



**Hinsdale, NH – Brattleboro, VT**  
**Connecticut River Bridge Project**  
**NH Project #12210C; VT Project # BF A004 (152)**

**Existing Bridges Subcommittee Meeting #9**  
**December 18, 2020**  
**1:00 p.m.**

**Join Zoom Meeting**  
<https://bit.ly/Dec18HBEB20>  
**Telephone: (646) 558-8656**  
**Meeting ID: 873 8454 6724**  
**Password: 501 044**

**AGENDA**

1. Minutes of October 28, 2020
2. Project Updates
3. Feedback on December 2nd Online Public Forum
4. Revised Conceptual Plan for Bridges & Island
5. Next Meeting
6. Public Comment
7. Adjourn



## Hinsdale, NH – Brattleboro, VT Connecticut River Bridge Project

*Existing Bridges Subcommittee Meeting #8*

### Web Conference Meeting

#### MINUTES

October 28, 2020

Co-Chairperson Lynch announced that the meeting would be conducted using a Zoom format and J. B. Mack read a document entitled *Authority for Conducting a Meeting Electronically (copy attached)*. He announced that all votes would be conducted by roll call.

**Subcommittee Attendees:** Kathryn Lynch, *Co-Chair, Town of Hinsdale*; Patrick Moreland, *Co-Chair, Town of Brattleboro*; Steve Barrett, *Brattleboro Public Works*; Jason Cooper, *Friends of West River Trail*; Steve Diorio, *Hinsdale Board of Selectmen*; Prudence MacKinney, *Public Health Advocate*; Frank Podlenski, *Hinsdale Highway Department*; Ed Smith, *Hinsdale Economic Development Representative*; Sharon Smith, *Hinsdale Historical Society*.

**Staff and Technical Assistance:** Chris Campany, *Windham Regional Commission*; J. B. Mack, *Southwest Region Planning Commission (SWRPC)*; Christopher Ramage, Robert Ryan, *University of Massachusetts at Amherst*; Trent Zanes, *NHDOT*.

**Guests:** Representative Michael Abbott, *NH Cheshire District 1*; Mike Kowalczyk, *Monadnock Regional Rail Trails Collaborative*; Samantha Loch, *Connecticut River Conservancy*; Kathy Urffer, *Connecticut River Conservancy*.

Kathryn Lynch called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. J. B. Mack conducted a roll call of all of the Subcommittee attendees.

#### I. Meeting Minutes of June 25, 2020

**Motion: To approve the minutes of June 25, 2020.**

Motion by Patrick Moreland, seconded by Prudence MacKinney. Approved by unanimous roll call vote.

#### II. Project Updates

Trent Zanes announced that the advertising date for the Hinsdale-Brattleboro Bridge (#12210) has changed from November 17, 2020 to January 5, 2021. NHDOT needs more time to develop the plans and deal with some other issues. There is some right-of-way that is still being acquired in Vermont and NHDOT needs to submit a plan to VTtrans for their review. There's a thirty-day window for VTtrans to review those plans. The plans are then submitted to the Federal Highway Administration for approval. Otherwise, everything is moving well, and NHDOT expects that the advertising date of January 5<sup>th</sup> will hold. He noted that NHDOT has run into some issues with the solar lights for the project area. The solar collection system for

the lights has been discontinued by the manufacturer who may have gone out of business due to COVID-19, but NHDOT is looking at other alternatives or options for the solar lights.

Prudence MacKinney asked if the project is still on the same project completion schedule. Trent Zanes responded that the completion date has changed. NHDOT was trying to get the bridge open by the end of 2023, but because of the delay in advertising and the fact that pavement operations really can't be pushed into the winter, the paving would happen in the spring of 2024 with an opening of the bridge in the summer of 2024. He added that part of the delay in the advertising date was to get a better bidding response by waiting until after the holiday season.

