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To: [Dixie Zens](#)
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Subject: Sunderland, Bridges 19-5 and 19-7 on US Route 7 - Public Informational Meeting Follow-up
Date: Thursday, October 12, 2023 11:31:14 AM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)

Good morning Dixie,

Thanks again for helping us schedule a Public Informational Meeting to discuss the scope for the upcoming replacement of Bridges 19-5 and 19-7 in Sunderland. Bridges 19-5 and 19-7 along US Route 7 will both be replaced with a reinforced concrete box meeting the minimum hydraulic standard. The construction contract for these structures will be combined and there will be two 14-day closure periods within one construction season.

Please find a summary of our discussion below:

- *Bridge Closure During Construction & Timing of the Closure:* We plan to close each structure for 14 days during construction. US Route 7 through the project area is a restricted access highway, with no driveways or Town Highways to maintain. While there will be minimal extra travel distance for rerouting traffic onto VT Route 7A, which parallels US Route 7 through the project area, the Agency understands that the additional traffic added to the VT Route 7A downtown areas will cause a hardship for the Towns due to added congestion. As such, The closure duration will be kept as short as possible. The Agency will work closely with the Towns of Sunderland, Shaftsbury, Arlington, and Manchester as well as the trucking community to determine the best timing for the bridge closure(s). Continuous traffic counters along US Route 7 show that traffic volumes along the corridor are the lowest in April and May and are the highest in August and October. The bridge closure should occur when traffic is at its lowest and avoid any possible community events that would have an impact on traffic. A representative from the Town of Shaftsbury was in attendance, and said that the Town of Shaftsbury is strongly opposed to the bridge closure(s). He expressed concern over an already congested downtown area and the addition of almost 8,000 vehicles. There was a question about reducing the 14 day closure durations. The Agency will keep the closure duration as short as possible to minimize impacts to the downtown areas along VT Route 7A and as we develop a more detailed construction schedule, we will refine the closure duration. Members of the community also noted that ambulance services north of the culverts use US Route 7 and that response times will be increased. Concern was also brought up about redundancies in the system in the event that there is a major flooding event during the bridge closure periods.
- *Incentive/Disincentive:* A member of the community asked how sure we were that the bridges would open up on time. As discussed, the contract will include incentives to the contractor to finish on time and disincentives for not opening the bridge on time. The Accelerated Bridge Program is a well-established program, and we have built an extensive library of ABP successes to date. Since the start of the program in 2012, there have been 110 Accelerated

Bridge Construction projects delivered. The 110 projects represent 215 million dollars, and of the 110 projects, 95% were opened on-time.

- *Truck Detour:* VT Route 313 has a low clearance bridge, which is posted for 14-feet. As such, large vehicles and super loads can't come up VT Route 7A through Bennington. These larger vehicles will need to go up through Manchester or utilize US Route 4 through New York. We will need to have extensive outreach to the trucking community so they are aware of the closure(s) ahead of time.
- *Night Time Work:* The Town asked if night work/24-hour construction could be required of the contractor in order to reduce the closure duration. The contractor will be allowed to work at night, but not required. Night time work can be difficult for a contractor to maintain and holds more risk to contractors due to the need for multiple construction crews and additional safety measures. While we won't require night-time work, we can set an aggressive closure duration to minimize the closure as much as possible.
- *Temporary Bridge:* A temporary bridge is not recommended here due to the natural resource impacts, high costs, and need for a second temporary bridge over TH-16 (South Road). Additionally, a temporary bridge would be in place for an entire construction season and the super loads coming up through Route 7 would have a hard time navigating a temporary bridge.
- *Phased Construction:* Phased construction was not recommended here as it results in reduced lanes widths of 12-feet for an entire construction season. The super loads coming up through Route 7 would not be accommodated with the reduced lane widths for phased construction.
- *Public Outreach:* The Shaftsbury Town Administrator asked if there would be a public meeting in Arlington, Manchester, and Shaftsbury as well. We invited all 3 Towns to the Sunderland Selectboard meeting, and will continue to involve the surrounding Towns in our public outreach. We typically hold the public informational meetings in the Town where the structure is located. Due to the traffic impacts with this project, we anticipate a Public Outreach Coordinator will be brought on early in order to get the word out to the public.
- *US Route 7 Bridge Inventory:* During the meeting, a member of the selectboard inquired as to how many other structures are in poor condition along US Route 7 and if more projects are expected in the future. Currently, Bridge 19-5 is the only culvert along US Route 7 that is in poor condition. If the Town is not aware of VTransparency, it is a great tool to know about! There are maps of upcoming construction projects (with dates and links to project factsheets), bridge inspection data, pavement conditions, and plow finders to name a few of its contents. It can be found at the following site: <https://vtransparency.vermont.gov/>.
- *Construction Year:* The project is currently in the budget for construction in the summer of 2026. It is possible this could move a year due to budget, Right-of-Way, or permitting. We do not anticipate the schedule deviating more than a year.

After Conceptual Plans are complete, they will be sent to the Town for review and comment, and Gary will reach out to schedule another public meeting (this second meeting is optional).

Additionally, there will be a pre-construction conference that the Town(s) will be invited to participate in prior to the start of construction activities.

The presentation has been uploaded to the VTrans projects page:

<https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/vtrans/external/Projects/Structures/23B027>

We really enjoyed meeting with everyone and are looking forward to working with the Town of Sunderland (and the surrounding towns) on this project. Gary Laroche will be the design project manager. All correspondence from here forward should be with Gary. His contact information is as follows: gary.laroche@vermont.gov, (802) 917-8514.

Best Regards,
Laura

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Impacted Vermonters can find resources and referrals by visiting Vermont.Gov/Flood.

From: Stone, Laura

Sent: Tuesday, August 22, 2023 5:39 PM

To: town@sunderlandvt.org

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Subject: Sunderland, Bridges 19-5 and 19-7 on US Route 7 - Public Informational Meeting

Good evening Susan,

The Vermont Agency of Transportation has completed a scoping report for Bridge 19-5 and for Bridge 19-7 located along US Route 7 in the Town of Sunderland. The Scoping Reports examine the feasibility of rehabilitating or replacing the existing bridges. The scoping report for each of these structures recommends a full bridge replacement while maintaining traffic on an offsite detour for 14 days. The construction contract for these structures will be combined and there will be two 14-day closure periods within one construction season.

I would like to schedule a Public Informational Meeting to discuss the existing conditions of the bridge, site constraints, the options considered in the scoping report and the recommended alternative. If possible, I would like to hold the presentation during a Selectboard Meeting. The Meeting will likely take about 40 minutes comprised of a 20 minute presentation and a 20 minute question and comment period

The Scoping Reports have been uploaded to the project page at the following link:
<https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/VTRANS/external/Projects/Structures/23B027>

Please let me know at your earliest convenience to arrange a time and date for this Public Informational Meeting. We would like to schedule the meeting at least 30 days out to allow for adequate notification to affected property owners and other stakeholders.

We look forward to meeting with the Selectboard Members and residents of Sunderland.

Best Regards,
Laura J. Stone, P.E.

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