



THE STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION



JEFF BRILLHART, P.E.
ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER

September 7, 2011

Mr. Kris Blomback
Chairman of Selectmen
Town of Henniker
18 Depot Road
Henniker, NH 03242

Re: Statewide Signing and Delineation Project (Henniker)
15884



Dear Chairman Blomback:

I am writing in follow up to Town Administrator Peter Flynn's letter of June 9, 2011 and the subsequent input from the August 16, 2011 Selectmen's meeting regarding the Town's request for authorization from the Department to modify the signing established as part of the above noted construction project. The modifications would include eliminating about eighteen chevron signs. The project was a safety project intended to reduce the number and potential for run-off-the-road crashes by providing guidance with warning signs and delineation to alert drivers of deficient roadway geometry.

Based on the input we heard at the August 16th meeting, a majority of the resident's concerns focused on the signing that occurred in the Quaker District. In particular, the number of chevron signs delineating deficient horizontal curves was the main issue of contention. The signing plans developed for this project were based on our engineer's field analysis and federal guidelines. Because federal funds are being used on this project, we are required to follow federal guidelines, one which is the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), a Federal Highway Administration document that provides guidance (based on national research) for determining the sign type, size, location, number, and spacing. The MUTCD is an important document as it standardizes the signing application for roadways around the nation. Research has shown that standardized signing improves safety as it affects driver expectancy and improves driver reaction to deficiencies in the roadway.

The MUTCD guidance on the use of chevron signs is dependent on the speed differential between the roadway's posted or statutory speed, and the advisory speed. The guidance indicates when a warning sign is "required", "recommended" or "optional". If the guidance indicates a sign is "required" it means that the sign shall be used. A "recommended" sign is one which should be used, and an "optional" sign is one that may be used. It was noted at the Selectmen's meeting that the posted/statutory speed on the roadways in the Quaker District area (where the advisory posting is 25 MPH) is 35 MPH. It was also noted that the Town roads are in rural areas that have low traffic volumes. Based on the input, the Department requested traffic

counts from the Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission in these areas to confirm the traffic volume. The Department recently received the traffic counts, which showed Average Daily Traffic (ADT) volumes in the range of 125 to 235. The MUTCD indicates that curve locations where there is 10 MPH differential between the roadway's speed along straight-a-ways and the speed along curves, (35 MPH posted speed vs an advisory speed of 25 MPH), and an ADT less than 400, the chevron signs at the curves are "optional".

With that as background information, I would support Selectman Watman's suggestion to have the Town's Traffic Safety Committee and a traffic engineer hired by the Town, review the chevron sign locations where the MUTCD indicates the signs are "optional", to determine if modifications are appropriate. Once the Selectmen receive the modification recommendations from the Traffic Safety Committee, they should also consider consulting with its legal counsel regarding any sign removal.

As I indicated at the Selectmen's meeting, if some of the other warning signs require relocation because they were not placed in the right location, the Department would be willing to evaluate the signs and locations, and relocate the signs as necessary.

I sympathize with the Henniker residents' feelings that the signs intrude on the rural character of their neighborhood and that consideration should be given to the reasonableness of the signs on low volume roads. I also understand the need to enhance the safety of those roads, and the balance between safety and aesthetics. Thank you for the opportunity to hear the residents' concerns and the opportunity to explain the safety aspects of the project. I would also like to thank you for the professional and impartial regard given us and the public in discussing the concerns. I feel the meeting was quite productive.

I have asked Stuart Thompson (271-1407) of our office to be available to you or the Traffic Safety Committee to answer questions or assist with your efforts. Please feel free to contact him as needed.

Sincerely



David J. Brillhart
Assistant Commissioner

cc The Honorable Andy Sanborn, NH Senate
C. Green
W. Oldenburg
S. Thompson