### **III. Feedback on October 15<sup>th</sup> Online Forum**

J. B. Mack noted that the October 15<sup>th</sup> Online Forum was the first kickoff meeting with the public about getting feedback on a vision and conceptual plan for the existing bridges and Hinsdale Island. He announced that about forty people attended the event. The event included a welcome followed by a presentation on the construction plans for the new bridge and how that relates to the plans for the existing bridges. After that NHDOT presentation, Patrick Moreland spoke about the goals and charge of the Existing Bridges Subcommittee. Finally, Chris Ramage and Robert Ryan gave a presentation introducing the public to preliminary concepts for the existing bridges and island area based on the work that was done earlier this year by an undergraduate studio design class at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

J. B. Mack noted that a number of poll questions were conducted during the Zoom meeting which he will present on but asked if anyone that attended had any remarks they wanted to make about the meeting. Mike Kowalczyk said he thought the meeting was run very well, it was very clear, and he thought the presentation on the architectural renderings was really well done. Patrick Moreland said that since the meeting, he's heard from a number of members of the Brattleboro Select Board and the public and all were really excited about the potential for this project after seeing the renderings. Jason Cooper said he wasn't entirely clear on the location of the proposed boat landing. Trent Zanes said that the proposed boat launch is about five and a half miles south of the existing bridge off of Prospect Street in Hinsdale. Ed Smith added that the project is really an enhancement to the existing boat launch.

J. B. Mack gave a short presentation on the poll findings from the October 15<sup>th</sup> Online Forum. A copy of that presentation is attached. He said that the results represent a small sample of people and asked for assistance from the Subcommittee to spread the word about the survey which has been posted on SWRPC's homepage. Chris Campy observed that it may be difficult for survey respondents to visualize the economic benefit of the project without being prompted with examples and ideas. He posited that perhaps the Subcommittee might want to look at the question a little closer and seek technical assistance. He mentioned the Donohue Institute at the University of Massachusetts Amherst as a possible resource to talk to the Committee. For example, some of the recreational opportunities being considered for the island might translate into economic activity. Steve Diorio mentioned that it was difficult for some of the attendees to take the poll. J. B. Mack responded that in order to use the polling feature, people need to download the Zoom client software. He said he would provide directions on this for people attending the next scheduled Online Forum. There was some discussion about using social media, e-mail contacts and websites to promote the survey.

Kathy Urffer mentioned that the University of New Hampshire Extension has a Nature-Based Economy Program, and she has seen the contact person, Shannon Rodgers, do a webinar on exactly what Chris Campy was referring to earlier. J. B. Mack thanked her for that lead and said he would look into it.

#### **IV. Work Scope with University of Massachusetts Amherst and Future Public Involvement**

J. B. Mack stated that he had spoken with the Existing Bridges Subcommittee about the University of Massachusetts Amherst scope of work during the last meeting, but wanted to have a conversation with the Subcommittee about how future public involvement would be addressed. He noted that he met with Professor Robert Ryan and Chris Ramage last week to discuss the schedule and part of that discussion focused on plans for holding public meetings during different stages of the development of the conceptual plan. He presented a schedule on the screen showing planned public meetings and other meetings and deadlines. The recommendation by SWRPC and the University of Massachusetts Amherst is to hold four meetings designed to get public input through May 2021. One of those meetings already happened through the Online Forum on October 15, 2020. Other proposed public meetings would be on December 2, 2020, and the University of Massachusetts Amherst and SWRPC are recommending meetings that would be scheduled approximately the first week of March in 2021 the first week of April in 2021 as well. Robert Ryan added that the schedule shows a work flow process where plans get more and more detailed as time moves forward. Once the project reaches March and April 2021, there will be less opportunities to make significant changes to the conceptual plan, so it's important to get feedback on proposed big concepts early and focus more on details later on. He added that the University of Massachusetts Amherst academic calendar ends in May and that's why the timeline shows a finished project in early May 2021.

#### **V. Preliminary Concepts from University of Massachusetts Amherst**

Chris Ramage announced that he would give his first presentation on working concepts for the project, which he is calling *A Living River*. The initial concept is derived from the work of a number of people at this point including the Subcommittee, students from University of Massachusetts Amherst and others. He discussed how the project area moves between a very urban space eventually into a "wild-dominated" space, so we are working in an urban-wild interface. Chris Ramage introduced a conceptual diagram showing different areas including a gateway to Brattleboro/River (Brattleboro shoreline), gateway to island/intensive recreation area (Anna Hunt Marsh Bridge), a managed landscape/semi-passive recreation space and conserved landscape areas (Hinsdale Island), a gateway to island (Charles Dana Bridge) and gateway to Hinsdale/river (Hinsdale shoreline). He went into detail with ideas for each of these areas. This presentation is available online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GRdaF8CupMA&feature=youtu.be>.

