



To the Citizens of the Upper Valley:

The New Hampshire Department of Transportation, as lead agency, and Vermont Agency of Transportation are aware of considerable discussion regarding a current construction project to rehabilitate the bridge carrying East Thetford Road over the Connecticut River between the Towns of Lyme, New Hampshire and Thetford, Vermont. The concerns have ranged from surprise over the project's existence and requests that pedestrian facilities be added to this historic bridge, to dissatisfaction with the construction traffic control and displeasure that the bridge is being rehabilitated rather than replaced.

The project has been developed jointly by our agencies over the last decade in order to address the structural condition of the bridge and maintain a structurally sound crossing over the Connecticut River. It has been advanced based on the Federal Highway Administration's requirements, including evaluation through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, Section 4(f) of the US DOT Act of 1966 and 23 CFR 774, among other State and Federal regulations. As part of the NEPA process, multiple public meetings were conducted, in which members of both Towns participated.

The bridge, along with other adjacent properties, has been determined to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. This eligibility means that NHDOT and VTTrans must comply with the requirements of Section 4(f) of the US DOT Act of 1966 and 23 CFR 774. The project is required to minimize impacts to eligible properties and to select the alternative that is least impacting to these properties. In this case, it has been determined that it is feasible and prudent to rehabilitate the structure, and that is the action being constructed.

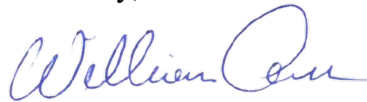
We recognize the concerns of the citizens that will be impacted by the closure of the bridge crossing during its rehabilitation. It is never possible to satisfy all parties as part of a project solution and counter all the potential negative consequences with the construction. However, the decisions for this project reasonably balance the competing interests in the most feasible and reasonable manner within the fiscal, legal, and environmental constraints. We stand by these decisions and reconfirm the determination to rehabilitate the bridge, which will soon get underway.

The bridge is already weight restricted and delay will further compromise its condition. Without completion of this project, the bridge will continue to deteriorate until such time that it cannot safely carry vehicles and must be closed to all traffic, both vehicular and non-motorized. Once this occurs it would remain closed until such time that new funding can be allocated by both States and it can move through the project development process for a second time. This crossing could be closed for the better part of a decade, or longer, after which it may be difficult for the

States to prioritize investment of limited financial resources in what has historically been a low-use local crossing. Further, depending on the location of deterioration, it is possible that rehabilitation could still remain feasible at this later time and therefore would still be required to be the selected alternative under Section 4(f).

As previously noted, this project has been developed in accordance with all applicable regulations and to utilize the funding available to our States most efficiently in addressing the many transportation needs across the States of New Hampshire and Vermont. In the end, this project will provide a safe, reliable, continued crossing of the Connecticut River between Lyme and Thetford that protects and maintains the historic character of the area to serve the transportation and mobility needs of the region for years to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "William Cass".

William Cass, P.E.
Commissioner
New Hampshire Department of Transportation

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joe Flynn".

Joseph Flynn
Secretary
Vermont Agency of Transportation