge, and the lifecycle cost is much more in a temporary bridge than a permanent bridge structure. We will also be reusing a lot of the materials of the existing bridge during construction. While it’s not inexpensive, there was a greater user cost. The temporary bridge allows a paved surface to cyclists and pedestrians. When we had alternating traffic, we had a large que of cars during the interim repairs this past Spring and Summer.</p> <p><i>Were the fire and ambulance departments part of this discussion?</i> We certainly considered it, and we did not have them in our meeting. One of the driving factors was to maintain traffic.</p> <p><i>You haven’t increased the flow through this area, what are you doing to improve this?</i> We are not improving the flow as part of this project. The DEC, ACOE, US Coast Guard, etc. are involved with this project. The issue that you are bringing up is outside of this project, and this is something that should be brought up with your public advocates.</p> <p><i>I believe you can’t build a fixed span because you don’t have enough length, is that true?</i> There are a number of factors that play into the selection of a bridge type and were part of the alternatives analysis for this project. If we went with a fixed span, it would be a very high and long structure. Historic significance was part of our consideration for the preferred alternative of the bridge type selection.</p> <p><i>Where is the historical value if this is replaced?</i> A fixed span would provide for better quality.</p> <p><i>Did the cost values consider the construction of this temporary bridge?</i> It did not. It is included within the project scoping report, which is posted to the project website.</p>

Jan Macinelli: I'm the economic development coordinator for the county. Our industry is based on agriculture and tourism. What's very important to us is that the design of the new bridge does not meet the design standards of the bike lanes. I took it on my behalf to send a letter to the Secretary of Transportation to express the concerns of residents. That there is no dedicated bike lane and the bridge is staying relatively the same. We had two cycling accidents this past year.

Pete Davis: VTrans will review the letter. We have considered cyclists during the design phase of this project, and the current design does meet Vermont Standards for bike lanes.

I'm Emily Clark, part owner of Ladd's Landing, we are heartened by how well the bridge is currently operating. To Jan's point, I have spoken to several business owners. We don't want to make a 100-year mistake. The design of the project should not preclude the expansion of bike lane(s). The bridge has a 4.5 to 5-foot shoulder, which already feels too narrow, and there are safety concerns. We feel that an 11-foot lane and 5-foot shoulder is just as unsafe. We are looking at a 9 to 10 foot, which would include a buffer.

[Emily's presentation is enclosed as part of the meeting minutes]

Emily Clark would support hourly, on-demand bridge opening, and this is the feedback that she has received from boaters at Ladd's Landing. There has also been a lot of discussion regarding reduction of speed on the bridge, and we would recommend the speed limit of 35 mph. Drawbridge should have lights on either side to manage marine traffic.

Participant: I have lived where there is protected bike lanes. In those situations, the bike lane is only on one side of the road, not on both.

Emily: The bike trail community likes paths in either directions, but where there is biking going in both directions it needs to be wider.

Participant: – But not twice as wide.

(Project layouts shown)

One of the design criteria is to not change the causeways due to environmental impacts. The shape of the causeway is based on erosion forces from the lake, and that is why the slopes are the angle that they are at.

Jan Macinelli: These guys are not the ones who would make a determination based on the causeway and water quality. I can assist with drafting a letter from us as residents to send to the Agency of Natural Resources. Another participant – if we remove the causeway we may improve the water quality on one side of the bridge while decreasing the water quality on the other side of the bridge.

Tom French: Your approach is spot on – these are policy decisions, and sending a letter to the Secretary is appropriate.

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The temporary bridge will be the same elevation as the existing roadway? It will be on pilings? Yes, they are on pipe piles.

Ray Mitchell: I enjoy biking and boating. I'm on the Grand Isle Fire Department, along with others here that are emergency responders. In a year, we had two fairly serious accidents. There are a lot of bikers on this road and lot of folks driving fast.

The new deck will also be paved? It will be a concrete surface which will be an improvement. The two cyclist accidents were in part due to the open deck surface. A closed deck is less dangerous, better on maintenance, etc.

Will it be more aesthetically pleasing? It will look similar to the existing bridge. The operator's house will be higher and larger for safety reasons. I think you will be pleased. The operator's house will be in the same location as it is now (not on the opposite side of the roadway like the previous version of the design plans).