Mike Kowalczyk commented that he's working with Steven Dotson, Brattleboro's Sustainability Coordinator, who is working on a rail with trail connection from the Brattleboro shoreline area to the West River Trail. He also complimented Chris Ramage for considering the study area's connectivity to the Fort Hill Trail.

Jason Cooper said that he really liked the portage ideas for kayaks and canoes on the Brattleboro and Hinsdale shorelines, but said that he didn't really see an opportunity for boats to stop on the island itself. He suggested there should be a place for people to pull -up a kayak to enjoy the island and noted that in the past there had been the idea to have a place for people to tie-up motorboats on the island to come to a concert or walk across the bridge to go to the Whetstone Brewery or even see a movie. Chris Ramage responded that he was thinking that people could use the water access point that he described in his presentation to pull-up and store kayaks. There would be a dual purpose for that area - water access and cartop boat portage. He noted he's given less thought to motor boats, partly because he would need more information about requirements for docking, however, he noted possible opportunities near the amphitheater and the part of the boardwalk that passes under the Anna Hunt Marsh Bridge just south of the bridge. Jason Cooper commented that he thought that would be a good attribute to include somehow. He reiterated he liked the idea of a kayak launch area on the Brattleboro shoreline near parking and said that there are few places for people to access that side of the river. He said it makes downtown all the more

inviting if people can come down with their boat. There was discussion about whether it makes more sense to have access north or south of the Anna Hunt Marsh Bridge. The slope isn't as steep to the north, but it is railroad land. To the south, the slope is quite steep. Chris Ramage also said that more information is needed about the brownfield site to the south of the Anna Hunt Marsh Bridge. Patrick Moreland said he would be happy to get Chris Ramage in touch with the Brattleboro Planning Department to share more information about the brownfield.

Kathy Urffer echoed Jason Cooper's recommendation to have boat access on the island. She mentioned that it would fit well into the Connecticut River Paddler's Trail, which is a thru river trail that goes down the whole river. Doing that would enable people to put in boats upriver such as at the Marina and then paddle down river, walk into town and then paddle back up on the return trip. She also mentioned that the Connecticut River Conservancy is expecting that Great River Hydro will be submitting a final application to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to relicense their dams on the Connecticut River. The application will probably be submitted in December 2020 which means that during the second half of 2021 into 2022, they will be working on their recreation plan for the Connecticut River. She said that once a final design is completed for this project and a planning document is created it would be good to submit it to the FERC docket and to send it directly to John Ragonese of Great River Hydro so they might consider if they want to make some capital investments as part of their recreation plan.

Prudence MacKinney asked what would constitute the surface area of the paths on the island coming-off of the main bicycle path? She also asked what kind of factor noise would play on the island due to the new bridge. Chris Ramage answered that the paths coming-off of the main path are currently sketched out as six or eight feet wide depending on if they are considered a major or minor path. He added that the level of detail is prone to change as the concept develops. She asked what the surface would likely be. Chris Ramage explained that the majority of the soils on the island are hydric, it wouldn't be advisable to do any traditional paving even if you could get a wetland permit to construct them. It could be gravel, or any number of intensities of boardwalk systems. He plans to present more on this at a future meeting to solicit input as it would factor into costs, level of ADA accessibility, etc. In responding to the question about noise, Trent Zanes said that because of the height of the bridge and its distance from the island, he doesn't think it will significantly impact people enjoying activities on the island. Robert Ryan added that in some respects, it will be better because vehicle traffic will be taken off the island. He added that one of the reasons Chris Ramage is proposing more intensive activities on the western side of the island, is because it is the most distant from the new bridge.

J. B. Mack noted that if anyone has any more comments or feedback they would like to share, he can make a video and powerpoint of Chris Ramage's presentation available. He added that according to the work scope, Subcommittee members could have until November 6<sup>th</sup> to send any comments and questions. It was agreed that people would send feedback through SWRPC.

