

## SECTION 1. INTRODUCTION

In 2006, the Lakes Region Planning Commission (LRPC) identified the NH Route 28 corridor as a regional priority for study based on existing traffic volume, development potential, and regional importance. In consultation with the towns of Alton and Barnstead, the LRPC applied for funding from the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) to conduct a safety audit. While the need was acknowledged, it was recommended by the grant evaluation committee that the inclusion of additional communities in the corridor would enhance the proposal. In 2008, the LRPC and Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission (CNHRPC) re-applied as joint applicants and were awarded funding to conduct this NH Route 28 Corridor Safety Study. This study examines the 24-mile stretch of NH Route 28 from the Alton traffic circle south to the Epsom/Pembroke town line.

Supporting the need for this study are the following facts:

- ❑ The corridor has experienced a 30 percent traffic volume increase from 1997 to 2006 (at the Barnstead/Pittsfield town line).
- ❑ Traffic generators include a high level of urban commercial, residential, and employment center activity from the city of Concord, local employers, area second homes, summer tourism, and winter sports in the North Conway and Mount Washington Valley.
- ❑ According to the NHDOT Transportation Improvement Plan 2007-2016: Moderate to high congestion is experienced throughout the corridor, with Level of Service (LOS) diminished to ratings of E (unstable traffic flow) & F (forced or a breakdown in traffic flow) in the southern stretch near the Epsom traffic circle.
- ❑ The Lakes Region Transportation Plan 2008 identifies east-west corridors as leading transportation planning priorities, and NH Route 28 as a “Lifeline Corridor” having critical importance for the state and the region.

NHDOT encourages the use of corridor studies to generate more involvement and greater insight of community values and views relating to the maintenance and improvement of state transportation routes. This cooperative approach requires consideration for the multitude of users; local residents, business owners, seasonal visitors to the area, and through traffic. The intent of the NH Route 28 Corridor Safety Study is to assess current conditions, identify potential safety improvements, assess potential future safety and land use issues, and outline practical land use strategies that can be implemented at the local level.

The services of Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. (VHB) were used in the development of conceptual and pre-engineering safety improvements. VHB staff provided assistance in the prioritization of safety concerns, identification of near-term and long-term improvements, the production of project specific graphics, and the development of preliminary safety improvement cost estimates. While the graphics are

suitable for planning purposes and not intended to represent final solutions, the potential projects could be considered for future implementation, and the cost estimates will be useful in budgeting discussions.

In addition to safety improvements, this study explores the link between land use and transportation. While the NHDOT approves driveway permits for access on state transportation routes based on safety, transportation design and connectivity have an impact on community character. This study acknowledges the importance of future development on NH Route 28 as it relates to the maintenance of community character. Existing land use regulations and zoning ordinances from corridor communities were reviewed for key transportation principles, strategies, and policy statements designed to influence future development within the corridor. The result of this review is a series of corridor-wide recommendations as well as specific town recommendations for each community in the study area.

The Boards of Selectmen in each community were asked by LRPC and CNHRPC to appoint representatives to a Project Advisory Committee (PAC). The PAC consisted of a broad base of local representatives with planning experience or a working knowledge of the NH Route 28 corridor. Press releases were used to notify the public about all PAC meetings. A NH Route 28 Corridor Safety Study web page was created to facilitate the exchange of information including, meeting notes, study drafts and maps, data collection results, and general information regarding the purpose of the study.<sup>1</sup>

A subcommittee was formed to conduct a safety field assessment. This Safety Audit Team (SAT) was comprised of 14 people including representatives from each community and planning commission, NHDOT, and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) staff. The SAT participated in a two-day training session in Manchester, NH on the FHWA method of conducting Road Safety Audits (RSAs). The LRPC organized assistance from the RSA Peer to Peer program (RSA P2P) where a veteran of the RSA process participated in field review with the SAT for three days.

Committee meetings and VHB involvement in the study are outlined below:

#### **Fall 2008**

- ❑ Data collected by planning commission staff include vehicle speed, volume, and classification counts. Historic accident data is requested for each corridor community and provided to NHDOT for crash analysis.

