

8.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND AGENCY COORDINATION

Throughout the environmental process, a number of meetings were held with federal and state resource agencies. Regular attendees included representatives from USACE, EPA, USFWS, FHWA, NHDOT, NHDES, NHFGD, and NHDHR. In addition to the meetings with the resource agencies, meetings were held with several Project-related groups, including a Local Advisory Oversight Committee, TAC, and CATF. Chapter 8 of the 2007 DEIS provides a detailed account of public involvement and agency coordination from Project inception through DEIS publication.

In support of the evaluation for this FEIS, NHDOT and FHWA held eight resource agency coordination meetings and three public information meetings.

8.1 Resource Agency Coordination Meetings

8.1.1 Cooperating and Participating Agencies

The initial agency coordination and the agency and public scoping process for this Project occurred during the preparation of the 2007 DEIS. NHDOT prepared an Agency Coordination Plan with the intent of the coordination process to allow federal and state agencies to provide input on the issues that will be examined as part of the EIS process (Appendix A). Invitations were sent to federal agencies, tribes, state agencies, and local agencies in October and November 2016. Table 8.1-1 includes the cooperating and participating agencies that accepted the invitation.

Table 8.1-1. Cooperating and Participating Agencies

Agency	Agency Type	Role
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Federal	Cooperating and Participating
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	Federal	Cooperating and Participating
New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services	State	Cooperating and Participating
New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources	State	Cooperating and Participating
U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service	Federal	Participating
Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission	Regional	Participating
New Hampshire Office of Strategic Initiatives	State	Participating
New Hampshire Department of Business and Economic Affairs	State	Participating
Town of Chester	Local	Participating

In accordance with 23 USC 139, the participating agencies were given multiple opportunities to review and comment on technical reports supporting the SDEIS and preliminary administrative drafts of the chapters of the SDEIS, and comments were considered and addressed by the lead agencies during development of the SDEIS. The Agency Coordination Plan (Appendix A) outlines the coordination points for SDEIS content, the primary objective of which was to identify and resolve important issues related to the evaluation of environmental impacts. As detailed in Appendix A, the participating agencies were given the statutory maximum 30 days to review and respond to each interim SDEIS submittal.

8.1.2 Agency Meetings

The Project team provided updates to the natural resources and cultural resources agencies on the development of the SDEIS on the following dates:

- Cultural Resources Agency Coordination Meetings
 - February 11, 2016
 - October 13, 2016
- Natural Resources Agency Coordination Meetings
 - February 17, 2016
 - October 19, 2016

Meeting notes from the cultural resources agency coordination meetings and the natural resources agency coordination meetings are published on NHDOT's website.²⁸

A kickoff meeting for the participating agencies was held on March 6, 2017, at which time consensus was reached on finalizing the Coordination Plan. Two technical working group meetings were held in spring 2017: one focused on wetland impacts and mitigation/Section 404 permitting issues, and one focused on water resources (including chloride/TMDL issues). A meeting was held with USACE and EPA on August 30, 2017, which focused on indirect effects and cumulative impacts and water quality (i.e., chloride). A meeting was held with USACE, EPA, and NHDES on March 15, 2019, which focused on indirect impacts to vernal pools and mitigation requirements.

In addition to the participating agency meetings listed above, two conference calls were held with EPA on August 30 and September 18, 2018, to discuss the result of the *Chloride Technical Report* and the indirect effects and cumulative impacts analysis.

8.2 Public Meetings

Public meetings were held on September 27, 2016; May 24, 2018; and July 25, 2018. All public meeting materials are provided on the Project website (see Section 8.3).

²⁸ Dates for all meetings are published on NHDOT's website (cultural resources meetings: <https://www.nh.gov/dot/org/projectdevelopment/environment/units/program-management/crmeetings.htm>; natural resources meetings: <https://www.nh.gov/dot/org/projectdevelopment/environment/units/project-management/nracrmeetings.htm>).

8.2.1 Public Information Meeting 1

Public information meeting 1 was held on September 27, 2016, at the Derry Municipal Center. The purpose of the meeting was to update the public on the status of the Exit 4A Project and receive feedback. The Project website was introduced. In addition to the Project schedule, the purpose and need for the Project, alternatives under consideration, and a summary of some of the environmental issues that would be evaluated and updated in the SDEIS were presented.

