



*Town Of Chatham  
Historical Commission*



TOWN ANNEX 261 GEORGE RYDER ROAD CHATHAM, MA 02633  
TELEPHONE (508) 945-5168 FAX (508) 945-5163

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

February 9, 2012

RE: Mitchell River Bridge  
Chatham, Massachusetts

Dear Ms. Stephenson:

This will acknowledge receipt of your email and letter of January 26<sup>th</sup> enclosing a revised draft Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) and your request for comments by all consulting parties, including our Commission.

We have carefully examined your letter and the revised MOA and, with all due respect, we are unable to agree with your conclusions and with the substance of the proposed MOA:

- While we appreciate your efforts in preparing and conducting the teleconference of January 4<sup>th</sup>, the actual results of the meeting were quite minimal. Most importantly, and notwithstanding the strong recommendations of the Advisory Council to move toward Alt. 1B or at least a "hybrid" bridge that would involve more wood than what is included within Alt. 3, you have continued to support Alt. 3 as the "preferred alternative".
- The revisions which you refer to in the draft MOA are very few, including only limited discussion with MassDOT regarding "possible" replacement of the concrete caps with wooden caps. Since we regard the caps as more than "aesthetic details", we are unable to agree that comments which can be made by us and other consulting parties at the public meetings are sufficient to bring about a real dialogue on this important item.
- From the outset of the Section 106 process, one of our primary concerns has been to maintain the National Register eligibility of the Mitchell River Bridge. We disagree that the rebuilding of the entire Bridge would somehow remove it NR status, especially if the replacement bridge was rebuilt as an all-timber bridge in accordance with the same design and pattern as we have had at this site in Chatham for over the last hundred years. Your offer to "support" a new National Register application ---- following completion of the rebuilt bridge with a steel leaf, steel floor beams, and concrete-and-steel pilings (Alt. 3) – would be insufficient if the Keeper were to rule that Alt. 3 did not qualify, since we would then be unable to correct that result.

- We continue to believe that further serious consultation should take place with respect to using wooden pilings made from foreign hardwoods (i.e. greenheart) which are able to last well beyond your estimate of 20-30 years for other woods and which will avoid higher replacement costs and possible environmental issues.

For these and other reasons, we are unable to sign onto the proposed MOA as a consulting party. We would urge you to reconsider your views and, if necessary, bring all parties together at another consulting parties' meeting where true give-and-take can occur that will bring us all closer together toward an agreement that we and other consulting parties can accept.

Respectfully submitted,

*Donald Aikman* 

Donald Aikman  
Vice-Chairman  
Chatham Historical Commission