



Preserving America's Heritage

January 11, 2011

Ms. Pamela S. Stephenson
Division Administrator
Federal Highway Administration
Massachusetts Division
55 Broadway, 10th Floor
Cambridge, MA 02142

Ref: *Proposed Replacement of the Mitchell River Drawbridge
Mass DOT Project File No. 603390
Chatham, Massachusetts*

Dear Ms. Stephenson:

Thank you for organizing and participating in the teleconference held on January 4, 2012 to discuss the referenced undertaking. Participants in the teleconference included representatives of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT), Friends of the Mitchell River Drawbridge, Chatham Historical Commission, the Chatham Board of Selectmen, Pease Boat Works, Indiana Historic SPANS Task Force, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Historic Bridges Foundation, and individual consulting parties George Myer and Dr. James Cooper.

The teleconference was productive and appreciated by all parties as it helped to clarify the objections of consulting parties to the draft Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) based on Alternative 3, the preferred alternative. It was useful to hear responses from MassDOT and FHWA to the expressed concerns. We were able to identify the major issues that FHWA should consider in finalizing the MOA. This letter provides a summary of what we understand to be FHWA's next steps.

As a result of the discussion, it appears that additional modifications to the proposed design would help to improve the appearance of Alternative 3. Further design work was recommended with the goal of building a new bridge with a similar appearance to the existing wooden structure. We do not propose a replica of the existing drawbridge, but a new bridge that is compatible with the existing context; serves the transportation needs of the community; and is sensitive to the request from other consulting parties to retain as much wood as possible in the new structure. If MassDOT would go on record reaffirming its position with regard to the use of wood pilings, focusing on maintenance, materials, and long-term costs to the town of Chatham, all parties would be clear about how this project was developed to address the public interest.

ADVISORY COUNCIL ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION

1100 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Suite 803 • Washington, DC 20004
Phone: 202-606-8503 • Fax: 202-606-8647 • achp@achp.gov • www.achp.gov

We understand that FHWA and MassDOT are willing to consider modifications related to aesthetics and possible cladding of the concrete pier caps in Alternative 3. Paul Brandenburg of the Indiana SPANs Task Force noted that a simulation of Option 2 in a March 10, 2010 newsletter hides a majority of the concrete in the structure. This provides FHWA with an example of how the design can expose less concrete. This and other aesthetic treatments could significantly improve the appearance of the new bridge from the perspective of many of the consulting parties.

In order to allow the project to move forward, FHWA has agreed to provide consulting parties with minutes of the meeting, and to revise the draft MOA to allow further involvement of consulting parties as the design proceeds to final (i.e., design review of the aesthetic treatments and cladding for piers and abutments to minimize the exposure of concrete and steel). In addition, FHWA will include a stipulation to require the re-evaluation of the National Register eligibility of the bridge, once completed, to determine if it retains its historic significance. The ACHP supports these changes and looks forward to reviewing the revised draft MOA. It appears that the MOA could be finalized shortly after circulating the new draft, thereby allowing the Town to secure funding for this project. It was generally agreed that the Town needs a new, context sensitive, structurally sound crossing that does not deplete local funds required to maintain it over the years.

We appreciate FHWA scheduling the call and look forward to working with you to complete the Section 106 process for this undertaking. If you have any questions or require further assistance, feel free to contact me at 202-606-8533 or Carol Legard, our FHWA Liaison, at 202-606-8503 or clegard@achp.gov.

Sincerely,



Charlene Dwin Vaughn, AICP
Assistant Director
Federal Permitting, Licensing, and Assistance
Office of Federal Agency Programs