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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 7, 2025

Executive Councilor Janet Stevens District Report - Infrastructure

The New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) is finalizing engineering and design plans to install median cable barriers along a five-mile stretch of I-95, from the Hampton Toll Plaza to the Portsmouth Rotary (Mile Marker 8 to Mile Marker 13), which is part of a critical safety initiative prompted by a series of median crossover accidents in 2024, including three in October that resulted in three fatalities and multiple, serious injuries.

Since 2018, New Hampshire's 16-mile stretch of I-95 has seen over 1,700 non-fatal accidents.

Project Scope and Cost

- Length: 5 miles
- Estimated Cost: \$2.5 to \$3 million
- Funding: Partially supported by Highway Safety Improvement Funds
- Originally scoped as a four-mile project with a \$2 million estimate, the plan was expanded after a comprehensive review of traffic data and median design considerations.

Following two devastating median crossover crashes on October 16 and October 23, 2024, I called for a meeting with NHDOT Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner and Safety Engineers. During the conference call I emphasized the urgent need for enhanced safety measures along I-95 and noted the Department of Transportation's use of a dated guidance study - *2011 AASHTO Roadside Design Guide* - **which deemed barriers optional for medians wider than 50 feet with daily traffic below 20,000 vehicles.**

However, after reviewing NHDOT's Traffic Data Management System, **I noted that recent Average Annual Daily Vehicle Traffic on I95 exceeded 96,000 vehicles per day. Even with median widths along this route 53'-73' - data and current engineering studies support either median cable or metal beam barriers within the swales of I95. Given the high traffic volume, excessive speeding and recent tragedies, barriers in this area are essential, not optional.** This project will significantly enhance safety on one of New Hampshire's busiest highways.

As a result of discussions with NHDOT following these accidents, it was agreed that intermediate and midterm roadway safety improvements were needed. Less than 48 hours after discussions an increased State Police presence and use of radar technology went into effect on I95. Delineation poles were installed at certain segments of I-95 within five days. **The New Hampshire State Police have issued 471 speeding citations since that time and continue to implement weekly safety saturations.**

Project Timeline

- January 2025: Finalize engineering designs and bid packages
- March 2025: Advertise the project
- Spring 2025: Review bids, award contracts, and seek Governor and Executive Council approval
- June 2025: Anticipated start of construction

Challenges - the project faces several technical challenges:

- **Overhead Bridges:** Placement of barriers near bridge piers requires detailed engineering solutions
- **Emergency Median Access Points:** There are currently five emergency access points being evaluated for possible closure in consultation with state and local law enforcement and first responders. These gaps are further complicated by close proximity to bridge piers.

- **Railroad Bridge Decks:** Tailored solutions are needed for existing concrete barriers and earth berms on the bridge deck of the rail line (Portsmouth/Greenland)
- **Environmental and Drainage Reviews:** Ongoing assessments ensure compliance with environmental standards and effective drainage systems.

Future Expansion

Preliminary discussions are underway for a second phase to install median barriers on the southern portion of I-95, from the Massachusetts border to the Hampton Toll Plaza. This project is tentatively scheduled for FY 2027, pending funding and schedule considerations. Preliminary engineering and design has not commenced.

Commitment to Safety

This project exemplifies NHDOT's commitment to traveler safety and proactive infrastructure planning. The installation of these barriers is a critical step in preventing future tragedies and ensuring safer travel for all motorists on I-95. Further updates will be provided as the project advances through each phase.

Rockingham County Infrastructure Recommended Projects for State's Draft Ten-Year Transportation Improvement Plan

The **Rockingham Regional Planning Commission (RRPC)** has identified and prioritized key infrastructure projects for inclusion in the **State's Draft Ten-Year Transportation Improvement Plan**. These two infrastructure projects are critical for improving safety, capacity, and traffic flow across the region and were presented at the November 13, 2024, RRPC meeting in Portsmouth.

Dave Walker and the RRPC leadership have demonstrated outstanding diligence, evaluating 10 crucial infrastructure projects in a process that began in **Summer 2024**. Preliminary construction budgets for the two prioritized projects is **\$5.5 million** with probable costs estimated at **\$8,055,824** (accounting for a 3.7% inflation rate through 2035). Recommendations are now under review by the **New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT)**, with findings expected by **January or February 2025**.

Projects Proposed for Inclusion

1. NH 125 at South Road Safety Improvements – Brentwood, NH

- Following a **Road Safety Audit (RSA)** in August 2023, intermediate improvements, including dedicated left-turn lanes, were implemented in July 2024.
- **Proposed Long-Term Solution:** Construction of a single-lane roundabout (150' inscribed diameter) with raised medians on roadway approaches for traffic calming and channelization.
- **Cost Estimate:** Current estimate \$2,815,000 with probable cost of \$4,200,000 (adjusted for inflation to 2035).
- **Benefits:** Enhanced traffic flow, improved safety, and reduced collision risks.

2. NH 121A at North Avenue Improvements – Plaistow, NH

- Based on the **Main Street Traffic Calming Plan** (initiated in 2011), a single-lane roundabout (140' inscribed diameter) is recommended as a gateway feature to address capacity and safety.
- **Cost Estimate:** Current estimate \$2,726,000 with probable cost of \$4,100,000 (adjusted for inflation to 2035).
- **Benefits:** Increased intersection capacity, traffic calming, and support for the Main Street Corridor as a community hub.