Patrick Moreland commended Chris Ramage with the designs presented today. He appreciates the idea of having the path meander on the bridges and island.

Ed Smith said he likes what he sees and there is good potential here, but he wondered if part of the planning is to look into the maintenance of the design. Or is the care and maintenance meant to be taken up by a different committee at a later time? Patrick Moreland said that our task is to develop a vision and confirm that vision is enthusiastically supported by the public. In terms of who is going to own and maintain it, that is ultimately a decision based on negotiations made between the two States and two Towns. They may decide to put together another group of people to look into that issue. J. B. Mack added that although the Subcommittee is not tasked at this time to develop a plan for care and maintenance, he encourages them to think about the feasibility and reasonableness of the conceptual plan. He noted that the Subcommittee

includes experts on maintenance, including Mr. Barrett and Mr. Podlenski, and noted that it would be important for them to speak-up if they see something that is unrealistic or a maintenance problem, and steer us in a more appropriate direction or at least warn us that this will be difficult to maintain.

Sharron Smith said that she loved the plan, but noted that there is nothing in it that addresses the need for a restroom. She said that she thinks it's a big enough area that people may be there a length of time and may need access to a restroom. Chris Ramage agreed that was an important consideration and said that he has been thinking of a low-impact approach where traditional plumbing infrastructure isn't needed such as a composting toilet, or there could be provisions made for port-a-potties. She asked how far it is to the Brattleboro water and sewer. Steve Barrett said that there are water and sewer utilities available where the Whetstone Brewery is, and if Chris Ramage needs any more information he can contact the Brattleboro Public Works Department. He said you could potentially consider something seasonally that would be attached to the bridge structure. He also said that he will plan on making comments on maintenance and added that he thought the concept was great.

Robert Ryan said that they haven't really gotten into utilities, but along with plumbing another issue that the Subcommittee will need to grapple with is lighting. Should the island be lit? Should the trail going across the bridges and island be lit? He said that he and Chris Ramage are leaning toward recommending lighting for public safety purposes as well as access. He said that they can show that in future drawings but feedback on cost and maintenance on that topic will be helpful as well. Steve Barrett responded that just to be aware, with the new bridge, the Towns are looking at using solar lights so that might be another alternative for the existing bridges and island.

Kathryn Lynch offered to put Chris Ramage in touch with Frank Podlenski regarding maintenance and commented that she found the concept he presented very inspiring.

## **VI. Next Meeting**

J. B. Mack said that SWRPC is looking potentially at December 2, 2020 as the next public meeting on the project, which will be hosted by the Existing Bridges Subcommittee. The Subcommittee asked him to conduct a poll to determine the next date.

Kathy Urffer asked J. B. Mack to share any social media posts, press releases or any other communications regarding the public meeting so that people can spread the word about the event.

Kathryn Lynch noted that there were a few comments in the Zoom chat feature that she wanted to note before the meeting ended. She noted a comment from Kathy Urffer to not discount that there might be a nonprofit that would take on maintenance of the area, that it doesn't necessarily have to be the Towns. She also noted a comment from Jason Cooper about how Dan Hiler from Whetstone Brewery has expressed interest in investing in boat docking on the island.

## **VII. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 10:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

J. B. Mack  
Principal Planner

**To stay compliant with NH public meeting guidelines when using a remote meeting format, we are obliged to read the following script so please bear with us.**

### **AUTHORITY FOR CONDUCTING A MEETING ELECTONICALLY**

In **Emergency Order #12**, issued by the Governor of the State of New Hampshire pursuant to **Executive Order #2020-04**, certain provision of **RSA 91-A** regulating the operation of public body meetings have been waived during the declared COVID-19 State of Emergency.

Specifically:

The requirement that a quorum of a public body be physically present except in an emergency requiring immediate action under **RSA 91-A: 2, III (b)**;

The requirement that each part of a meeting of a public body be audible or otherwise discernible to the public at the location specified in the meeting notice as the location of the meeting under **RSA 91-A: 2, III (c)**.

Provided, however that the public body must:

Provide access to the meeting by telephone, with additional access possibilities by video or other electronic means;

Provide public notice of the necessary information for accessing the meeting;

Provide a mechanism for the public to alert the public body during the meeting if there are problems with access; and

Adjourn the meeting if the public is unable to access the meeting.

