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Agency of Transportation

January 16, 2014

Denis Benson, Chair
c/o Cheryl Barker, Administrative Assistant
Town of Weston
PO Box 98
Weston, VT 05161

Matthew Mann, Transportation Planner
Windham Regional Commission
139 Main Street, Suite 505
Brattleboro, VT 05301

RE: Weston BF 013-2(13) VT Route 100, Bridge 98 over the West River

Dear Mr. Benson and Mr. Mann,

A Regional Concerns Meeting for the above-referenced project was held on Monday, October 28, 2013 to present several alternatives to the public (see attached attendance sheet). Representatives from the town of Weston attended the meeting as did several adjacent property owners and other members of the public. The purpose of this letter is to inform you of the decisions that have been made and how we plan to advance this project after receiving this public input.

At the Regional Concerns Meeting, VTrans made a recommendation to replace the entire bridge due to the deteriorated condition of the existing bridge and there did not appear to be any opposition to this approach. We presented three alternatives to maintain traffic during construction of the new bridge. The first was to close the bridge for a four week period and detour traffic onto State-owned roads while the new bridge is being constructed. This alternative would add 12 miles to the through route distance and would result in an end to end distance of 43 miles. This was the recommended alternative by VTrans. The second alternative presented was to maintain traffic on a one-lane temporary bridge located adjacent to the existing bridge. Traffic signals would be provided to control the one-way alternating traffic. The third alternative presented was to construct the new bridge half at a time using phased construction. Again, traffic signals would be provided to control the one-way alternating traffic. More details and comparisons of these alternatives can be found in the Scoping Report and the Regional Concerns presentation available on the internet at the following location:
<https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/vtrans/external/Projects/Structures/13B076>

There was a lot of good discussion and many valid comments made by the Town, abutters to the project and the general public at the meeting. No comments have been received since this meeting was held offering any additional input. A summary of some of the more noteworthy comments is provided below.

A comment was made that the existing bridge acts much like a dam and controls the stream flow and by providing a new longer structure that meets the hydraulic standards, flooding downstream would be worse. As stated at the meeting, we work very closely with the VTrans Hydraulics section as well as the Stream Alteration Engineer from the Agency of Natural Resources and have proposed a bridge opening based on their input. A follow up response from the Stream Alteration engineer states "... when and if these structures (and associated road fills) fail under a hydraulic and hydrostatic loading, the peak discharge is dramatically increased due to the catastrophic release of the impounded water. Any increase in peak discharge downstream over the existing condition due to properly sizing a replacement structure represents much less of a hazard than the undersized/failure mode."

There were many questions regarding closing the bridge for four weeks during construction of the new bridge. The time period allowed for the closure between June 1 and September 1 is also a busy period for the tourist businesses and the Weston playhouse and this would be an impact. Other concerns were stated including concerns over safety to properties along the bypass routes, concerns about noise generated with night construction and assurance that the bridge closure period will be completed as intended.

A meeting was held with VTrans representatives to discuss the comments received at this meeting and to decide on the best way to proceed. As a result of that meeting, the decision has been made to continue with our recommended alternative and replace the bridge using a four week maximum bridge closure while traffic is detoured onto the state roads as shown at the meeting.

It is understood and acknowledged that there will be business impacts during the closure but with proper mitigation strategies, we have found these impacts can be minimal. VTrans has used Accelerated Bridge Construction in conjunction with short-term bridge closures for many projects over the past several years and have developed several mitigation strategies. We have found that proper advanced planning and public outreach is essential so that the public is aware of, and can plan for, the upcoming closure. When necessary, signing can be provided to direct motorists toward business centers which may not get as much drive-by traffic during the closure. We have also found that when faced with this situation, many business owners become very creative and come up with various methods to draw customers to their business during the closure. In some cases, business owners have even received grant money to mitigate the business impacts and we would be happy to provide more details on that as we proceed.

Regarding the impacts to the local roads along the bypass routes, we have developed what we believe to be a fair and consistent way to compensate towns for these impacts. This compensation can be used for speed enforcement, weight enforcement, dust control and roadway maintenance or for any other purposes to ensure public safety along the bypass route. We will discuss this local compensation in more detail as the project advances.

Night time construction noise to adjacent property owners is dealt with in the construction contract. The contract will include a requirement stating that this work will not exceed a maximum decibel level and that certain loud construction activities are specifically prohibited during the night. Based on previous projects, we often hear that adjacent property owners find it quieter during the closure period since there is very little traffic.

Keeping the actual duration of the closure to the agreed upon limits can be challenging but we have a very good record of meeting these original durations with well over 95% of our projects meeting our goals according the contract. With each project we learn from our experiences and improve and revise our methods to improve our chances of success.

In closing I would like to note that the proposed project has many advantages and is our best attempt to balance the many constraints on this project. By avoiding a temporary bridge we can save a considerable amount of time and money while also minimizing impacts to the adjacent property owners and the environment. Our proposed project will also minimize our impacts to the community by concentrating the construction work into one season rather than spreading it out over multiple years as is often the case when a temporary bridge is used. We have a proven record of delivering many short-term closure projects such as this according to the terms originally agreed to and anticipate another successful project at this bridge location.

In the near future we will be submitting Conceptual plans that are based on the recommendation provided in the Scoping Report as presented at the Regional Concerns meeting. We also anticipate holding another public meeting during the design phase of the project to keep the public informed about this project and to work out additional details related to the bridge closure.

If you have any questions, comments or concerns please feel free to contact me at the above address or by email at chris.williams@state.vt.us or by phone at (802) 828-0051.

Sincerely,



Christopher P. Williams, P.E.
Structures Senior Project Manager

Attachments

cc: Tammy Ellis - DTA #2 (via email only)
Jennifer Fitch – Design Project Manager (via email only)
Mike Hedges – Structures Program Manager (via email only)
Jackie Cassino - VAOT Planning Coordinator (via email only)

ALTERNATIVES PRESENTATION MEETING - ATTENDANCE SHEET

Project: Weston BF 013-2(13)	Meeting Date: Monday, October 28, 2013
Description: VT Route 100, Bridge 98 over the West River	Location: Weston Playhouse 12 Park St. Weston, VT 05161

Name	Company	Phone	E-Mail
CHRIS WILLIAMS	VTRANS	828-0051	CHRIS.WILLIAMS@STATE.VT.US
GARY SWEENEY	VTRANS	828-0049	GARY.SWEENEY@STATE.VT.US
MIT MANN	Wre	257-4547	mmann@sver.net
Shirley Knowlton	Selectboard Weston	824-3576	knowlwoods@comcast.net
Donald W HART	Property owner	824-6048	N/A
RAY Heberts	91 SLAWSON	824-9621	RAYS91@COMCAST.COM
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BROTHER ELIAS	WESTON PRIORY	824-5409	brcelias@westonpriory.org
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Bev Proctor	1166 RT. 100	802- 856-7075	Proctorbjp@sbcglobal.net
BRIDGET SULLIVAN	WPTC	802-824- 867x113	bsullivan@westonplayhouse.org
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Margi Graf	OKemo Valley Regional Chamber of Commerce	2285830	mgraf@yourplaceinvermont.com
Annie Fujii	WBC Select Bd	8246123	ann.fujii@gmail.com
Jeff Yzhe	Select board	8243708	