



Public Meeting Summary

Subject	Project Public Informational Meeting
Date and Time	October 24, 2024, 6-8 pm
Location	Harriet Dame Auditorium in the City Wide Community Center, 14 Canterbury Rd Concord, NH
Presenters and facilitators	• Jason Ayotte: Project Manager, NHDOT • Gene McCarthy: Project Manager, McFarland Johnson • Christine Perron: Environmental Consultant, McFarland Johnson • Jonathan Evans: Environmental Project Manager, NHDOT • Liviu Sfintescu: Project Manager, WSP • Delia Makhetha: Public Outreach Facilitator, WSP • John Butler: Design Subject Matter Expert, NHDOT • Brian Coburn: McFarland Johnson
Number of Public Attendees	Approximately 133

Meeting presentation began at 6:05 pm

Presentation Notes

1. Purpose of the Meeting

- To reintroduce the project team and set the stage for the future public outreach.
- Clarify project goals and gather input.

2. Introductions

- Jason Ayotte opened the meeting by thanking everyone for attending and introduced the key members of the project team.

3. Project Background:



- The project has been in development for over 20 years, with extensive data collection and community outreach efforts.
- Previous outreach in 2021 was pivotal in reassessing project focus and gathering community feedback.

4. Public Outreach Plan

- Jason explained the vision for the public outreach strategy, including plans for a number of open house events in 2025.
- The goal of these meetings will be to clarify project benefits, expectations, and objectives while re-engaging the community.
- Delia Makhetha will lead these outreach efforts, ensuring that community concerns are heard and addressed.

5. Project History

- The project began with a transportation planning study that analyzed various alternatives, focusing on the least impacted option that follows existing corridors.
- In 2018, the NHDOT 10-year plan was restructured to accommodate project funding and prioritize key infrastructure.
- Recent work includes drafting environmental documents and holding public hearings, with workshops in Bow and Concord prior to the pandemic.

6. Recent Design Modifications

- The team reviewed feedback from the 2021 public outreach and incorporated the following into the project design (see PowerPoint presentation for details):
 - New roadway configuration at I-89 Exit 1 interchange to improve safety by eliminating weaving conflicts.
 - Additional turning lanes at the intersection of Manchester St (US Route 3) and Old Turnpike Rd
 - Expansion of the Merrimack River Greenway Trail
 - Relation of Pan Am Railroad by Storrs Street
 - Addition of a partial Northbound on-ramp at Exit 14 to facilitate access from Fort Eddy Rd to I-93 Northbound.
 - Addressed concerns about noise barriers and impacts on historic sites were addressed.

7. Environmental Assessment

- Christine Perron discussed the comprehensive environmental assessment process, which includes gathering information on the existing environmental resources, evaluating potential environmental impacts associated with the range of reasonable alternatives, and ensuring compliance with all applicable laws, rules and regulations, including the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).
- The Environmental Assessment (EA) from 2018 is being updated to reflect changes in design, updated resource information, and new regulations.



- The EA will also identify the project's anticipated improvements to traffic safety and any associated environmental impacts as well as any required additional mitigation. Any necessary design modifications and/or mitigation will be integrated into the future project design phases.
- Natural Resource Impacts:
 - The project is expected to impact approximately 1.4 acres of wetland, divided evenly between both towns, and 0.7 acres of state forest.
 - Wetland impacts will be addressed through ongoing communication with relevant agencies and mitigation strategies.
 - Stormwater Management: With an increase in impervious surfaces, stormwater runoff will be managed through swales and basins, adhering to New Hampshire's Department of Environmental Services regulations.
- The project is subject to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, which mandates consideration of impacts on historic properties. Two historic properties have already been identified as potentially impacted, with potential impacts to two additional properties. The public has the opportunity to engage as a consulting party to the Section 106 historic resource review process. FHWA contact information and links to additional Section 106 consulting party information were provided for individuals or organizations interested in becoming a consulting party or who wish to obtain additional information on the Section 106 historic resource review process.
- The EA will identify the environmental impacts associated with the maximum footprint associated with the reasonable range of alternatives under consideration including those which would result in capacity expansion as well as those focused on safety improvements.
- Completion of the environmental assessment and obtaining the necessary NEPA approval from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is required to advance any portions of the project to the final design and construction phases including any of the more critical safety and infrastructure improvements at both exit 1 in Bow and the exit 15/I-393 bridges in Concord.