#### **February 10, 2009 – Study Kick-off Meeting – Barnstead Town Hall**

- ❑ The first meeting of the PAC includes a project overview and timeline, an overview of existing conditions, and a presentation of historic crash analysis.
- ❑ The PAC develops a list of priority safety concerns that includes 17 locations within the study area.

#### **March 3-4, 2009 – Road Safety Audit Training, Manchester, NH**



<sup>1</sup> [http://www.lakesrpc.org/services\\_transportation\\_route28.asp](http://www.lakesrpc.org/services_transportation_route28.asp)

- ❑ Training provided by Craig Allred, FHWA Transportation Specialist.

Attendees:

Vanessa Bitterman, CNHRPC  
Rodrigo Marion, CNHRPC  
Michael Izard, LRPC  
Adam Hlasny, LRPC  
David Kerr, Barnstead Board of Selectmen  
Bill Evans, Barnstead Health Officer  
Ken Roberts, Alton Road Agent  
Gordon Ellis, Epsom Road Agent  
Dave Furintino, Epsom Resident  
Peter Holmes, Chichester Business Owner  
Robert Wharem, Pittsfield Police Chief  
Gary Johnson, Pittsfield Fire Chief

**April 20, 2009 – Consultant Interviews**

- ❑ Consultant Selection Team consisting of Michael Tardiff - LRPC, Rodrigo Marion - CNHRPC, and Michael Izard - LRPC evaluate eleven prospective consulting firms and narrow the field to three firms for telephone interviews. Each firm is provided a list of interview questions in advance of the phone conference. After careful consideration, Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. was selected to assist with this project.

**April 26-28, 2009 – Safety Audit Team Conducts Safety Field Assessment**

- ❑ Field review of concerns identified by the Project Advisory Committee on February 10. Epsom Fire Department serves as team headquarters.

Participants:

Kenneth Roberts, Alton Highway Department  
Bill Evans, Barnstead Health Officer  
David Kerr, Barnstead Board of Selectmen  
James Plunkett, Chichester  
Peter Holmes, Chichester  
Betsy Bosiak, Epsom  
Gary Johnson, Pittsfield Fire Department  
Robert Wharem, Pittsfield Police Department  
Martin Calawa, FHWA (NH)  
Rosemarie Anderson, FHWA (NJ) Peer to Peer Program participant  
Stuart Thompson, NHDOT  
Rodrigo Marion, CNHRPC  
Craig Tufts, CNHRPC  
Adam Hlasny, LRPC  
Michael Izard, LRPC

**May 12, 2009**

- ❑ Consultant Selection Team meets with VHB to develop consultant scope of services.

**June 25, 2009 – Preliminary Safety Audit Team Road Safety Audit Findings – Prospect Mountain High School, Alton, NH**

- ❑ SAT results are summarized and presented at a PAC meeting. The committee identifies a “top ten list” of concerns for concept planning.
- ❑ VHB is introduced as the consulting engineer and discusses project involvement.

**July 30, 2009 - Project Advisory Committee Meeting – Pittsfield Town Hall**

- ❑ Existing land use reviewed and potential recommendations discussed.
- ❑ Preliminary results from VHB.

**August 27, 2009 - Final Project Advisory Committee Meeting – Chichester Town Hall**

- ❑ Project Advisory Committee and public input on draft study report is requested.

**August 31, 2009 - Final Project Advisory Committee Meeting – Chichester Town Hall**

- ❑ Report is completed and submitted to the NHDOT, as per contractual requirements.

**September 2009 - Report Presented to Boards of Selectmen**

- ❑ Board of Selectmen in each corridor community is presented with a final copy and asked to accept to assist with future regional transportation planning.

Details for all meetings (minutes, adgendas, press releases, news articles, etc.) are included in Appendix A of this document. Map 1.1 shows the extent of the corridor study area.

Map 1.1 Corridor Study Area



