

**LACONIA CITY COUNCIL AGENDA  
MAY 23, 2022**

**STAFF REPORT  
AGENDA ITEM 22.A.  
FUTURE OF THE WOOD BRIDGE OVER THE RAILROAD TRACKS ON  
CENTENARY AVENUE**

**Discussion:** NH Department of Transportation (DOT) has provided a draft of the agreement (attached) for the City Council's consideration of NH DOT's proposal to rehabilitate the wood bridge over the railroad tracks on Centenary Avenue. This agreement is dependent upon the City accepting the bridge as part of the City's road system. Under this proposal all future maintenance, repair and replacement will be the responsibility of the City after the bridge has been rehabilitated.

NH DOT will fund 100% of the project's participating costs, to include design costs, using Federal fiscal year 2025 funds. However, the City (the project's sponsor in the agreement) is responsible for managing the design and the construction of the project.

Under this draft agreement the ownership of the wood bridge will be transferred to the City once NH DOT has accepted the bid proposal and issued a notice to proceed to construction.

NH DOT has programmed \$1,280,623.54 for the project. If during the design process the City determines the cost of the project will exceed the budget, then the City must request additional funding before proceeding further with the process.

The following issues impact the design, rehabilitation, operations and maintenance of the bridge due to it being over an active rail line:

- Due to federal regulations requiring 22 feet of clear space above the tracks, proximity of adjacent buildings, and the area's topography, very little change can be made to the steep approaches to the bridge. After the bridge is rehabilitated, it will still only be suitable for use in the summer due to the steep approaches.
- The rehabilitation project will be subject to Section 106 of the Federal National Historic Act.
- All work in the railroad right of way to include maintenance will require a temporary use agreement with NH DOT rail.
- The only time major work on the bridge can be done without hiring a flagger from the railroad company is when the railroad is not operating, which is from November 1st to April 1st. The City will have to hire a flagger from the railroad company to be with the work crew any time the crew is in the right of way outside of that period. Late March through May and October through December are Public Work's busiest times of the year as we are working on one season's "projects/tasks" while we are trying to get ready for the next season.

Based on a discussion with NH DOT's bridge maintenance division manager, the City can expect the following costs for maintaining the wood bridge in the future. For many years NH DOT has only been doing minimal maintenance to keep it safe to use until its removal date. If the bridge will remain in service, I expect that the City will have to maintain it to a higher standard. Thus, the City may have higher maintenance costs than NH DOT's.

- NH DOT's bridge crew did some significant work on the bridge in 2017 and 2021. They mainly replaced deck boards. The work in 2021 took 200 person-hours and cost \$10,000 in materials. One of the major problems they face in maintaining a wood bridge is when they replace deck boards. If the condition of the stringers on the bridge is poor, their maintenance crew has a hard time finding good wood for the screws/nails that attach the deck boards to the stringers.
- Based on NH DOT's experience, a wood bridge deck that is plowed and treated over the winter will last 10 years before the whole deck needs to be replaced. The State's Bridge Maintenance Manager believes that if we do not plow or treat the deck during the winter, we may be able to get 20 years out of a deck. Current cost for just the pressure treated lumber to re-deck the bridge is ~\$50,000.
- Individual boards will still have to be replaced during this period due to rot and other issues. We will probably spend about \$2,500 per year replacing boards on the bridge. Public Works spends at least this much each year maintaining the wood section of the boardwalk.

Public Works annually is not allocated enough funds to maintain the City's existing bridges. Another source of funds will be necessary to maintain the wood bridge if it is accepted to be part of the City's road network.

**Fiscal Impact:**

All participating costs for the rehabilitation project will be funded by NH DOT. Public Works anticipates that it will cost approximately \$2500 (in FY 2022 dollars) annually to maintain the wood bridge.

**Staff Recommendation:**

Staff recommends that the City Council approve the agreement and authorize the City Manager to sign the Federal Aid Project Agreement for the Bridge.

**This report submitted by:** Wesley B. Anderson, Director of Public Works

**Proposed motion:**

*"I move that the City Council approve accepting the Wood Bridge over Centenary Avenue upon NH DOT's acceptance of the rehabilitation project's bid proposal and NH DOT's notice to proceed with the construction process. I further move that the City Council approve the Federal Aid Project Agreement for the Project # 24181, the project to rehabilitate the wood bridge on Centenary Avenue, and authorize the City Manager to sign the agreement."*