

State of Vermont
PDD/Structures Design Section
One National Life Drive
Montpelier, VT 05633-5001
www.aot.state.vt.us

[phone] 802-828-2621
[fax] 802-828-3566
[ttd] 800-253-0191

Agency of Transportation

April 1, 2014

John S. Hall, Town Manager
Town of St. Johnsbury
1187 Main Street, Suite 2
St. Johnsbury, VT 05819

Doug Morton, Transportation Planner
Northeastern Vermont Development Association
36 Eastern Ave., Suite 1
St. Johnsbury, VT 05819

Re: St. Johnsbury BF 7000(20) VT 2B, Bridge 6 over the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail

Dear Mr. Hall and Mr. Morton,

A Regional Concerns Meeting for the above-referenced project was held on Tuesday, November 19, 2013 to present several alternatives to the public (see attached attendance sheet). Representatives from the town of St. Johnsbury attended the meeting as well as 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 six week period and detour traffic onto State-owned roads while the new bridge is being constructed. This alternative would add 1.0 miles to the through route distance and would result in an end to end distance of 7.8 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/86E048>

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 (see attached meeting notes). We have also received two comments via email since this meeting was held offering additional input (see attached emails). A summary of some of the more noteworthy comments is provided below.

There were a few questions regarding our proposal to close the bridge for six weeks during construction of the new bridge. Delayed response time by emergency responders was the primary concern raised at the meeting and was also brought up in the email received from Bradley Reed, an adjacent property owner. Mr. Reed asserts that it will be difficult to provide an appropriate level of safety for residents during the closure due to increased response time and feels that phased construction would be better, even with the higher cost, when spread out over the 80 year projected design life of the new bridge. Mr. Reed also added that the St. Johnsbury Fire Department staged a fire truck on the other side of a bridge that was being installed on Mount Vernon Street (apparently on the local bypass route) to address delayed response time on a previous project.

The email from Jay Whitcomb is contrary to the other email received and supports the proposed bridge closure option stating that “Yes the closure will be a temporary inconvenience but after enduring 2 summers of 1 way traffic on the bridge just before it over the interstate that was in much worse shape than thought, the 6 to 8 weeks of detours will be a piece of cake.”

A meeting was held with Structures management 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 six week maximum bridge closure while traffic is detoured onto the state roads as shown at the meeting.

It is understood and acknowledged that there could be some delay by emergency responders during the closure but whether this is considered a significant delay and is a justifiable reason for not proposing a six week closure is the debate. We take emergency response very seriously when we propose a bridge closure. The decision is reached primarily on the extra distance to travel during the closure, the duration of the closure and whether a local bypass route is available. For this project the end to end distance on the detour route (representing the longest distance anyone would travel during the closure) is 7.8 miles. There is also a local bypass route to circumvent the closed bridge using Tilton road, Library road, Swett road and Crow Hill road that is also available with an end to end distance of 4.3 miles. These distances are well within the limits used on previous successful projects involving bridge closures and are considered acceptable. We will also continue to work with the Town of St. Johnsbury and the emergency responders as the project is developed to coordinate the closure so that proper advance time is provided for planning purposes.

Regarding the impacts to the local roads along the local bypass route, 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. The town may also decide to use this compensation to minimize the emergency response time if that is

determined to be necessary. We will discuss this local compensation in more detail as the project advances.

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. Structures management is involved and ultimately makes the decision whether a closure is appropriate after carefully reviewing the details of the project. We understand that closing a bridge is a significant impact but we have found that this approach of concentrating the work in a short period of time is generally preferable to spreading the construction work out over several months or possibly years.

