

**STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE  
INTER-DEPARTMENT COMMUNICATION**

**CONFERENCE REPORT**

**PROJECT:** Wentworth – possible removal/rehabilitation of Br. No. 148/121  
(Closed/Bypassed/Historic steel through truss over Baker River)

**FED. NO:** X-A003(407)

**STATE NO:** 26903

**DATE OF CONFERENCE:** Friday, February 21, 2014, 3:00 pm

**LOCATION OF CONFERENCE:** NHDOT offices, Concord, NH – Kenison Room 185

**ATTENDED BY:**

Wentworth: Steve Davis, Wentworth Selectman  
Francis Muzzey, Wentworth Selectman  
Craig Pasco, Wentworth resident  
Palmer Koelb, Wentworth resident  
Peter Holden, President, Holden Engineering & Surveying  
Lee Eddins, Structural Engineer, Holden Engineering & Surveying

NHDOT: Christopher D. Clement, Sr., Commissioner, NHDOT  
David J. (Jeff) Brillhart, Assistant Commissioner and Chief Engineer, NHDOT  
William J. Cass, Director of Project Development, NHDOT  
Mark W. Richardson, Administrator, Bridge Design Bureau, NHDOT

**SUBJECT:** Meeting scheduled at the request of the Wentworth Selectmen (per 2/21/2014 Selectmen's meeting) to discuss Wentworth's concerns with the Commissioner and other NHDOT staff regarding the condition, safety, current situation, and options for this bridge.

**NOTES ON CONFERENCE:** The general disposition and situation regarding this historic bridge was reviewed, i.e., it is currently closed and barricaded to all traffic due to its severely deteriorated condition. Selectman Davis explained that there is very little parking in the Town Common area and that in the past, many residents and visitors parked south of the bridge and walked across to the Town Common for various events. Selectmen Muzzey and Davis reiterated the Selectmen's (and others) concerns that this bridge closure now requires that pedestrians travel along Route 25 and cross the newer (1937) bridge over the Baker River to eventually access the Town Common area. The Route 25 bridge is somewhat narrow and vehicular traffic, including trucks, often travel in excess of the 30 mph speed limit, thereby creating a safety concern for anyone walking or biking on the bridge. Other Wentworth residents have expressed concerns as well, regarding the safety of those using the Route 25 bridge. The historic (148/121) bridge previously provided a means for pedestrians to cross the Baker River to access the Town Common area.

The Selectmen further noted concerns/complaints that they had received from some residents of Wentworth. Selectman Davis said that one concern is with the lead based paint that is flaking off the bridge and falling into the waterway below. Although these paint chips do not present an environmental hazard, it would be beneficial to address this concern by stripping and repainting the bridge, especially with a swimming hole located downstream of this bridge. Regarding the bridge closure, Selectman Muzzey noted that the complaint about the condition of the bridge prompted their December 2012 letter to the Department, which eventually led to the full closure of the bridge. Overall, this caused the situation to go from bad (limited use of the bridge) to worse (complete bridge closure).

J. Brillhart indicated that the Department understood the Selectmen's concerns regarding safety, but that given the Department's current financial challenges and lack of funding, it is very unlikely that the Department would be able to rehabilitate this bridge as preferred by the Town, and certainly not in the near future. He continued that the Department had already committed Bridge Maintenance and Bridge Design staff to install staging to inspect the bridge to determine its current condition and extent of deterioration. Load ratings and suggested repair or rehabilitation options with rough cost estimates could then be better understood. This effort would begin in the spring of 2014 when weather and schedules permit. Once these results are received, further discussions regarding options would be possible.

The Selectmen then asked Peter Holden and Lee Eddins, PE, of Holden Engineering and Surveying, to briefly discuss their findings. Holden staff had performed a cursory inspection of the bridge, generally viewing the deck and topside of the bridge from the deck, and viewing the underside of the bridge from the edge of the river using binoculars, wherever river access could be obtained. Holden's report (copy attached) provided a brief summary of conditions (poor) and cost estimates for various options, ranging from \$175,000 for bridge removal, \$250,000 for removal and installation of a prefabricated pedestrian bridge, and up to \$1.5M for complete rehabilitation/restoration of the bridge for pedestrians and passenger cars. P. Holden noted that the decision as to which option should be chosen is essentially a question of money. It was also noted that the recent rehabilitation of the Saunders Hill Road in Wentworth (Br. No. 142/096) over the Baker River was also an historic steel truss and was rehabilitated in 2010 for a total project cost of about \$925,000.00.

