

Hartford Bridges Project
Summary of Public Information Meeting
April 7, 2015
Bugbee Senior Center
262 No. Main Street
White River Junction
6:30 – 7:45 p.m.

A public meeting with project staff and construction contractor for the Vermont Agency of Transportation's (VTrans) Hartford Bridges Project was held on April 7, 2015 at the Bugbee Senior Center in White River Junction. Two I-91 highway bridges over U.S. Route 5 near exit 11 will be replaced. Accelerated bridge construction methods will be used to remove and replace the existing bridges over two weekends in late August.

Kristin Higgins, VTrans project manager said the purpose of the meeting was to give an overview of the project, describe the construction, traffic management plan and schedule, project outreach coordination as well as to provide the public an opportunity to give feedback and ask questions.

The two bridges that will be replaced were built in 1966, are comprised of three spans, totaling 200 feet. The structures have deteriorated and maintenance is both critical and costly. To improve safety, VTrans will widen both bridges by four feet, from 42 to 46 feet, and build one 128-foot single span bridge to eliminate the need for joints, reducing future maintenance costs. The southbound slip ramp to I-91 will be closed permanently and will set the stage for the Town of Hartford to install a sidewalk and bicycle lane on Route 5 in the vicinity of the bridges in the future.

Kristin Higgins explained the Slide-in Construction method that will be used for the Hartford Bridges Project and provided numerous illustrations to demonstrate how the slide would be performed. Beginning this spring, two new bridges will be built on temporary supports next to the existing bridges. At the same time, new abutments or supports will be built under the existing bridges. The new bridges will be built over Route 5 while motorists travel under them throughout construction. When the supports and new bridges are completed, VTrans will close and demolish each bridge on a separate weekend, slide the new bridge into place and open the bridge. For each bridge, one side of the interstate will be closed at 6 p.m. on a Friday evening and re-opened at 6 a.m. the following Monday morning.

The slide has been scheduled for the weekends of August 21 for the northbound bridge and August 28 for the southbound bridge. For the northbound bridge closure, traffic will be re-routed from the highway at exit 11 and cross Route 5 and re-enter I-91 at the northbound ramp on Route 5. For the southbound bridge closure, southbound I-91 through traffic would take the exit 11 I-91 southbound off-ramp and follow U.S. Route 5 south about 11 miles and re-enter I-91 at exit 9 in Hartland. During the daylight hours of the closure, uniformed traffic officers will be stationed at the intersection of VT Route 12 and U.S. Route 5 in Hartland. Southbound traffic headed for I-89 (about 4,500 vehicles) would take

the exit 12 I-91 to U.S. Route 5 south to U.S. Route 4 west. Vehicles would follow US Route 4 to I-89 Exit 1 and proceed north or south.

Kristin Higgins noted that the new traffic patterns that have been implemented on Route 5 in March were needed to provide a construction zone in which the contractor could work to construct the new bridges while at the same time allowing safe passage for everyone traveling along Route 5. The slip ramp to I-95 southbound was removed resulting in a single entrance to the highway at the existing entrance to the highway, west on U.S. Route 5. The slip lane at exit 11 for northbound traffic proceeding to Route 5 southbound was also removed. New, temporary traffic signals now control traffic at both on/off ramps to I-91 at Route 5. The project team will continue to monitor traffic flow on Route 5 and on the highway at Exit 11 and will adjust the timing of the traffic signals as needed.

Management of traffic during construction has been a key element of planning for the project. A Smart Work Zone system with sensors, video cameras and message boards has been set up at 25 locations on Route 5, I-91 and I-89, including I-89 in New Hampshire. The system is designed to sense when traffic is backing up and communicate to travelers via message boards placed at strategic locations that they should seek alternate routes to avoid congestion at Exit 11.

Jill Barrett, outreach coordinator for the project, said there would be proactive outreach, with numerous communication methods to stay in touch with the project throughout construction. She said that weekly construction updates are being sent to a stakeholder list and the media. The website will provide up to date project information including real-time video images of traffic conditions in the vicinity of Exit 11 northbound.

Meeting attendees asked questions and made comments throughout the meeting as indicated by italics below. Responses were made by the project team.

Will there be night work other than the closure weekends?

Yes. For example, we know that there will be night work during the week leading up to each bridge closure weekend. On Monday, (August 17) and Tuesday (August 18) nights we'll be milling asphalt off the northbound bridge decks. On Wednesday (August 19) we'll shut down one lane of the northbound bridge so we can begin demolition. The following weekend we'll have a similar schedule on the southbound bridge. There will also be night work activities such as setting beams for the new bridges, pouring concrete and other activities that would impede traffic during the day. Night work will be warned so motorists can make appropriate routing decisions.

Are you planning to work a 7 day schedule?

The construction schedule is for a six-day week (Monday -Saturday). However, unexpected elements may add more nights or Sunday work that is not currently anticipated.

Will you be rerouting traffic along the VA Road to keep it away from the Route 5 work zone?

No. We plan to keep Route 5 open in two directions during construction. If a mishap closes Route 5 for any reason uniformed officers will be posted to reroute traffic through any detours. The VA road may be used as a detour if Route 5 is closed unexpectedly.

The traffic light at Sykes Ave. and Route 5 is now causing dramatic back-ups for traffic trying to enter Route 5. It appears to be on a much shorter green cycle during rush hour. Can that be adjusted?
We'll definitely look into that by the end of the week.

Removing the slip ramp on to I-91 south will force more traffic into the single intersection to get on the highway. This will mean longer waits for traffic that needs to make the left turn to get on to this ramp. Is there any thought of making the temporary light a permanent one?

This is a town decision. Based on its earlier traffic studies it doesn't think one will be needed after construction. Removing the slip ramp eliminates a potential safety issue where the two ramps merge. It will also provide the space the town wants to add a sidewalk and bike lane in that area.

If there is an emergency in that area is there a way to get emergency vehicles through the work-zone quickly?

Yes. We've met numerous times with the emergency services team and they are comfortable that the current plan will work fine. The project should not result in any noticeable difference in response time. We have been told that emergency vehicles often prefer to use roads other than Route 5 to respond to emergencies.

Are there extra handouts we can have for hotel guests?

We are working on a special handout for hotel guests and these will be available soon.

If local people take other options that are not the official detour, will we find local roads too busy to cross?

We don't expect that to be a problem, but if there are local spots you encounter that are let us know and we'll see how we can address it.