

ROUTE 12 UPDATE

The outstanding questions are when will the road be open and when will the project be complete. Unfortunately, there is still uncertainty surrounding both these dates. However, with the design parameters having been worked out, the NH Department of Transportation (DOT) is proceeding with an emergency contract to begin work in mid-October. Although it was initially projected that the road could be open by Thanksgiving, that is not the case for a host of reasons. DOT remains mindful of the concerns with the road closure and plans to continue the work through winter; however, winter construction presents its own challenges and delays.

This project is not the usual road repair. Designing, planning, and constructing the repairs on this section of Route 12 is complex due to the tight constraints between the road and the Connecticut River downslope on one side and the active rail line on the other. Destabilization of the rail line during the necessary repairs, including deep excavation, remains a major concern.

There has been substantial coordination with the railroad to gain consensus on the design approach and agreement on access. A detailed design submission is being prepared for the railroad's review and approval next week.

The following details on the project schedule and construction timeframe shed light on the project issues. Next week there will be a pre-bid meeting to present the project details to shortlisted prime contractors. DOT providing early information to potential prime contractors to enable the contractors to identify a sub-contractor skilled in the soil nail technique, which is required to stabilize the rail line slope during excavation and reconstruction on Route 12. Again, it is not a routine repair for DOT or the contractors. The project is anticipated to be advertised on 10/7/2021 with bids due on 10/14/2021. DOT will seek advance G&C approval for a contract so the successful contractor can mobilize as soon as possible.

The roadway repairs are estimated to cost about \$2.9 million, but that estimate does not include the soil nail wall. The soil nail wall, which is still being designed, will be 400 feet long and 10 feet high, at an estimated cost between \$500,000-\$700,000.

Permanent easements will need to be secured on the Great River Hydro, LLC. property by the Bureau of Right of Way.

The uncertainty surrounding the project dates is also attributable to factors, which the DOT can only estimate. More definitive timeframes and dates cannot be provided until a contractor is hired and has input from the soil nail expert. DOT estimated the time for the soil nail subcontractor to construct the wall, which involves sequencing, drilling, curing, testing, and exaction. The total soil nail construction will likely take 6-8 weeks, but that is not firm and it is not certain when the soil nail expert can begin the work. Construction also requires that two utilities be braced. The time needed for the utility work with support from Liberty Utilities is being determined. And finally, as mentioned above, longer construction duration is expected due to cold weather and then need to remove groundwater and surface water from the construction site, known as dewatering.

Although everyone is anxious for the repair work to begin and the road to open, neither date can be predicted at this time.

DOT is proceeding with due diligence to ensure that the repairs to Route 12 in Charlestown will be done in a safe manner and will provide future safety to the travelers on the road, as well as the safety of the active rail line. DOT is committed to having the contractor work into the winter in order to open the roadway.