



THE STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION



Victoria F. Sheehan
Commissioner

William Cass, P.E.
Assistant Commissioner

September 21, 2016

Durham Town Council
Attn. Ms. Gail Jablonski
Administrator (Acting), Town of Durham, NH
8 Newmarket Road
Durham, NH 03824

Re: Resolution #2016-11 of Durham, New Hampshire

Dear Ms. Jablonski:

This correspondence responds to **Resolution #2016-11 of Durham, New Hampshire** passed and adopted on August 15, 2016 which questions the necessity of guardrail and requests a 5-foot minimum shoulder in guardrail areas from Newmarket to Durham as part of the Durham-Newmarket 13080 series of State construction projects.

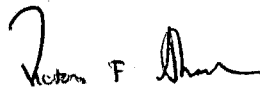
As part of the overall Durham-Newmarket project improvements, a corridor wide review of roadside safety was performed. Accordingly, this section of the NH108 corridor was evaluated during the final design effort and guardrail warrants were established in multiple areas to protect vehicles from roadside hazards such as culvert headwalls, steep slopes and standing water. The "Flats" presented a relatively uncommon hazard condition, seasonal standing water of significant depth, but one that also required protection, thus extending the warrant for guardrail. In general, the Department would prefer to not install guardrail along roadways, as guardrail in itself is a hazard and introduces additional maintenance responsibilities. Guardrail installations were minimized to the extent possible.

One of the goals for the project was to widen the roadway to improve safety for all modes while minimizing impacts to private property and environmental resources. Each project has a unique set of circumstances that must be resolved during design. In many cases, it may not be practical to deliver a design that meets every design guideline. The ultimate solution should consider all guidelines and balance the benefits of one against the negative impacts of another. The Department believes the final product in this particular case did just that. It provides a wider, safer, roadway when compared to the existing conditions (30 feet of pavement vs. 22 feet) while limiting the overall footprint of the project by constructing eleven foot travel lanes and four foot wide shared use shoulders.

The Department does acknowledge the perceived narrowness where guardrail is present and has modified the guardrail layout to provide five foot clear shoulder width in multiple locations. We will provide this five foot offset when installing the remaining runs of guardrail on both the A and B projects. This modification maintains a maximum overall pavement width of 30 feet throughout the corridor.

The Department is confident that this much anticipated project will significantly improve safety for all modes of travel while maintaining the natural New Hampshire character of the NH Route 108 corridor for future generations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Victoria F. Sheehan".

Victoria F. Sheehan
Commissioner

RJG/rjg

cc: Peter Stamnas, Director of Project Development
Brian Schutt, District 6 Maintenance Engineer
Nickie Hunter, District Construction Engineer
Ronald Grandmaison, Project Manager

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RESOLUTION #2016-11 OF DURHAM, NEW HAMPSHIRE

DIRECTING THE ACTING TOWN ADMINISTRATOR TO REQUEST THE NEW HAMPSHIRE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (NHDOT) DEMONSTRATE WHY THE INSTALLATION OF GUARDRAILS ON ITS PROJECT "DURHAM-NEWMARKET 13080" ARE NECESSARY AND, IF NEEDED, WHY THEY DO NOT MEET THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF STATE HIGHWAY TRANSPORTATION OFFICIALS' (AASHTO) GUIDELINE OF A 5-FOOT MINIMUM DISTANCE BETWEEN EDGE OF TRAVEL LANE AND FACE OF GUARDRAIL TO CREATE A SAFE BICYCLE FACILITY TO MEET THE STATED PROJECT PURPOSE AND THAT NHDOT RECOMMEND ONE OR MORE SOLUTION(S) TO ATTAIN SAID 5-FOOT MINIMUM.

WHEREAS, The NHDOT project titled Durham-Newmarket 13080 is finally underway nearly 20 years after it was initiated (in 1998) and is welcomed by the Town; and

WHEREAS, In NHDOT Project Manager Ronald Grandmaison's PowerPoint presentation to the Town Council on October 2, 2012, a slide titled "Project Background and Need" lists among its first points: "Route 108 is a critical link in the Seacoast MPO bike network, and heavily used by the UNH bike community"; and

WHEREAS, In an informational meeting held at the Durham Town Hall on January 6, 2015, Project Manager Ronald Grandmaison stated at the outset, "It is imperative that we get these shoulders out there, so that it's a little safer, a lot safer, especially for bicyclists, for pedestrians, and for the road users"; and

WHEREAS, The AASHTO (American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials) "Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities," 2012 edition, states that, "Shoulder width of at least 5 ft (1.5 m) is recommended from the face of a guardrail, curb, or other roadside barrier to provide additional operating width, as bicyclists generally shy away from a vertical face." [Chapter 4: Design of On-Road Facilities, 4.5 Paved Shoulders]

WHEREAS, The United States Department of Transportation *Policy Statement on Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodation Regulations and Recommendations*, signed on March 11, 2010 and announced March 15, 2010, states in its Purpose, "...DOT encourages transportation agencies to go beyond the minimum requirements, and

proactively provide convenient, safe, and context-sensitive facilities that foster increased use by bicyclists and pedestrians of all ages and abilities, and utilize universal design characteristics when appropriate"; and

WHEREAS, Guardrails were recently installed along Rte. 108 in the first portion of Project 13080 (Part A) that create only a four-foot distance between edge of travel lane and face of guardrail; and

WHEREAS, Seasoned bicyclists and others, including the Durham Energy Committee, have expressed concern that the guardrail as installed south of Bennett Road introduces a new safety hazard on the corridor, reducing the effective width of the shoulder and margin of safety for all road users in an area where right-of-way and adjacent slopes would otherwise support safe width per the AASHTO standards; and

WHEREAS, the Durham Town Council has adopted as a goal "Strengthen the community and enhancing its social capital by ... developing initiatives that promote public transportation options and ensure safe walking and biking."

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Durham Town Council, the governing body of the Town of Durham, New Hampshire, hereby approves Resolution #2016-11 directing the Acting Town Administrator to request the New Hampshire Department of Transportation demonstrate why the installation of guardrails on its Project Durham-Newmarket 13080 are necessary and, if needed, why they do not meet the AASHTO (American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials) guideline of a 5-foot minimum distance between edge of travel lane and face of guardrail to create a safe bicycle facility to meet the stated project purpose and that NHDOT recommend one or more solution(s) to attain said 5-foot minimum.

PASSED AND ADOPTED 15th day of August, 2016 by a unanimous vote of the Durham Town Council with 6 voting in favor, 0 voting against and 0 abstaining.

Katherine Marple, Chairman
Durham Town Council

ATTEST:

Lorrie Pitt, Town Clerk