

## Sewalls Falls Bridge – Public Information Meeting Questions and Comments

January 23, 2013, 6:00 – 8:00 PM  
Beaver Meadow Golf Course

### I. Presentation

### II. Questions, Comments and Answers

1. Roy Schweiker: I was never in favor of Alternative H due to cost and impracticality. I think it's a good idea to replace the structure. Further, I propose we build a new bridge *downstream*, because that will afford a better approach and better alignment. It will allow us to use the current bridge during construction and keep part of the current bridge as a historical monument. The existing bridge could be placed alongside of the road at the approach to the new bridge.

Faulkner: In 1999, a downstream alternative was explored. However it was dismissed because it impacts a private residence and would cause significantly more impacts in general. It also poses a negative impact on the Fish and Game boat launch.

2. Citizen: Given the fact that regardless of which alternative is selected, a new or refurbished bridge will not be up for several more years, how safe is the current bridge right now?

Roberge: It is indeed a safe bridge and will continue to be for the next several years.

3. Jim Garvin, former NH State Historic Preservation Officer: First, it should be noted that full federal funding (maximum of 80%) for building a new or rebuilding the current bridge may not be granted if we cannot demonstrate that every reasonable effort has been made to preserve the historic bridge. Secondly, I object to the fact that in this process of solving the problem of the Sewalls Falls Bridge for these past 14 or so years, other organizations and private entities have not been invited to participate or be consulting parties in this decision making process.

Roberge: Reiterated history of Concord's role in the bridge replacement project administered by NHDOT beginning in the late 1990's – Concord was handed the project in 2010, moved to assess the condition of the current bridge and called for a detailed structural inspection and load rating analysis. This assessment showed that significant rehabilitation, strengthening and/or replacement were needed. We also found that in order to preserve the look of the bridge, serious safety concerns would remain regarding the metal's ability to keep the bridge safe in the particular truss design the bridge currently has. This led us to seriously question whether it was reasonable and prudent to preserve the bridge. While preservation may be *doable*, does it address the safety concerns and cost requirements that we're compelled to meet?

Casella: In answer to the question of whether making rehabilitations to the current bridge will even give us an end result that remains “historic”, the answer is yes. That is, even if we make all the necessary strengthening, replacements and refurbishments that Mr. Perkins showed us (with the red-lined graphic) to be necessary, the bridge will indeed remain technically “historic.”

4. Karim Naji, of the NH Division of Federal Highway: This is not a federally overseen project; it’s a local project. FHWA involvement is very limited. Their primary focus will be on the Section 106 process. FHWA does have the final approval for the project participating funds, however, NHDOT approves the majority of the day to day documentation of the project.
5. Richard Roach, US Army Corps of Engineers: [in response to Garvin’s comments on “consulting parties”] The 106 Process does allow for participation by consulting parties. See the brochure (one of hand-outs) which states: “For more information on how you can become a consulting party, contact: Jamie Sikora, Environmental Program Manager, FHWA at “Jamie.Sikora@fhwa.dot.gov”.” At the federal level, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) is the agency that administers public comment on historic properties. For further information visit “[www.achp.gov](http://www.achp.gov)”. Secondly, I have noted a few entirely new bridges being built in NH that are trusses. How are these new truss bridges safe, since it appears from the Sewall’s Falls Bridge’s case that truss bridges are non-redundant and therefore unsafe?

Faulkner: A modern truss bridge was considered as one of the alternatives along the way, but construction costs were prohibitive.

Perkins: New truss designs can indeed have redundancy. In the case of this bridge however, if we retain its general design we cannot put the trusses in a place that keeps them safe from the danger of cars running into them. Also metal elements are not limited to one unit on *modern* trusses, but would be so limited if we kept the general (old) design of the Sewalls Falls Bridge. Cracks in metal cannot proliferate significantly when they occur in multi-element situations, but in the older designs such as the current bridge, one crack will compromise a whole metal piece because it is designed as one unit.

6. Citizen: Are we going to replace the metal deck and does that alleviate any safety issues?

Roberge: Yes, we would replace the decking since there is limitation to the 1915 steel’s fatigue life and replace it with a steel girder and reinforced concrete deck.

7. Jim Garvin: Question about fatigue: It’s been stated that the current bridge has a remaining life of 45 years. But it was my understanding that only the diagonals have vulnerability to fatigue.