8. Timeline and Future Steps:

- Ongoing analysis of traffic conditions and safety improvements, especially related to the I-93 corridor.
- Continued coordination with the City of Concord and Town of Bow.
- Environmental assessments will be a major focus over the next six months to align with federal highway requirements.
- Finalizing engineering modifications based on community input and ongoing assessments.
- Additional studies, including a noise analysis and value engineering study, will support decision-making and innovative solutions for the project.
- Planning further outreach and engagement opportunities to keep the community informed and involved in the project's development. Design and traffic workshops will be scheduled in 2025.
- The goal is to initiate final design in 2026 for early action projects at exits 1 and 15, with a full design of the corridor planned for 2027.



9. Priorities

- I-393 bridges at exit 15, which are on the "red list," indicating they are structurally deficient. These bridges require urgent attention and funding for replacement.
- Enhancements at exit 1 are also a top priority to improve safety and traffic flow.

Questions & Answer

- **Engagement Rules:** The presentation concluded with guidelines for the upcoming Q&A session, encouraging participation while ensuring everyone has a chance to speak.
- **Comment Options:** Attendees who prefer not to ask questions live can submit written comments or questions, either during the meeting using the comment cards available or online at any time.

Thomas Bell (Proxy questions for Concord Mayor Byron Champlin in attendance): I wanted to clarify Gene's reference to the Merrimack River Greenway Trail. After reviewing three alternatives, it seems that part of the project will be constructed by the DOT using their funds. Is that correct?

Bow-Concord Team Response: Yes, that's correct.

Thomas Bell: Just to clarify, please work with the Transportation Policy Advisory Committee. They do not have decision-making authority but will provide recommendations to the city council and mayor, who will ultimately decide which alternative is chosen. Thank you for that clarification. Great job on the presentation; I look forward to collaborating on this project in the coming years.

Robert Spiegelman (Concord resident): I find this project complicated with many moving parts. You mentioned the Merrimack River Greenway multiple times, and I'm curious why, after three years, the DOT still hasn't finalized the right of first refusal to buy the five-mile stretch from Holiday Inn to Boscawen. There's a willing buyer, willing seller, and an agreed-upon price, yet it remains pending. This raises concerns about the project's progress.

Bow-Concord Team Response: Unfortunately, it falls outside my responsibilities as project manager, but I can investigate it.

Roy Schweiger (Concord): My comment is that this room is overflowing, as are the illegally parked cars outside. Future meetings should probably be held at a larger venue like the City Auditorium. Concord is experiencing significant growth, reflected in recent zoning approvals for high-density apartments. We need to consider how this growth will impact traffic. My question concerns the roundabouts at Exit 12. They create multiple weaving maneuvers, which seems worse than traditional intersections. Why not consider alternatives?

Bow-Concord Team Response: We are aware of the growth in Concord and are incorporating it into our traffic evaluations. Regarding roundabouts, they are designed to facilitate smoother traffic flow by eliminating the need for weaving. The two



roundabouts at Exit 12 have been part of the project for a long time and has a great deal of support.

Tim Robson (Concord resident): I love roundabouts. My question is whether you've considered alternative forms of transportation, like buses or trains, to address highway congestion based on your data. Have these modes been incorporated into the DOT study?

Bow-Concord Team Response: While federal highway funds primarily focus on roads and bridges, we can share the data with our partners to explore additional transportation options.

