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turnout Thursday night and to hear from more residents about the project.

"I'm appreciative of the state's effort to involve the local folks and solicit feedback," he said.

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**Townspople Question DOT On Potter Place Plans**

By Charlie Darling  
Beacon staff

More than 20 people filled the meeting room in the Town Hall on April 5 for the Department of Transportation's (DOT's) informational meeting on the Potter Place bridge project. David Scott of the DOT Bureau of Bridge Design opened the meeting with the caveat that DOT has recently had a change at the top, and the new commissioner, Charles O'Leary, hadn't yet seen the options being presented at this meeting. "I'm not sure what Commissioner O'Leary will think about the options," David said.

With that said, Jason Tremblay, a senior project engineer with DOT's Bureau of Bridge Design, presented three options:

**Re-Deck The Existing Bridge.** This is the least costly option up front, but the most costly over the long term. The decking would be replaced one lane at a time, leaving the other lane open for one-way traffic during construction.

If rail service were to return, there's sufficient clearance under the current bridge to accommodate it.

**Build A New, Shorter Bridge.** This option would replace the existing bridge with a much shorter bridge just to the south of the existing bridge. The new bridge would be about 75' long with a single span (and therefore no joints to let in water), as opposed to the 264' span of the existing bridge, which has multiple joints and "one of the strangest girder configurations I've ever seen," according to David. The proposed new bridge is designed to last 75 years.

A 12'x12' box culvert about 70' long would carry the Rail Trail under Route 11, and if rail service were to return the bridge would be high enough that (with the box culvert removed) trains could pass under Route 11.

Unlike the existing bridge, the proposed new bridge eliminates the current ramp that carries westbound traffic from Andover onto Route 4 north to Danbury. In the new plan, that traffic would turn left before the bridge onto the ramp to Route 4 and Depot Street that today is used only by traffic eastbound on Route 11 from Cilleyville.

**Replace The Bridge With An Intersection.** Route 11 would be a through road and Route 4 (to the north) and Depot Street (to the south) would each have a stop sign where they meet Route 11. Left-turn lanes in Route 11 would allow for safe turns off of Route 11 toward Danbury or toward Potter Place.

The rail trail would be carried in a

box culvert, as described above, but should rail service someday return, there would not be sufficient clearance for the trains to be routed under the intersection.

After the brief presentation of the three options, the public was invited to comment and ask questions.

Kendel Currier couldn't understand why, in the proposed new bridge, DOT would eliminate an existing ramp (to Route 4 north) and replace it with a dangerous left turn across traffic. Neither Jason nor David had a good answer and said they would look into not eliminating the ramp.

Toby Locke felt strongly that the existing bridge should be repaired. "I don't see a reason to change this," he said.

Jim Phelps from the Danbury Planning Board asked if we'd need lights at the intersection someday. David said that traffic counts projected out 20 years suggested we wouldn't.

Many people expressed concern about an intersection's ability to handle the traffic volume safely, citing:

- heavy truck traffic
- skiing traffic from Ragged, particularly when everyone leaves at once
- race traffic, especially on Race Weekend
- traffic taking a shortcut from I-89 to I-93

Mark Stetson, Andover's Town Administrator, asked about the life expectancy of a re-decking. The answer was that we got about 50 years out of the first deck, so probably in about 40 years' time we'd be back into significant maintenance costs again. At some point, the steel girders and concrete abutments will also need maintenance.

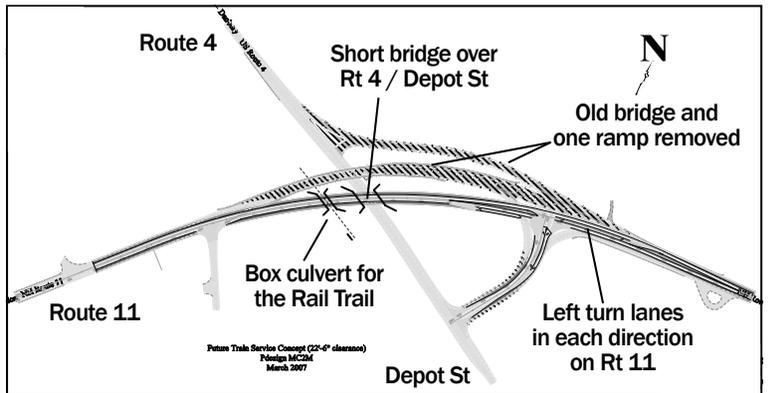
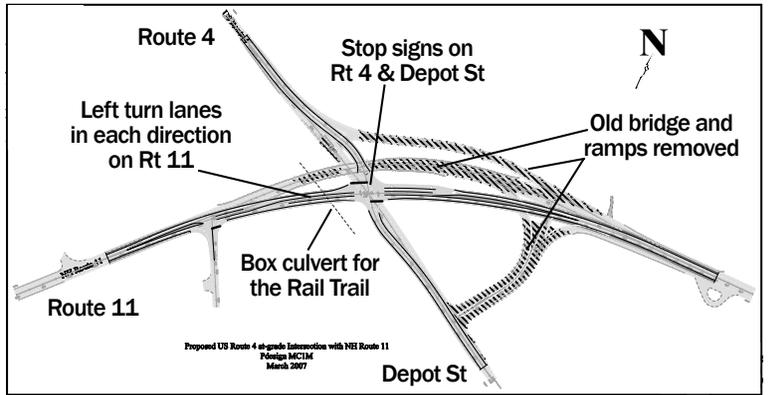
**Eliminate Depot Street?**

When the question of whether Depot Street could be eliminated between the proposed intersection and Potter Place (making it a three-way intersection instead of four-way), Ed Hiller of the Andover Historical Society said that blocking access to Route 11 would cut off the Potter Place historic buildings and summer events from the rest of the world.

He further pointed out that the proposed intersection would eliminate the problem of traffic that currently comes down Route 4 and mistakenly speeds through Potter Place, not realizing they're suddenly on a back road. Neither the old bridge nor the new bridge by themselves would help solve that problem.

Jim Phelps asked about adding a dedicated right-turn lane to the proposed intersection to make it easier for people coming south from Danbury to head toward New London. Jason and David felt it was possible, but pointed out that they're "bridge people." Their "traffic people" didn't feel it was necessary.

Ed Becker of the Andover Rescue Squad expressed grave concerns about the existing bridge because of its long, curved deck. He also cited multiple instances when the Rescue Squad has



**Two New Options:** The top plan shows a four-way intersection replacing the existing bridge at Potter Place. The bottom plan shows the existing bridge replaced by a much shorter one. The third option is to rebuild the existing bridge.

had to search for the driver of a car left in distress on the bridge, for fear that the driver had fallen off the bridge. Ed pointed out that an at-grade intersection doesn't create that problem for the Rescue Squad.

Andover Police Chief Glenn Laramie worried about the problem that two stop signs across from each other in an intersection would cause. Howard George suggested that making Depot Street one way going south from Route 11 might be the solution to that problem.

When asked about the likelihood of rail service returning through Andover, neither David nor Jason were aware of anything that says revitalization of the

railroad is imminent.

DOT has not run a break-even estimate to determine how long it would take for the reduced maintenance costs of the proposed intersection to repay its higher initial construction costs. But understanding the complete financial picture may be moot. David Scott's guess is, "Odds are we'll be replacing deck rather than doing what's most cost effective in the long run."

After nearly an hour of input from the public, David wrapped up the meeting by thanking everyone for their comments and assuring them that nothing had been decided yet and there would be more opportunities for discussion.

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