This meeting will be conducted using the online meeting platform, Zoom. The public may view the meeting online by going to **www.zoom.us/join** and enter the meeting ID: **898 2113 0967** passcode: **110 407**.

If you are unable to, or wish not to attend the meeting on line, you may call the toll free # **(888) 475-4499** and enter meeting ID: **898 2113 0967** to listen to the meeting.

If you are having trouble accessing the meeting, you may call **(603) 357-0557** for assistance.

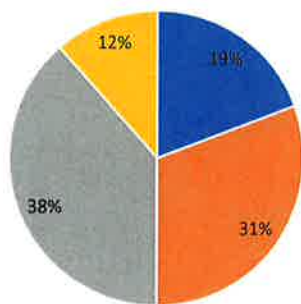
The meeting will now be called to order.

**Poll Results:**  
**Online Forum re: Reuse of Hinsdale  
Island and Existing Bridges**

October 15, 2020

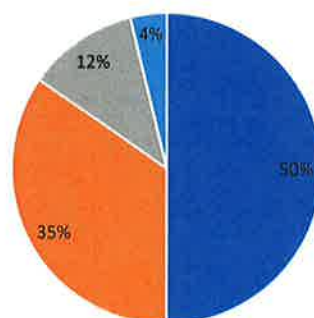


How important to you would it be for Hinsdale Island to provide ECONOMIC benefits to Hinsdale and Brattleboro residents and visitors?



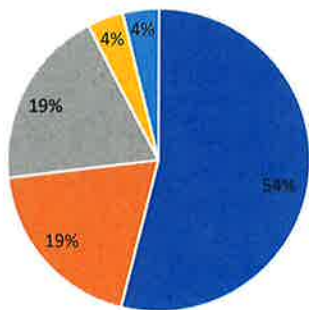
- Very Important
- Important
- Somewhat Important
- Not Important
- I don't know

How important to you would it be for Hinsdale Island to provide RECREATIONAL benefits to Hinsdale and Brattleboro residents and visitors?



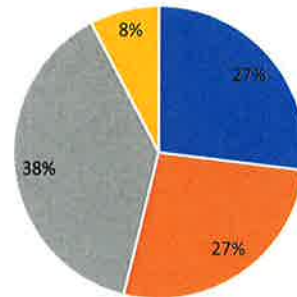
- Very Important
- Important
- Somewhat Important
- Not important
- I don't know

How important to you would it be for Hinsdale Island to provide ENVIRONMENTAL benefits to Hinsdale and Brattleboro residents and visitors?



- Very important
- Important
- Somewhat important
- Not important
- I don't know

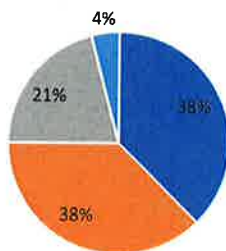
How important to you would it be for Hinsdale Island to provide CULTURAL benefits to Hinsdale and Brattleboro residents and visitors?



- Very important
- Important
- Somewhat Important
- Not Important
- I don't know

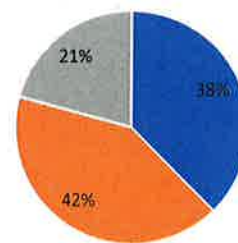
Please rate the following draft goals identified by the Existing Bridges Subcommittee for driving a future vision for the existing bridges and island area:

Goal 1: Strengthen area social and economic relationships between the two states and communities



- Very important
- Important
- Somewhat important
- Not important
- I don't know

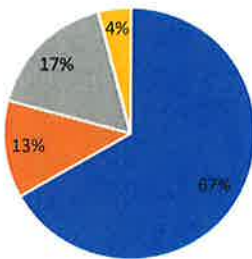
Goal 2: Promote active transportation (walking, bicycling, etc)



- Very important
- Important
- Somewhat important
- Not important
- I don't know

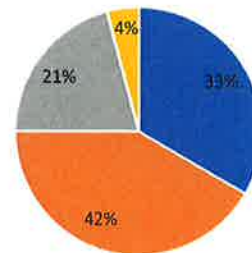
Please rate the following draft goals identified by the Existing Bridges Subcommittee for driving a future vision for the existing bridges and island area:

Goal 3: Enhance recreation opportunities and river access



- Very important
- Important
- Somewhat Important
- Not important
- I don't know

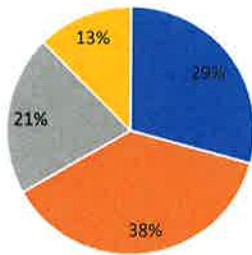
Goal 4: Preserve the integrity of natural, historical and cultural resources



- Very Important
- Important
- Somewhat important
- Not important
- I don't know

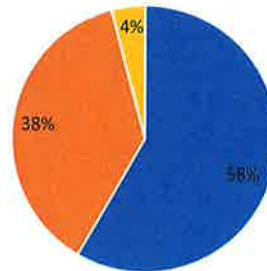
Please rate the following draft goals identified by the Existing Bridges Subcommittee for driving a future vision for the existing bridges and island area:

Goal 5: Conserve fiscal resources and minimize impact on local taxpayers



- Very important
- Important
- Somewhat important
- Not important
- I don't know

Goal 6: Ensure area is safe and clean



- Very important
- Important
- Somewhat important
- Not important
- I don't know

What experiences/activities do you think HINSDALE ISLAND should promote other than walking/bicycling/jogging? (choose up to 5 that you think are the most important)

If you have suggestions that aren't on this list, list them in the chat box.

swimming  
performance spaces  
art & culture  
boating  
playground  
wildlife & scenic viewing  
wildlife habitat  
fishing  
food & drink  
field activities

What experiences/activities do you think the BRIDGES should promote other than walking/bicycling/jogging? (choose up to 5 that you think are the most important)

If you have suggestions that aren't on this list, list them in the chat box.

performance space  
flowers & vegetation  
seating  
fishing  
wildlife & scenic views  
picnic tables  
art & culture



- ABOUT
- COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
- REGIONAL DATA & GIS
- FOOD PLANNING
- PLANNING REGULATION
- REGIONAL RECORDS
- TRANSPORTATION
- ADVISORY
- BROADBAND

WHAT'S NEW AT SWRPC



Due to the Public Health Emergency, SWRPC's physical offices are closed to the public. We remain available via telephone and email. Please call us at 603-357-0557 or click the "About", "Contact Staff" tab located in the upper left of this screen for a list of staff email addresses. Stay safe. Stay well.

[COVID-19 Resources Page](#)

[Monadnock Vital Economics](#)

[Video of Hinsdale Brattleboro Existing Bridges Forum Oct. 15, 2020](#)  
[Accompanying survey.](#)

[Plan for Assenonect rail trail: A Pilot Project](#)

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Home



Welcome to the Southwest Region Planning Commission Homepage. SWRPC is one of nine regional planning commissions in New Hampshire established under RSA 36. Our region covers a 34-town area in Cheshire, western Hillsborough, and Sullivan Counties.

Our Mission:

*"To work in partnership with the communities of the Southwest Region to promote sound decision-making for the conservation and effective management of natural, cultural and economic resources."*



Click on Town for More Information



**Existing Bridges and Hinsdale Island Project  
Revised Preliminary Schedule and Benchmarks**

*2020*

- Oct. 15- Public Involvement activity (conceptual ideas/public feedback)
- Oct. 28- Conceptual design development alternatives with presentation to client
- Nov. 6- Feedback on designs from Subcommittee/ agency staff to UMass
- Dec. 2 - Public Involvement activity (conceptual ideas/public feedback)
- Dec. 18- Final conceptual design plan with presentation to client

*2021*

- Jan. 8- Feedback on final conceptual master plan from Subcommittee/ agency staff to UMass
- Feb. 10- Grading plan, parking/access plans submitted to client.
- Feb. 26- Habitat restoration and vegetative management/planting plans submitted to client.
- March 3- Presentation to client of plans to date.
- March 19- Design details/construction schematics and conceptual lighting plans submitted.
- March 26- Preliminary cost estimate
- April 1- Final presentation to Subcommittee
- May 3- Any final revisions due to client