Will the operator's house be octagonal? No, it is rectangular.

Is there something that we can do now in terms of signage? I, Jim Cota (District Project Manager), can respond to your selectboard requests for signage concerns.

Adam White, Chair of the Selectboard: We can discuss this further at our next meeting (next Monday).

Jim Cota: I try to help you with all types of projects, and we have had some good conversations this evening. I would recommend not asking for 12-foot travel lane widths because that would increase the speed. If you want to reduce the speed, we would respond to a letter from your selectboard, and it will then be sent to the traffic committee.

Jan Macinelli: Please consider the economic impact to this community if we don't build appropriate bike lanes. Please consider this as part of your assessment.

Participant: The drawbridge also impacts real estate values.

Participant: I've worked in real estate for years in this area, and the bridge may have some impact but the much greater impact is the proximity to Burlington.

Include Safe Bike/Pedestrian Lanes in Design for New Grand Isle – North Hero Drawbridge

Let's not make a “100 year mistake”

- Design the new drawbridge with adequate width to safely accommodate bike, pedestrian & vehicular travel – we can't retrofit a bike lane.
- US DOT's Bridge Design guidelines state:
- *“Planning projects for the long-term should anticipate likely future demand for bicycling and walking facilities and not preclude the provision of future improvements.”* Source: US DOT Policy Statement on Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodation Regulations and Recommendations 2010

Current Drawbridge Unsafe for Bikes/Pedestrians

The current NH-GI drawbridge may be the single most dangerous section of the Lake Champlain Bikeway.

- Several bike accidents on the bridge every summer, at least 2 in 2016

The current Northbound shoulder is 5', including lane mark between travel lane and the shoulder.

- Current bridge width is approximately 33'5" - roadway is 30'3" plus total of 3'2" raised curb
 - » Northbound - 10.5' travel lane, 5' shoulder, 1'7" raised sidewalk to railing
 - » Southbound - 11' travel lane, 3'10" shoulder, 1'7" raised sidewalk to railing

Bridge is unsafe for cars attempting to pass bikes, and nearly impossible for trucks in oncoming traffic

Proposed Drawbridge (March 2016) Unsafe for Bikes/Pedestrians

Proposed drawbridge will be unsafe for bikes & pedestrians

- Proposed design, with 11' lanes and 5' shoulders, will be as unsafe as existing 1950's era drawbridge bridge (VT AOT BHF 028-1(26) Scoping Document)
- Proposed 5' shoulder does not meet the minimum standard for one-way bike travel on a bridge – 4' plus + 2' “shy distance” from bridge railing = 6' minimum
- These minimum standards are suggested for roadways with speed limits between 25 and 35 mph - current speed limit is 50mph.

With higher speed limits, buffered bike lanes are recommended

- 4' – 5' bike lane, plus 2' shy distance to railing, paired with a 3' painted traffic buffer lane = 9' – 10' total shoulder

Safe Passing Law (Act 153 - 7/1/16) requires at least 4' safe passing of bikes & pedestrians – impossible in oncoming traffic

Sources: American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Bike Guide 2010; Bikeway Design Guide, Cross Country Connection – Transportation Management Association; VT AOT Design Standards

Bike/Pedestrian Lane Recommendation for Safety and Future

Goal - Extend the design width parameters of the new drawbridge to increase bike, pedestrian and vehicular safety

- New drawbridge should be built beyond today's minimum standards for bicycle, pedestrian, and vehicular safety
- US DOT recommends that “...*transportation agencies and local communities go beyond minimum design standards and requirements to create safe, attractive, sustainable, accessible, and convenient walking and bicycling networks.*” Source: US DOT / FHWA Bridge Design document

Strawman Design Amendment – “Buffered Bike Lane”

- 11' vehicle lanes, 3' buffer lanes, 5' bike/pedestrian shoulder lanes
- High-season option - place flexible poles within the buffer lane to create a “Protected Bike Lane”
- Work with the experts to lock-in best width/lane configuration parameters

