

Natural Resource Agencies Monthly Meeting Minutes

Jan 7, 2001

Concord, BRF-X-5099-(021), 12004

Mark Hemmerlein gave a brief introduction to the project. He indicated that the project is located north of Concord proper and south of Penacook and involves the replacement of the bridge that carries Sewalls Falls Road over the Merrimack River. The project is scheduled for a Public Hearing in approximately one year and the Department has developed three alternatives. There are a number of competing issues associated with this project. Mark had met with Mike Amaral, Susi Von Oettingen and John Kanter at the bridge site. They indicated that there were State Endangered Brook Floater Mussels at the site. The habitat in the river is good: Rocky bottom, sandy pockets, and good flow. The area is also a good salmon fishery. The NHFGD release their brood stock at this location. Also, on the north side of the bridge there are large white pine trees that could be used by bald eagles for roosting. Bill Ingham noted there is a lot of recreational activity in the area. Mark noted that property in the northwest quadrant is LCIP with a recreational rider and therefore 4(f). The existing bridge is a double truss, one of two in the state and is considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The bridge scored a 26 out of 30 points and is the second highest scoring bridge in the state. The bridge was constructed in 1928 and the flanking span was constructed after the 1938 flood to convey more water through the bridge site. Since the construction of the flanking span, Hopkinton-Everett and Franklin flood control dams were constructed. The flanking spans are no longer needed. There is also a NH Fish and Game Access Facility in the southwest quadrant of the bridge. Mark has spoken with Rich Tichko at Fish and Game about the potential impacts.

John Butler described the three alternatives that the Department has developed. John reviewed some of the engineering constraints in the area. The Concord Monitor occupies the northeast quadrant of the crossing. There is a private residence in the southeast quadrant of the bridge. There are railroad tracks on either side of the river. The three alternatives consist of: an upstream off-alignment, downstream off-alignment and an on alignment alternative. The upstream alternative can have a curved bridge or a tangent bridge. The upstream alternative has impacts to the LCIP property. The existing profile is essentially flat with a pronounced sag and a crest as the road crosses the river bluff on the east side of the river. To meet the design criteria, the bridge will be sloped up at 2% which would smooth out the profile on the east side of the bridge.

The second alternative is a down stream alternative. This alternative virtually eliminates all impacts to the LCIP property, has minor impacts to the NHFGD access facility and fairly substantial impacts to the residential property. Physically the residence can be saved but there are substantial encroachments onto the property. The impacts will not impact the parking at the NHFGD access facility. The u-back wall from the abutment will nip the end of the turn around for the boat ramp, which is the only functional impact to the access.

The on-line alternative would be slightly downstream of the existing bridge and would require its removal. The new bridge would be tangent and the profile would be raised on the east side of the project. There would not be any functional impacts to the NHFGD access, there would be limited impacts to the LCIP property and there would be some impacts to the residential property.

Harry Kinter asked about the cost of a curved bridge and John indicated that it would cost 10%-15% more. Bill Ingham asked if the old bridge will left in place and John stated that the existing bridge could be left with the off alignment alternatives and would need to come down with the on-alignment alternative. Bill Cass explained there are different factions within the City of Concord that would like to see the bridge either demolished or retained. Bill Ingham expressed concern about people walking out

on the bridge. He was also concerned about the access facility and indicated that there is USFWS money invested at the site. Harry Kinter noted the potential archeology in three out of the four quadrants. Harry asked about the potential use of the bridge and could it be linked to any trails? Mark indicated that there are railroad lines on each side of the river. They are both active in the summer only. The western line is inactive north of Penacook. Various people asked about the condition of the truss. Bill Cass stated that the City has earmarked approximately \$20k for emergency repairs for the bridge. Linda Wilson was quite concerned about the preservation of this bridge. She stated the bridge is an important resource that should be preserved. Harry indicated that it appears that according to 4(f) regulations the off alignment alternatives would be favored. Rich asked about the environmental cost for going off alignment. Mark indicated that both the NHFGD and USFWS were concerned about placing a new pier in the river. Also going to the north we have impacts to the large white pines. There is also brook floater mussels in the river. Mark indicated that we could locate the mussels and relocate them if necessary. Rich asked about a clear span. Any of the alternatives would be a two span bridge, thus requiring a pier in the river. There was some discussion of the alternatives and which one would be favored by the Department. As a Department we were not favoring any alternative over another at this time, and we would have to meet with the City before we could determine a preferred alternative. Mark asked Laura if she had any concerns. She indicated that her Department would prefer any alternative that would not impact the LCIP property. Mark asked if each of the agencies could support an alternative that impacted the mussels or their habitat, if the Department made provisions to relocate them. Both Lori (NHWB) and Rich (ACOE) indicated that they could allow such a proposal to go forward. There was more informal discussion about alternatives. Once we have met with the City, the Department will bring the project back for further discussions.