Steve Henninger (Concord resident and former City employee): I appreciated the presentation but noticed a lack of detail on environmental issues and intermodal connectivity. Will these be addressed in future meetings? Also, what was the source of your origin-destination information?

Bow-Concord Team Response: This presentation was just the beginning of our public outreach. The detailed environmental information will be discussed in future meetings. As for the origin-destination data, it was purchased from a vendor, and while I can't disclose specifics due to confidentiality agreements, we can assure you it was gathered from reputable sources.

David Case (Pembroke resident): Is the project expected to be completed in 2038? The ten-year plan has funding allocated, but what about constraints on the overall state funding? Also, can you clarify the status of the bridge over the Merrimack River north of I-393 and I-93? Are there traffic counts coming into Concord?

Bow-Concord Team Response: Currently, we have funding outlined in the ten-year plan, but it's subject to state-wide constraints. Regarding the bridge, while it may not be included in this project, there are ongoing discussions about its future. Yes, there are permanent counters on I 93, and other count data along the corridor. On the NHDOT website there is an interactive website that will provide traffic data.

Peter Resing (Concord resident): I've heard discussions about a byway that could help with traffic congestion.

Bow-Concord Team Response: During the early stages of this project, we conducted a significant planning study that explored many options, including a bypass and moving the interstate and river. Ultimately, we decided to address these issues within the existing corridor, as the least impactful solution. The planning study that looked at this is available on the project website.

Ron Rainer (retired engineer and Concord downtown resident): I want to start by complimenting the presentation. The slides were very well done. Regarding the dual exit heading east onto Manchester Street, I have previously corresponded with DOT and the City about this and expressed my support. However, I believe a roundabout at the intersection of Old Turnpike Road would work better than traffic lights. Additionally, I support the concept of the Merrimack River Greenway Trail, particularly if it can be cantilevered on the north side of the Loudon Road Bridge. Will it need additional support? When the trail reaches the west side of the river, I suggest creating an elevated walkway over Fort Eddy Road. A grade crossing would be too congested



due to the existing traffic. Lastly, I would like clarification on whether the I-393 bridge replacement is total or just re-decking.

Bow-Concord Team Response: The I-393 bridge is the one over I-93 near the cloverleaf, and we anticipate a full replacement due to its condition. The bridge over the river is a separate project. To date this is a planning effort and engineering will be evaluated and incorporated in the future. Some of the plans do not show all the level of detail at this point. As for your suggestions regarding the Old Turnpike Road, we haven't investigated a roundabout yet, but it's intriguing and worth exploring based on projected traffic. Regarding the Merrimack River Greenway, we have considered various concepts, it has been narrowed down to three, including an elevated or tunnel option to keep pedestrians away from traffic, although it's a complex and constrained area. The team will need to consider ADA compliance. These decisions will be up to the City's discretion.

Anthony Foote (Bow): I missed the announcement about our next meeting. I submitted questions online, I thought those would be addressed at tonight's meeting. Will there be a specific meeting to address the hot topics you mentioned in Bow?

Bow-Concord Team Response: We haven't scheduled the next meeting yet, but it will be in 2025. We've received many questions online, and we are working through them. We plan to hold multiple meetings throughout Concord and Bow, and we will look for larger venues to accommodate everyone.

John Hunton (Bow): I want to express my support for this project. As a father of two, I see the traffic issues daily, and I believe this project is crucial for our community. If there's any way to expedite the project, that would be fantastic. Also supportive of roundabouts where possible.

Dick Lemieux (Merrimack River Greenway Trail President and Board of Trustees): I'm the president of the board of trustees for the Merrimack River Greenway Trail. We have been developing this trail for 14 years and would like a formal seat at the table during discussions about the alternatives.

Bow-Concord Team Response: Acknowledged, thank you.

Dennis Casey (Concord): I have a couple of questions about the I-93 project. First, regarding the northbound direction, can you clarify the access to Route 3A?

Bow-Concord Team Response: Currently, there is no direct access, but this project will provide a new directional ramp that replaces the need for the old loop.