Perkins: Yes, fatigue issues can be addressed by replacement of all the diagonals.

Roberge: I think for longevity, we should replace rather than strengthen the diagonals. After all is done, we need to have a safe bridge that will last and meet our future needs.

Naji (FHWA): There would be a great deal of rehabilitation needed to meet current design criteria.

8. Ken George: The existing bridge is a one lane bridge, something has to be done. What will we have on either side of whatever bridge we select, once the bridge is finished? Gas stations? Dunkin Donuts store? That is, we'll have more development.

9. Citizen: I don't think we should be emotional or sentimental - rather we need to be practical in our decision, and I think we should emphasize the criteria of safety and feasibility for future expansion. Let's not let our emotions get in the way.

10. Ed Welch: Regarding our one-lane current bridge, I value its traffic calming effects. What about Exit 16? How can we slow traffic down there and on Mountain Rd and Sewalls Falls Rd? Remember we are a community. Please encourage your neighbors to slow down.

11. Citizen: We must consider that there is a need for a good maintenance plan for the new bridge to keep it in good shape. Also, as for traffic calming we need to look to the interchange between Sewalls Falls Road and I-93.

Roberge: Funding for maintenance is critical; regular maintenance prevents the buildup of small problems that turn into large, expensive problems. And as you have suggested, this must be planned out in advance.

The interchange is well into the future; it won't be considered or built for another 20 to 30 years or so.

12. Citizen: In terms of the speed issue, if we have 5 foot shoulders on a new bridge, it will cause people to speed up and reach speeds of 50 mph.

Roberge: Those widths are supportive of our Complete Streets commitment. The design needs to be walkable and bike-able as well as drive-able.

13. Citizen: What about the south entrance to the bridge?

Roberge: The six section flanking span structure that was added in the 1930's allowed for flood waters to pass by. This is no longer necessary. So the south entrance will become roadway on an earthen berm.

14. Citizen: Regarding speed, I am also very concerned. We do not have support from police in terms of enforcement.

15. Josh: I love the bridge. If we build a bigger bridge we could get more development on the north side which would slow down drivers.

16. Citizen: Were any of the alternatives considered a one-way bridge?

Naji (FHWA): No because such an alternative would not get federal funding; it wouldn't comply with AASHTO Standards.

17. Citizen: I live nearby and I like historic things. Perhaps the downstream idea meant *way* further downstream. I don't like the alternative of adding a second bridge and rehabilitating the old bridge. For one reason, essentially making it 2 lanes would bring more traffic including trucks and they would pose an even greater risk to the safety/integrity of the bridge if they hit the metal verticals and diagonals.

Roberge: Yes, that is correct. And furthermore, emergency vehicles cannot currently use the bridge. Emergency vehicle capacity should be seriously taken into account.

18. Roberge : Pros and cons to offline (in a different spot than the current bridge) or online (in the same exact spot as the current bridge) alternatives. If we choose offline, there will be phased construction that is slow and protracted, but the bridge will never have to close. If we choose an online alternative, we will have to close the bridge but the total construction will be quicker.

19. Bob Bragg (Sewalls Falls Bridge Neighbor): Route 3 construction caused more people to use Sewalls Falls Bridge. My vote is to replace the bridge because it is inevitable in the long run. "We can get a hip or knee replacement and that can help us to move around easier for a few years, but at some point in time .... we're gonna *bury* it!"

20. Citizen: I like the current bridge. I would like any replacement to be equally emotionally pleasing. Also, are there mitigation plans if we do replace the current bridge? Documentation plans?

Roberge: Regarding a replacement bridge, it would be nice, cost-effective, well-engineered and one that reflects its neighborhood by possibly being a 'signature bridge'. Plans for mitigating would definitely go beyond simply documenting.

21. Tom Harrison: Who decides what amount of land which will be taken from the LCIP (Land Conservation Investment Program) land and the Fish and Game land? There has been a *lot* of public investment.

Faulkner: The offline alternative has the *most* impacts to such land. The online alternative has the *least* impacts.

Roberge: Our goals are to minimize impacts and maximize recreational and wildlife use.

Roberge: Thank you everyone. Please join us on February 11, 2013 at 7:00 PM at the City Council Chambers for a City Council public hearing.