Aug. 15, 2007

Concord, 12004, BRF-X-5099(021)

This project involves the rehabilitation / construction of the bridge that carries Sewalls Falls Road over the Merrimack River. The project was presented prior to holding a Public Hearing. The alternative that was selected includes constructing a new upstream bridge and rehabilitating the exiting truss. The substructures may need to be reconstructed and may be shared by each substructure. In addition, the flanking spans will be removed as they are no longer needed to pass the 100-year flood. There was a review of environmental issues including the potential eagle roosting trees, brook floater muscles, wildlife passage. The plans have not been reviewed by FHWA

Sept, 15, 2010

Concord, BRF-X-5099(021), 12004

This project involves the rehabilitation of the bridge that carries Sewalls Falls Road over the Merrimack River, and construction of a new bridge adjacent to it. John Butler indicated that at previous meetings the Department discussed alternatives, and ultimately the City decided upon the construction of a bridge adjacent to the existing bridge. Each bridge will carry one lane of traffic. The work would include the rehabilitation/reuse of the existing bridge for northbound traffic with the new bridge used for southbound traffic. New/wider substructure would be constructed for both bridges. The flanking spans at the south abutment would be replaced with fill since there are no longer any flood issues due to the construction of a dam in Franklin. A pedestrian underpass would be constructed at the location of the old flanking spans. Drainage treatment is proposed to the south of the bridge in the area between the road and the NH Fish and Game parking facility at the boat launch to the east. Drainage treatment to the north of the bridge is not feasible due to topographic constraints.

John discussed the environmental constraints associated with the proposed action. On the west side of the bridge is a 29 ac parcel of LCIP land (owned by NH Fish and Game). On the east side of the bridge is a 100 ac NH Fish and Game property which includes the boat launch and parking area near the bridge. The Department is working with NH Fish and Game and through the CORD process to secure the necessary acquisition and easements required on those two parcels.. It is anticipated that the land use would qualify for a de minimis 4(f) determination.

Maria Tur asked about the flanking spans. John replied that the 8 flanking spans would be replaced with fill. With the flanking spans no longer required for flood passage, it is much less expensive to construct an earth embankment rather than reconstructing the bridge spans, and an embankment will have far less long term maintenance costs. Maria indicated that the fill could block passage of animals under the bridge. John indicated that the pedestrian tunnel is proposed to be approximately 10-12' wide/ high. After discussion, including openness ratio to facilitate animal passage, it was determined that the Department would discuss this issue with the City and return to provide follow-up on what could be done to enhance wildlife passage, including evaluation of a larger structure through the fill.

Lori Sommer asked about wetland impacts and the width of the fill at the south approach. It is anticipated that there would be about 5,000 sf of permanent impacts, including work at the pier. Lori asked if there would be compensation for the LCIP impacts. The Department is determining what will happen with those impacts. Lori indicated that the permit may be conditional upon resolution of those issues since some of the wetland impacts are on the LCIP property.

Kevin indicated that since the bridges would essentially match what is there today, the Department is not anticipating that the design would comply with the recently-adopted stream crossing rules, including completing a fluvial geomorphic assessment. This information would not affect the design of the crossing and would only add time and expense to the project. Kevin also mentioned that a mussel survey was completed for pier work on this bridge several years ago. No mussels were identified. The Department acknowledged that another survey may be required prior to construction of this project.

Once the Department has had the opportunity to confer with the City, the project will be reviewed again relative to the animal underpass concerns at the south side.

This project was previously reviewed on the following dates: 1/17/2001, & 8/15/2007.

Nov 17, 2010

Concord, BRF-X-5099(021), 12004

This project was presented by Cathy Goodmen and John Butler. The project involves the rehabilitation of the bridge that carries Sewalls Falls Road over the Merrimack River, and construction of a new bridge adjacent to it. The project involves impacts to the NH Fish and Game boat launch and parking lot on the southwest side of the road and a Land Conservation Investment Program (LCIP) conservation property managed by NH Fish and Game, on the northwest side of the road. This project is being managed by the City of Concord with assistance from NHDOT. Cathy Goodmen noted that it was presented November 8, 2010 to the City Council and approved for construction. NHDOT and the City have received a letter from NHF&G, agreeing that the project is needed and acknowledging that right-of-way will need to be acquired from the two parcels noted above. J. Butler noted that at the September meeting a request was made to address the loss of the approach spans and allow passage for wildlife. The pedestrian underpass, originally designed to be approximately 10 feet wide by 10 feet high and 70 feet long, has been enlarged to be approximately 24 feet wide and 8-10 feet high and approximately 70 feet long. The necessary right-of-way acquisition on the LCIP conservation land is approximately 0.85 acres with some additional temporary construction easements. There will be approximately 2,800 sq. ft right of way acquisition for the new slopes of the roadway and approximately 1.1 acres for permanent drainage easements. The permanent wetland impacts will be approximately 8,000 sq. ft. Jamie Sikora asked if the boat launch can be used by the public during construction. J. Butler said that the boat launch will be open during construction of the bridge, but will need to be closed for a short time when installing the drainage culvert from the detention area, probably for only one or two days. Carol Henderson

noted that NHF&G does not have permission to allow use of this land for road construction. John Butler and Rich Cook noted that they were aware that the proposed right of way has to go to the legislature for final approval. R. Cook also noted that they are waiting for an appraisal of the land before developing the final mitigation proposal. R. Cook also asked for a plan to show the new layout of the drainage swale near the parking area. (C. Goodmen sent this to NHF&G and the Conservation Land Stewardship (CLS) Program after the meeting). It was also noted that the new design removes a smaller amount of trees than the previous design. Rich Roach indicated that the project would qualify for coverage under the NH Programmatic General Permit.