Dennis Casey (Concord): Great! I would like to combine Exit 14 with Stickney Road to eliminate lights by the bridge on Loudon Road.

Bow-Concord Team Response: Unfortunately, we can't combine those exits due to regulations with the termination off the interstate. We are proposing to eliminate the existing signal on Loudon Road by the exit to improve traffic flow.

Dennis Casey (Concord): Will the project drawings be available for download on your website?

Bow-Concord Team Response: Yes, we will make those available as PDFs on the project website.



Don Berube (business owner): I appreciate what you're doing with the intersection in Bow, though I have concerns. We've talked about the potential impact of the new plans not having I-89 South terminate on 3A will adversely affect businesses in the commercial area along Route 3A. Trucks accessing the larger number of warehouses and truck dealerships in the area will struggle the most with this change,

Bow-Concord Team Response: To clarify, the proposed design has a direct ramp being constructed from I 93 to I 89. With this construction, it will eliminate the connection from I 89S to 3A. Heading southbound on I 89, traffic will have to exit at Exit 1, make a left turn onto Logging Hill Rd and use the new local road to connect to Route 3A. This could be challenging for larger vehicles. This was a compromise that is being made in the current design.

Ian McGregor (Concord): I'm part of the Transportation Committee here in Concord. I want to thank you for the fantastic engagement and the updates. I believe hiring a public outreach firm has been a great decision—the website and handouts are excellent. However, I'd like to raise a concern about New Hampshire's alarming increase in road fatalities this year. Could you elaborate on any safety improvements being made to address this?

Bow-Concord Team Response: Our focus is on improving safety within the corridor, especially with the new interchange with directional ramps and auxiliary lanes at Exit 1 and Exit 15, which will separate lanes and reduce weaving, and the roundabouts at Exit 12. We're analyzing current newer crash data to better understand safety improvements across the corridor.

Jeff Evans (Concord resident): I recently visited Lowell and was impressed by their waterfront parks. In contrast, Concord's industrial corridor along the river feels neglected. While this project may enhance safety, it seems to exacerbate past decisions that favor highways over community spaces. What are your thoughts on reducing the impact of the highway expansion, especially considering the City's request for no additional capacity?

Bow-Concord Team Response: We are committed to studying existing traffic and analyzing projected volumes. While we discussed a safety alternative that includes three through lanes and one additional lane, we did not commit to no increase in traffic. No increase in traffic is not something we can control, but we can update traffic data to the present day. Our focus will be on providing necessary improvements while considering community concerns.

Steve Henninger (Concord resident and former City employee): You mentioned designer for non-peak, did the DOT consider designing for the tourist peaks.

Bow-Concord Team Response: We typically design for average conditions. Yes, in 2019 we did a study to look at part-time shoulder use on I 93. There are restrictions at Exit 14 that may limit this. Depending on what the traffic counts say, we may look at part-time inside shoulder use.

Ryan Audley (Bow): I want to stress the critical need for public safety in this project. The Exit 1 on-ramp at Logging Hill is among the most hazardous in New Hampshire, with numerous incidents and fatalities over the years. I urge you to prioritize safety updates for this corridor.



David Harris (Concord): I've been attending meetings about this project for what feels like 20 years. We've often discussed three lanes in each direction, but it seems this is changing. Could you clarify how many lanes are being considered now?

Bow-Concord Team Response: The plan currently includes three through lanes plus one auxiliary lane to help with interchange movements. We will look at the traffic numbers carefully and we will have an opportunity to meet with the community to determine what the best alternative would be.

Roy Schweiger (Concord): I'm concerned about the pedestrian crossings. The federal guidelines seem to require proper crossings in urban areas. Have you considered an underpass or overpass for pedestrians at the north end of Teardrop Park?

Bow-Concord Team Response: Thank you for your suggestion. We will take it into consideration.

Questions and Answer ended at 7:45 pm