3. ALTERNATE: - NH 33 at Bayside Road and Winnicutt Road Capacity Improvements – Greenland, NH

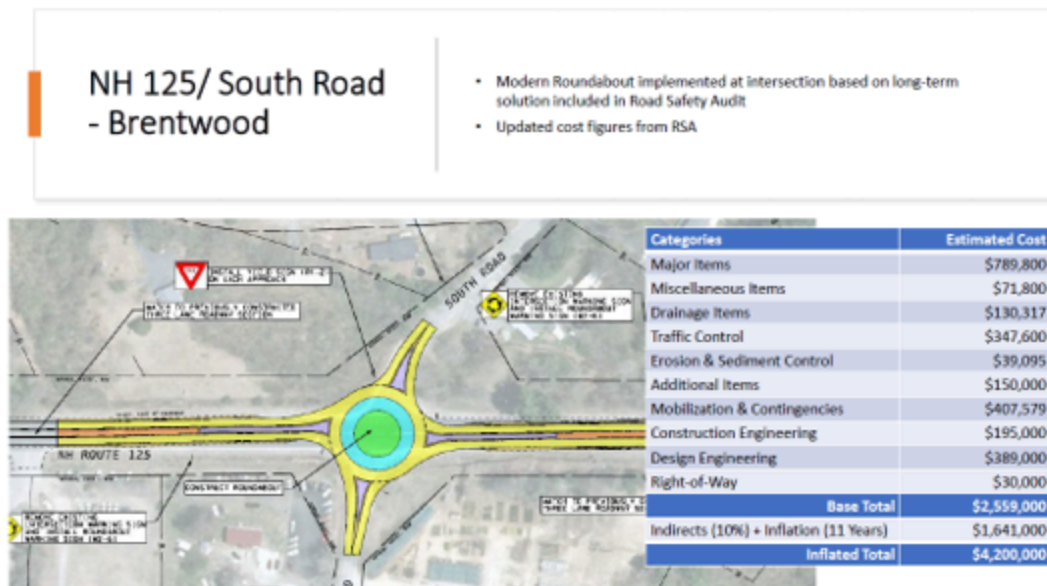
- Updated from a 2020 engineering study, the preferred alternative is a **5-lane signalized intersection**, addressing significant delays and congestion.
- Proposed Features:**
 - 2,000 linear feet of roadway widening with:
 - Two 12' travel lanes.
 - 11' left-turn lanes in each direction.
 - 8' shoulders and a 5.5' sidewalk.
 - Bridge Replacement** Over the Winnicut River to address traffic safety and congestion, pedestrian safety, structural (bridge base narrow) and NH Department of Environmental Services restoration goals.
 - Traffic signal upgrades with ADA-compliant pedestrian equipment.
 - Stormwater BMPs for enhanced drainage and environmental protection.
- Cost Estimate: Preliminary** Current estimate \$10,404,000 with probable cost range of \$15,000,000 to \$18,000,000 (adjusted for inflation to 2035)
- Benefits:** Improved capacity, reduced delays, and a safer, more pedestrian-friendly intersection.

Next Steps and Public Involvement

- NHDOT Review.** Engineering, design, and cost review of the projects submitted by the RPC is in progress with findings expected in early January-February 2025.
- Ten Year Plan - Governor's Advisory Commission on Intermodal Transportation (GACIT Hearings)** As a member of GACIT I will be conducting hearings throughout the District from September-October 2025 to gather public feedback on the proposed Draft Ten Year Transportation Plan. I encourage all residents to attend and testify on the proposed projects under consideration for inclusion in the plan.
- Public engagement will be critical for securing placement in the final Ten-Year Plan and can potentially accelerate project construction start dates.

Brentwood Proposal Schematic

Below is a conceptual image of the **NH 125 at South Road** intersection improvements, showcasing the proposed roundabout design:



Main Street/ North Ave - Plaistow

- Main Street (NH 121A) carries approximately 7,700 AADT on average while North Avenue carries 8,400 AADT. Truck traffic and speeding are a concern on the roadway
- Construct 140' diameter roundabout (Conservative Approach)
- Predicted operation at LOS A/B during peak hours at design year (2053)



Categories	Estimated Cost
Major Items	\$665,344
Miscellaneous Items	\$99,802
Drainage Items	\$191,286
Traffic Control	\$291,500
Erosion & Sediment Control	\$57,386
Additional Items	\$170,000
Mobilization & Contingencies	\$391,532
Construction Engineering	\$187,000
Design Engineering	\$281,000
Mitigation	\$0
Right-of-Way	\$140,000
Base Total	\$2,478,000
Indirects (10%) + Inflation (11 Years)	\$1,622,000
Inflated Total	\$4,100,000

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Executive Councilor Janet Stevens of Rye represents the 266,000 residents living in District Three, which encompasses the cities and towns of - Atkinson, Brentwood, Chester, Danville, Derry, E. Kingston, Epping, Exeter, Fremont, Greenland, Hampstead, Hampton, Hampton Falls, Kensington, Kingston, New Castle, Newfields, Newington, Newmarket, Newton, No. Hampton, Pelham, Plaistow, Raymond, Rye, Salem, Sandown, Seabrook, So Hampton, Stratham, Windham and the City of Portsmouth.

Thank you,

Caity Bean

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