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: Dale Perron - DTA #7 (via email)
Jennifer Fitch – Design Project Manager (via email)
Mike Hedges – Structures Program Manager (via email)
Rich Tetreault - Director of Program Development (via email)
Scott Rogers - Director of Operations (via email)
Chris Cole - Director of Policy, Planning and Intermodal Development (via email)
Mathew Langham - VAOT Planning Coordinator (via email)

ALTERNATIVES PRESENTATION MEETING - ATTENDANCE SHEET

Project: St. Johnsbury BF 7000(20)	Meeting Date: Tuesday, November 19, 2013
Description: VT Route 2B, Bridge 6 over the LVRR	Location: St. Johnsbury Town Offices 51 Depot Square St. Johnsbury, VT 05819

Name	Company	Phone	E-Mail
Chris Williams, Project Manager	Vermont AOT	802 828-0051	chris.williams@state.vt.us
David B Timson	TAC	802-788-8683	crutdwest@yadco.com
Kaitlin O'Shea	VT rans	828-3462	kaitlin.o'shea@state.vt.us
KATHERINE PHELPS	RESIDENT	748-8562	
Bradley Reed	Resident	274-8795	breed2934@gmail.com
JIM RUST	SELECT DM ST. Johnsbury	748-2203	JIM RUST @ CHANTON, VT
Doug Manton	NVDA		
Katrina Floranza	NEWS 7		
Kevin Kelleher	NEWS 7		
Bob Brazil		748-8772	Bob@vabrazil.com
Melissa Bridger		"	melissa@stjfootcoop.com
Tom Moore	St J Select B	748-2528	thomas.moore_90@vntwa.com

These notes were taken at the Regional Concerns meeting by Doug Morton from NVDA and sent to me via email on 11/20/13. My responses (in underlined bold) were added after the meeting to the best of my recollection. Chris Williams

Does Federal Rail Clearance need to accommodate Double Stacking of Freight cars? Yes, even though this is currently a rail trail, we have to plan for the eventuality that it will revert back to a railroad. 23' vertical clearance is required by statute unless proper coordination is obtained and proper procedures are followed.

Rigid Frame option is essentially a culvert? You could use that term

What is the impact implied by color shading of both designs...what specifically is planned for impacted property Area immediately south of driveway is very steep. The colors indicate where we think out project limits will be at a very rough level of detail. Most importantly, these areas indicate whether we expect to extend outside the existing ROW and will need to acquire rights.

There are no holes in proposed Bridge Rail? Correct.

Lots of snow on Bridge ends up in 1st driveway after bridge rail. Also major drainage issues result from improper runoff of bridge to the same drive. It was acknowledged that this was an existing condition prior to this project. We will try to improve the situation as much as possible while maintaining the proper scope of work for this bridge replacement.

How often does 24/7 provision actually get used? What does that really mean for adjacent property owners We have found that contractors usually do not work all 24/7 but that time is available if they need to so it should be planned for. In some cases, a contractor will use the night to clean up and prepare for the work the next day. An adjacent property owner should plan for 24/7 work with the work carried out in a short concentrated period during the closure period rather than a long duration construction where not much construction work is underway.

How will closure impact emergency response? 4 miles will add significant time to response. Coordination with emergency responders will continue throughout the project development process. We believe that with proper coordination and the relatively short detour distance, an appropriate level of safety will be provided.

Much of the current traffic at this location is Danville Traffic using 2B as a cut through. Both St J and Danville use that route as for school busing. Understood that this is a short cut route for some. Is this route is a bus route, a closure period should be selected that does not happen during the school year.

Phased w/rigid frame is only \$200k more...what makes that less appealing than the preferred alternative aside from the \$? Other than the money (\$200K of savings) a bridge closure is much safer than phased construction since the construction workers are separated from the traffic. Phased construction also takes much longer

and has a bigger impact to the community since the contractor has to perform several operations multiple times.