(project website) (NHNHB File #: NHB10-0354) This project was previously reviewed on the following dates: 1/17/2001, 8/15/2007, & 9/15/2010

Dec 9, 2012

Concord, BRF-X05099(021), 12004

Rob Faulkner provided a brief summary of the project's history. The project began in 1999 as a NHDOT Preliminary Engineering Project for the replacement of the Sewalls Falls Road Bridge at which time several alignment alternatives were reviewed. Based on input from the community and City of Concord, the project evolved to include the rehabilitation of the existing truss bridge and construction of a single lane bridge upstream of the existing, which was the preferred alternative (Alternative H) at the conclusion of the Preliminary Engineering Phase in 2010. The project has since been turned over to the City of Concord to be completed as a Municipally Managed Bridge Aid Project and is programmed for FY2014 construction. The results of a detailed inspection and load rating analysis performed by CHA as one of the first steps in the Final Design phase indicated that the existing truss would require extensive rehabilitation in order to carry legal highway loads. In addition, there is a concern as to whether or not Alternative H would meet the long term needs of the City based on potential development and increased traffic demands in the area as well as safety issues associated with the type of structure (non-redundant), roadway alignment, and continuous maintenance needs once the bridge is rehabilitated. As such, the Concord City Council authorized further consideration of two previously evaluated alternatives, construction of a new 2-lane bridge upstream of the existing bridge (Alternative 4) and the on-line replacement of the existing bridge (Alternative 8), to determine which alternative would be best to pursue given the new structural assessment of the rehabilitation Alternative H.

R. Faulkner provided a review of the two alternatives, as summarized below:

Alternative 4 –Off-line Upstream Bridge:

Profile increase at north abutment of +/- 10';
Most impacts to LCIP parcel, potential eagle perch trees, wetlands, and ROW;
Better roadway alignment than Alternative H;
Second highest construction and maintenance cost.

Alternative 8 – On-line Replacement:

Profile increase at north abutment +/- 16';
Least amount of impacts to LCIP parcel, potential eagle perch trees, wetlands, and ROW;
Ideal roadway alignment;
Lowest construction and maintenance costs.

All alternatives would include drainage easements at the Fish and Game parcel for a proposed water quality basin as well as the Concord Monitor due to impacts necessary to their existing water quality basin. Relocation of the freshwater Brook Floater Mussels would need to be performed for all alternatives prior to construction. After further review of the alternatives, the City Engineering Department has prepared a report recommending to City Council that Alternative 4, On-Line Replacement of the existing bridge, be progressed through final design and construction. As such a Public Informational Meeting has been scheduled for January 23, 2013 as part of the Section 106 process, followed by a City Council meeting in early February. Rich Roach asked what the floodplain and wetland impacts were for Alternative 8. R. Faulkner responded that there were about 13,000 sf of wetland impacts and that he didn't have the floodplain impact areas at hand, but noted that the alternative included being

able to push the southern abutment back outside of the currently delineated floodway/floodplain. R. Roach asked if there would be any downstream impacts. R. Faulkner responded that the alternative would have no downstream effects. Mark Kern asked if the City had completed the Historic/SHPO process. R. Faulkner responded that the project was presented at the December 6, 2012 Cultural Resource Agency Coordination Meeting and another meeting would be scheduled following the January 23, 2013 public informational and City Council meetings. R. Roach asked what the land use implications would be by replacing the bridge and whether or not this was accounted for as part of the Bow-Concord Study. He also asked if the proposed water main across the bridge would support future development. R. Roach further stated that if the existing bridge were rehabilitated and kept in service that it might serve as a restriction to hinder future development and enhance conservation of the area. He noted that NEPA requires the consideration of secondary impacts as part of the alternative evaluation. He expressed concern over excessive development and land clearing along the Merrimack River and asked if there were conservation elements included in the City's Planning and Zoning regulations. Ed Roberge confirmed that Concord's zoning regulations protect open space and shoreland areas within the project area. E. Roberge stated that the area in question for future development is currently zoned as Industrial and is considered under the Bow-Concord Study. He also noted that water service did not currently cross the bridge and the area on the north side was already served. However, a new main across the bridge would allow this area to be looped to improve capacity. Carol Henderson noted that Fish and Game recommends reducing the impacts to the potential eagle roosting trees as much as possible. R. Faulkner responded that the on-line replacement option resulted in the least impacts. Henderson commented that any impacts to the LCIP land required legislative action. E. Roberge acknowledged this. Gino Infascelli asked for clarification on the limits of the Bow-Concord planning study and thought that it didn't include the I-93 area in the vicinity of Sewalls Falls Road. J. Sikora noted that the planning study extended to the Exit 17 area.