Selectmen Muzzey inquired whether it was possible that the bridge could be rehabilitated and/or opened by the fall of 2014. J. Brillhart responded in the negative, stating that due to inadequate funding, the Department would not be able to reopen this bridge anytime soon. He continued that if the rehabilitation option is eventually pursued, it would likely take place in phases over several years to spread out the financial impact to the Department's resources.

One additional issue raised by Selectman Muzzey involved the Town's request for a sidewalk to be attached to the east side of the Route 25 bridge (Br. No. 146/120) to provide safe access to the Town parks located in this area, which are separated by Route 25 and the bridge. Preservation and maintenance work was to be performed on this bridge as part of the Route 25 resurfacing and bridge preservation projects (*Wentworth-Runney 16221* and *Wentworth 15908*), which are being completed.

Subsequent to this meeting, M. Richardson researched NHDOT project records for further details on this subject. The following information was the result of this research:

At the public meeting on December 7, 2010, held to discuss the scope of work proposed for the Wentworth 15908 project, the Selectmen requested that a sidewalk be added on the bridge. The response from the Department was that available funding was limited to the bridge rehabilitation work only; essentially, adding a sidewalk was beyond the scope of this bridge preservation project. Changes to the roadway lines/stripping were considered in an effort to delineate additional space for pedestrians. However, it was determined that restriping would likely cause problems for vehicles using the bridge as SB traffic would be shifted immediately adjacent to the westerly bridge steel plate girder, and that NB traffic would be crossing over the roadway crown when traveling over the bridge. It was determined that these conditions made the situation less safe overall, and therefore, the roadway stripping was not changed on the plans.

M. Richardson also reviewed the Conference Report for the Pre-Construction Meeting for these projects, held at the Wentworth Town Offices on March 7, 2013, and also contacted the Construction Bureau's Contract Administrator to discuss this issue. The Conference Report noted that at the Pre-Construction meeting, the Selectmen again requested that a sidewalk be constructed on the Route 25 bridge to address their safety concerns, as previously noted. The Conference Report indicated that the Department agreed to this request and that the sidewalk would be installed. However, the Contract

Administrator had understood the Town's request to be for a temporary pedestrian crossing during construction activities on the bridge, and not as a permanent crossing or solution to the issue. Although this request was discussed in general with the Contractor, it was observed that pedestrians were using the nearby historic bridge (Br. No. 148/121) to cross the Baker River. Due to the anticipated high cost of even a temporary pedestrian crossing along Route 25, and with the historic bridge being used (then) by pedestrians, a sidewalk or other crossing was not included with any work on the Route 25 bridge.

M. Richardson continued that it would be somewhat difficult and perhaps expensive to construct a sidewalk along the outside of the Route 25 bridge due to its type of construction (a steel through-plate girder structure), but that an estimated cost for this work would be developed. Information prepared after this meeting estimated the total cost to be \$200,000.00, comprised of \$65,000.00 to design, fabricate, and construct/attach a sidewalk to the bridge, with an additional \$135,000.00 required for design and construction work on the roadway approaches/shoulders for the sidewalk along the east side of Route 25, extending from the recreational area north of the bridge to East Side Road to the south of the bridge. However, such a project would be outside the draft 2015-2024 Ten-Year Plan and would need to be discussed with and supported by the Regional Planning Commission for it to be included in subsequent 10-Year Plans.

In closing, J. Brillhart reiterated that the Department fully understood the Selectmen's and residents' concerns regarding the safety of any pedestrians or bicyclists using the Route 25 bridge. He continued that the Department was willing to proceed as outlined above to determine the current load capacity of the bypassed historic bridge, to develop conceptual estimates for various repair and rehabilitation options, and to explore the means to accomplish the most appropriate/feasible option. All agreed that additional meetings and discussions will be held in the future as needed to keep everyone informed as this effort progresses.

Submitted by: M. Richardson

Date: April 9, 2014