Pedestrians will not climb down the banks and back up the other side...they will in effect be cut off. **Pedestrians and bicycles will be detoured along the local bypass route shown in the presentation. Depending on the volume of pedestrian traffic, special accommodations can be provided with a shuttle bus or equivalent if deemed appropriate. It should be noted that the input from St. Johnsbury officials states the current level of bicycle and pedestrian use on the bridge is very light.**

Williams, Chris

From: Bradley Reed [breed2934@gmail.com]
Sent: Tuesday, November 26, 2013 12:58 PM
To: Williams, Chris
Cc: townmanager@stjvt.com
Subject: VT Route 2B Bridge Reconstruction

Mr. Williams,

I attended the meeting in St. Johnsbury last week and wanted to respond via email, because you indicated it was the the way that feedback would be evaluated.

First, I am supportive of that bridge being replaced. It is in serious disrepair and has been for quite some time. The presentation you gave was very informative and I am glad you gave us the opportunity to see the 4 different options that are being considered, and to weigh in with our opinions.

While I support replacing the bridge I am not in support of the accelerated bridge reconstruction option which would shut down through traffic for at least 6 weeks. As I indicated in the meeting, I am opposed to this option because it would significantly delay emergency response to not just my house but many more who live above that point. In fact just this year the St. Johnsbury Fire Department staged a fire truck on the other side of a bridge that was being installed on Mount Vernon Street (which happens to be on the "local bypass" route your team is proposing) because of the delay it would cause responding to that area.

The VT Route 2B bridge proposed to be replaced is 1 mile from the forestation, and it takes about 2 minutes to get to it. Should the local bypass be used by responding emergency vehicles, the response time drastically increases. Your proposed route includes a very steep and long hill and 2 dirt roads just to get back onto Route 2B. Though I do not know what the driving time would be, I am confident that it would be quite a bit longer compared to the normal route.

In your presentation you gave an opting for leaving one lane open, and the total cost was roughly \$250,000 more. While I understand that we should try to be careful spending our money, I also believe that we need to look at the whole picture and understand what the risk versus gain is. In this case, I would support the additional cost of leaving one lane open, not for my personal convenience, but for the necessity of giving emergency response vehicles access to that area.

The cost of the additional \$250,000 over 80 years which was the proposed life pan of the new bridge would be \$3,125 per year. The added amount of time that you are proposing for construction and the inconvenience of the one lane seems like a fair trade off to keep access to that area for emergency vehicles. After all if waiting for a few minutes at a light is that much of an inconvenience then motorists can still use the local bypass.

Thanks for taking my input. I hope it helps

Bradley Reed
401 Route 2B
St. Johnsbury, VT 05819

Williams, Chris

From: Jay Whitcomb [480whitcomb@gmail.com]
Sent: Friday, November 22, 2013 8:31 PM
To: Williams, Chris
Subject: RE: St. Johnsbury BF 7000(20) VT 2B, Bridge 6

Chris,

Just finished reading the reports and find it scary! Yes the closure will be a temporary inconvenience but after enduring 2 summers of 1 way traffic on the bridge just before it over the interstate that was in much worse shape than thought, the 6 to 8 weeks of detours will be a piece of cake.

Some tidbits I gleaned from the report are that I'm 775 feet from the bridge (directly across from well site 2) and the water main noted in the hand sketch is mine. St. J. water should be able to help with this as I previously mentioned. This area was also known as clay hill for a good reason my front yard is clay but sandy behind it and up the hill behind it. Perhaps the source of the water saturation?

Jay Whitcomb

From: Williams, Chris [<mailto:chris.williams@state.vt.us>]
Sent: Friday, November 22, 2013 9:32 AM
To: '480Whitcomb@gmail.com'
Subject: St. Johnsbury BF 7000(20) VT 2B, Bridge 6

Nice talking with you today Jay and sorry you missed the presentation. We discussed that you you have a private water line that you believe is on the bridge that services your house as well as 1 other house. You were going to get more details and provide that when available.

Here is the link to where you can view the Scoping Report and the presentation that you missed.

<https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/vtrans/external/Projects/Structures/86E048>

thanks,
chris