Economic Development Bikes & Pedestrians in the Islands

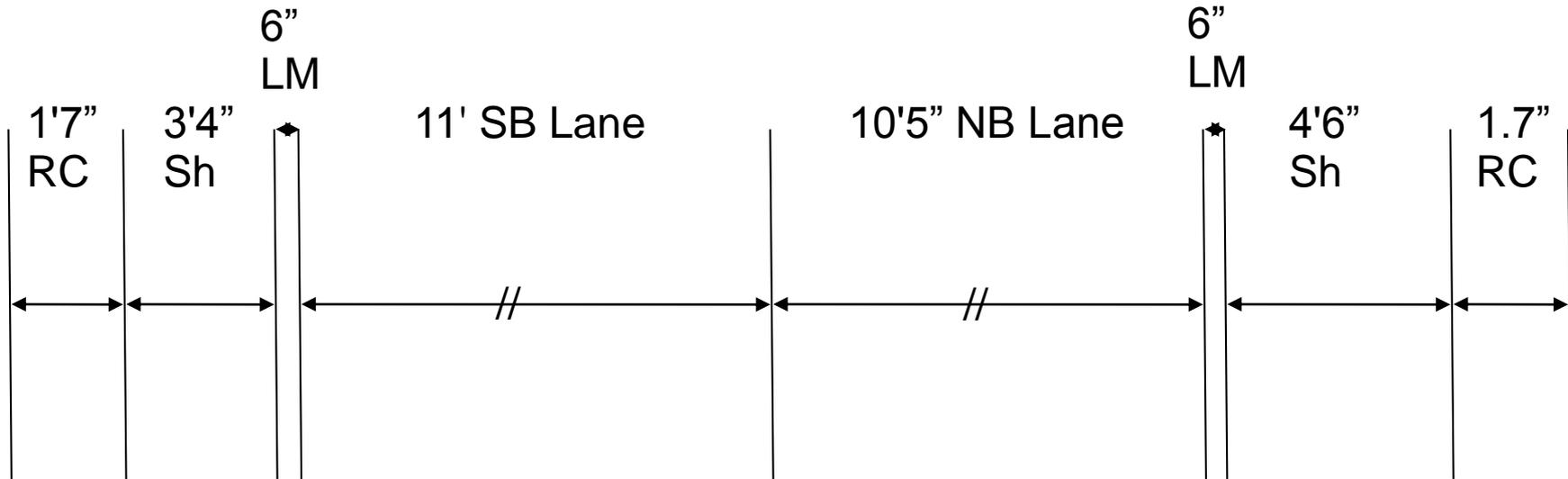
Tourism & Recreation are main the growth industries in Champlain Islands

- Champlain Byway is the jewel of Grand Isle County
- New Drawbridge bicycle safety shouldn't constrain Grand Isle County tourism and economic development
- Imagine Champlain Bikeway 2030 – Buffered Bike Lane the length of the Islands
- Current constraints in terms of the width of the causeway approaches to the bridge can be creatively addressed in the future
 - e.g., old route 2 conversion, cantilevered paths along causeways and narrows, etc.
 - *AASHTO recommends that “...the absence of a bicycle accommodation on the approach roadway should not prevent the accommodation of bicyclists on the bridge or tunnel.”* Sources:
American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Bike Guide 2010

Other Issues of Concern & Suggestions

- Increase vertical clearance under drawbridge by 5' - would significantly reduce the number of bridge openings by allowing most tall powerboats to pass under the bridge
- As such, a raised bridge deck might also improve the “dip” effect as cars travel Northbound approaching the bridge.
- Reduce bridge service-level to hourly bridge openings (vs. on the hour and the half hour) - significantly reduce the amount of time traffic is halted on Route 2.
- Reduce speed limit on approaches and bridge to 35 mph - for safety vehicle, bike & pedestrian safety (from E. Shore North in Grand Isle to Knight Point State Park North Hero)
- Add additional “Drawbridge Ahead – ## Feet” signs further back from current signs – stopped traffic can back up roadway on weekends

Appendix - Current Drawbridge Dimensions



Current roadway is 30'3" plus total of 3'2" raised curb (as measured by E. Clark)

- RC – Raised Curb
- Sh – Shoulder Lane
- LM – Lane Mark
- SB Lane – Southbound Lane
- NB Lane – Northbound Lane