Public input during the open comment session included questions and concerns about increased traffic on Tsienneto Road, accidents on Tsienneto Road near Scenic Drive, accommodation of the rail trail, impacts to residences and businesses, Project costs, alternatives under consideration, water quality and chloride issues, the northern long-eared bat, and cumulative impacts.

8.2.2 Public Information Meeting 2

Public information meeting 2 was conducted on May 24, 2018, at the Derry West Running Brook Elementary School. The meeting included open-house style presentation of the plans for the Build Alternative alignments A, B, C, D, and F and evaluation matrix, and the public was invited to discuss their questions with members of the Project team. In addition, there was a PowerPoint presentation that consisted of an overview of the Project's origins through to the current timeline and presentation of the re-evaluation of the 2007 DEIS reasonable range of alternatives, which indicates no new information or circumstances that would warrant reconsideration of Alternative A being the preferred alternative. It was noted that the Project would have no westerly access to the local street network. This was a condition of the original approval from USDOT to allow a new interchange. After the presentation, the public was welcomed to ask questions and express their concerns. Questions and concerns voiced during the public meeting included the following topics: Project schedule and cost, truck traffic on NH 102, delays at signalized intersections evaluation of alternatives, water quality and flooding, accommodation of the planned rail trail, benefits (or lack thereof) to Derry, compliance with environmental commitments, meeting notifications and review of the SDEIS, and issues outside of the scope of the Project (e.g., NH 102 rotary and blasting during construction of I-93).

Hand-written comments and questions were received after the meeting. In addition to the concerns noted above, written comments included water and sewer on Tsienneto Road, opposition to the Project, the importance of the Granite State Rail Trail, impacts to specific properties, and requests for additional improvements (e.g., signalization) beyond the limits of the Project.

8.2.3 Public Information Meeting 3

A public information meeting for use of design-build procurement was held on July 25, 2018, at West Running Brook Middle School in Derry. The purpose of the meeting was to present the additional detailed information on the preferred alternative (Alternative A) and to inform the public on the potential use of design-build procurement for the Project.

The format was similar to the May 24, 2018, public information meeting in that there was an opportunity to informally review plans for the preferred alternative and to ask questions of the Project team. The presentation focused on (1) the update of the Exit 4A alternative selection process with a more detailed explanation of the preferred alternative, and (2) the NHDOT design-build process. Additionally, information was provided on the underpass to accommodate

the planned trail, the proposed reconstruction of the original gap sections along Tsienneto Road, which would include sidewalks, and I-93 sound walls.

An opportunity for public comments was provided during the meeting. Questions and concerns expressed by the public included the following: design-build process, schedule, advantages, liability, and quality; Project funding; increased traffic along Tsienneto Road and at Ross' Corner (NH 28/Folsom Road/Tsienneto Road intersection); acquisition of properties, including partial takes, easements, and eminent domain; negative economic impacts to downtown Derry; public review of studies in support of the SDEIS; the need for the Project; preferences for alternatives under consideration; changes in access to Tsienneto Road, Folsom Road, and Madden Road; and water quality.

8.2.4 Public Hearing

A joint public hearing on the design layout, SDEIS, and permit applications under Section 404 of the CWA and New Hampshire Wetland Rules was held on Wednesday, December 5, 2018, at the West Running Brook Middle School in Derry.

The hearing provided an opportunity for all interested parties to comment on the proposed project. Additionally, written comments were accepted at the meeting and accepted for up to 30 days after the hearing for inclusion in the official record. An opportunity for public comments and questions was also provided during the meeting. Members of the Project team were available to informally discuss the Project alternatives and impacts. The public comments received at the hearing and during the comment period along with responses are provided in Appendix M.

8.3 Consulting Parties

Section 106 of the NHPA offers individuals and organizations with a demonstrated interest in potential impacts to historic resources the opportunity to become more involved in an advisory role during project development as "consulting parties." Input was solicited by correspondence and during the public informational meetings. To date, four consulting parties are participating in Section 106 consultation: Mr. Chris McCarthy, property owner in Derry; Ms. Colleen Madden, property owner in Derry; Mr. Mark Connors, concerned citizen; and the Cowasuck Band of Pennacook-Abenaki People.

8.4 Project Website

The Project website (<http://www.i93exit4a.com/>) was established to provide the public with information throughout the development of the SDEIS and FEIS. In addition to providing notice of upcoming public involvement events, the website also provides background information on the Project and the SDEIS and FEIS process. The website serves as a repository for Project documents, including summaries of public meetings. The SDEIS was published on the website, and this FEIS will be published there as well.



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