

**Quechee Gorge Bridge  
Public Information Meeting  
June 21, 2018  
Hartford Town Hall**

A public information meeting to review the Scoping Report on the Quechee Gorge Bridge was held on June 21, 2018 at 7 PM at Hartford Town Hall. Representatives from the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) project team included: JB McCarthy, Project Manager, Matt Langham, Regional Planning Coordinator, Jill Barrett and Cindy Cook, Public Outreach staff.

The purpose of the meeting was to provide an overview of the Scoping Report developed for the Quechee Gorge Bridge, a critical step in the VTrans project development process. This report examines existing conditions, preservation and maintenance needs and constraints, evaluates various alternatives and recommends a preferred approach to address needs. Also included in the report is a proposed plan on how to maintain traffic during project construction as well as a project schedule.

Project Manager JB McCarthy told the 25 members of the public in attendance that this meeting would provide an opportunity for comments and questions on the Scoping Report and voice concerns on VTrans' selected alternative to address improvements recommended in the Scoping Report.

The Quechee Gorge Bridge has been identified by VTrans as a "Forever Bridge" and it is VTrans' goal to keep the bridge in service as long as possible. The Scoping Report concluded the bridge is in overall satisfactory condition with some maintenance issues though it does not meet standards for shoulder and sidewalk widths. It also has elevated safety concerns as it is a high crash location, with a history of fatal falls from the bridge.

The recommended alternative would address all preventative maintenance options identified in the Scoping Report. This would include:

- Cleaning and painting the steel arch
- Replacement of deteriorated steel
- Bridge joint repair or replacement
- Bearing rehabilitation/replacement
- Partial deck replacement to the approximate limits of the 1972 deck
- Applying a deck membrane to prevent moisture penetration
- New bridge pavement
- Sidewalk reconstruction and widening to 5 feet
- Silane application to the substructures, new concrete sidewalks and fascias
- Slope stabilization
- Construction of a barrier to prevent pedestrian falls from the bridge

Traffic management during construction would include these options:

- Traffic lanes reduced to two 10-foot lanes with no shoulders. This would occur when a contractor reconstructed the sidewalk, partially replaced bridge deck and applied silane. Two lanes would be maintained during peak traffic hours to avoid long queues.

- Single lane travel on the bridge during off-peak hours to enable cleaning and painting the steel arch, replacement of deteriorated steel, bridge joint repair/replacement, bearing rehabilitation/replacement, and deck membrane and pavement application.
- Any lane closures should occur at night or during the day in between peak traffic volumes. Off peak lane closures are expected intermittently throughout construction.
- During construction trucks would be detoured around the project via Routes 5 and 12.
- Pedestrian access will be maintained at all times during construction.

JB McCarthy said funding has been secured for the project including the installation of a temporary safety fence to be installed this summer. VTrans intends to attach chain link fencing or a similar barrier to the existing bridge rail. This fence would have strategically placed cut-outs to allow unobstructed views for photography and viewing of the gorge. Full rehabilitation of the bridge is programmed to start in 2021. It will take two years to construct the project. In Year 1 the sidewalks and structural work will be completed. In Year 2 the bridge will be painted. The total cost is estimated to be \$6,506,00.

At the conclusion of the Scoping Report presentation the project team received many comments and responded to several questions. Comments from the public are in italics below. VTrans responses by Project Manager JB McCarthy are also noted.

### **Temporary Sidewalk Safety Fence**

*We have a history of where temporary becomes permanent. We'd like to think the public has a chance to require VTrans to tell us why a temporary fence will not be replaced.*

We understand your concerns. VTrans is committed to replacing the temporary barrier with a permanent one in 2021-22

*What is the budget for the temporary fence and how long will it take to be installed?*

\$170,000 has been allocated. It will take 2-3 weeks to install.

*Are there other options besides chain link that we could look at?*

We have not yet completed the research on fence options.

*Would you look at the fence installed at Ithaca that we were shown in a previous presentation?*

Yes. We will.

*Could a "window" in the fence run the length of the fence? Could windows be at different heights?*

We understand viewing is important and will consider that when we write specifications for the fence. We know that we have to carefully consider where openings would be located as we would not want them to be used as a ladder.

*Hartford's Emergency Response would like a panel in the temporary fence that can be removed.*

We will work with you on this.

*When might we be able to see material options for the temporary fence?*

Within the next couple of weeks.

*A fence of any color, except aluminum, would be fine.*

*I'd hate to see a delay while we look at options. September seems late.*

*Could we wait until after tourist season? November?*

*I appreciate the business side, wanting to wait on installing a temporary fence. As a parent who has lost someone, I hope businesses would consider another view.*

*I appreciate comments about urgency. As a local driving by when emergency vehicles are parked on the bridge, this is not a happy sight.*

*There have been three deaths since January and six people contemplating it.*

*Would VTrans install signs indicating the fence is temporary?*

Yes, we will consider that.

*I hope that you've heard us that we want you to install a barrier as soon as possible, and to do what you can to minimize the visual impact of the barrier, but our first priority is public safety. We'd like a barrier installed as soon as possible.*

Yes, we hear you, and appreciate your input.

### **Permanent sidewalk barrier**

*When will there be discussion about the permanent barrier?*

We believe the design consultant hired, Gill Engineering, will develop conceptual plans this fall.

*When we meet in the fall to review conceptual plans for a barrier will this be a fact gathering session?*

*We don't want to be told a decision has been made – this is it.*

The meeting in the fall will present all options developed to date along with VTrans' recommended option. A final decision will be made after considering public comment as well as reviewing all data.

### **Bridge Rehabilitation Project**

*How long do you expect the proposed work will extend the life of the bridge?*

We think this work will extend the life of the bridge another 30-40 years. The bridge membrane that will be used works very well. The concrete section in the middle is in very good condition. The bridge is very well anchored in ledge.

*What kind of chemicals are in the spray that will be used? I am concerned about airborne chemicals during application or if material later chips off and falls into the gorge.*

The major property of the material we'll apply is that it bonds very well. It will not chip off once applied. VTrans has a cut sheet with more information about the product we plan to use.

*Will you plan for increased load-bearing should a septic line be placed on the bridge? Right now, there is a water line on the bridge, but area businesses are on septic systems. Eventually a sewer line will come over the bridge.*

Thank you for that information.

*How does this project figure into the re-building of Route 4?*

I am not sure. The focus of our project is rehabilitating the bridge.

*In the Scoping Report it lists "2019 for Right-of-Way clearing." What does that mean?*

I do not know what you are referring to. The drawing that I showed earlier in the presentation indicates the project will be completely within state-owned property.

*Our gift shop is located just east of the bridge and I would like to know how the project will affect our property.*

We will meet with you to discuss.

### **Construction**

*Will this project take a full two years?*

It is planned for two construction seasons

*Could you work at night?*

That is an option. It is located in a business area and the only construction activity that would be noisy is drilling anchor posts.

*Will people be able to walk across the bridge during construction?*

Yes. We will provide a sidewalk on one side of the bridge throughout construction.

*What about road closures?*

We are not planning road closures. At off-peak times we may have one-lane traffic.

*Can do you the construction on off-peak times?*

Yes, but we are not sure what periods would be off-peak. Typically, we view morning and evening commuting hours as -peak travel time. Here the peak may be different considering tourism.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM.