

Board of Selectmen
Public Hearing
with
NH DOT
Minutes
May 29, 2019 @ 6:00 PM
Prospect Mountain High School Auditorium
Suncook Valley Road
Alton, NH 03809
Approved: June 17, 2019

Chairman R. Wentworth convened the meeting at 6:00 PM and led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. The following staff members were present:

Reuben Wentworth, Chairman
Virgil MacDonald, Vice Chairman
Paul LaRochelle, Selectman

AND

NH DOT Representatives:

William Cass, PE, Assistant Commissioner
Michael Dugas, PE, Highway Safety Engineer
Sally Gunn, PE, Sr. Safety Engineer

Meeting Purpose

Rumble Strip Discussion on Route 28 with NH DOT

William Cass thanked everyone for coming out tonight and would like to give a brief introduction. He stated that everyone is here tonight to talk about a pavement resurfacing project that includes a section of Route 28 in Alton and Wolfeboro. He stated that the proposal is to re-install the Rumble Strips after the resurfacing of the road in accordance with the updated guidelines. Several years ago in 2016 a state-wide project was initiated to install safety rumble strips on a series of state highways. Route 28 in Alton was one of those areas. In that same summer rumble strips were installed on Route 9 through Hopkinton, Henniker, all the way to Chesterfield on Route 102 in Derry and Londonderry and Route 25 in Plymouth. This has been an ongoing systematic effort to approach safety with some low cost safety counter measures to address some of the concerns with distracted driving, centerline encroachment and do what we can to keep vehicles in their lane and prevent more serious accidents. When the rumble strips were installed in 2016 they were installed in both the centerline and edge line which created quite a stir. They were very narrow and created a lot of feedback. As a result of that we did try to address those concerns both here, in Plymouth and several other areas of Route 9 in Chesterfield. We came back and removed the rumble stripes along the edge line. We are fairly insistent that the rumble strips along the centerline provide a strong safety benefit. We did acknowledge that there are newer technologies and a lot of body of evidence growing in the research community. We knew that in 2019 we would be resurfacing Route 28 and made the commitment to look at and revise our guidelines according to the most up to date research and take into consideration the amount of feedback that we heard from all of these projects. Essentially that's a brief recap of why we are here tonight. The Board of Selectmen asked that we hold a broader public hearing to receive public input. We are very pleased to hear the participation here tonight.

Mike Dugas stated that his title is Highway Safety Engineer. He wants to touch very briefly on the basics of rumble strips. He will go over some of the changes to try to address some of the concerns that were heard here in Alton. The purpose of the changes is to reduce the incidents of inadvertent or errant strikes on rumble strips. Rumble strips are grooves that are cut into some of the center and sometimes shoulders of highways. When a car runs on them it creates a noise and vibration in the car to alert them that they are leaving their lane. Outside the car it makes noises as well. That is the issue they have been trying to deal with. It is very common for drivers to stray from their lanes for a variety of reasons. They could be drowsy, inattentive, distracted, or impaired in some fashion. The reason that we pursue rumble strips as a safety measure on our highways is because of the numbers in recent years of fatalities. It has ranged from 100-150 each year. We have about 450 serious injuries on top of that number. 2/3 of those crashes are the results of road departures. People leaving their lane of travel. The most safest way is to keep people in their lane of traffic. The best research that we have regarding centerline rumble strips is that they reduce the incidents of cross over crashes by about 45%. It does vary by site. That is the most comprehensive study that is available to us. Shoulder rumble strips are shown to reduce the incidents of going off the road by about 36%. They are shown to be an effective safety measure. Those numbers are specific to rural two lane highways. First we looked at the change of rumble strips that we use in certain areas by modifying where we put those rumble strips. Some of the key elements of our draft rumble strip guidelines, we propose to use mumble strips as our primary rumble strip type. They are a quieter design of rumble strips. These will be used on roads that are narrower than a certain dimension. Also, on wider roads we propose to use those in passing zones. Places where people are legitimately crossing the centerline trying to reduce the noise of when people strike those rumbles. The second element of our rumble strip guidelines is that we plan to continue installing rumble strips on the shoulders of highways because of the safety benefits they offer. However we will not put them on the white stripe. We will put them 1 foot onto the shoulder thereby reducing incidents of striking those rumble strips. Thirdly, we propose to be more generous in providing openings for legitimate access points, like side roads and driveways. A little more information of what we call mumble strips are also called sinusoidal. It is a technical term for the shape of the rumble strip itself.

Bill Cass stated that he would like to point out again that the exact timing will probably span over two seasons and would happen very late this year or probably into the next construction season spring/summer of 2020.

Public Input

Ken Roberts stated that he has not heard them talk about the Corridor. The corridor is very big. He stated they have not looked at just the corridor in Alton. The state never put in a slow lane on Route 28. He asked if there was a re-design when they resurface the road. He stated that when truckers pull over to let traffic through, people cannot avoid the rumble strips when they go around them. They are a problem with motorcycles too. He asked if there was a reason for the rumble strips on the side of Route 93 in Concord being removed. Bill Cass is not sure, that it could be because of resurfacing.

Ray Howard stated that he wanted to talk to his constituents tonight. You can twist statistics any way you want. One thing that needs to be asked is are we a government of the people or are we a people of the government. Article 1 has the answer to that. It says all people are born with equal rights. Why should we have to live with these things just so someone else might not leave the centerline. No that's not right. All I've heard is people do not like them. DOT says that they want to have a discussion. I tried that in the legislature this year. Another rep from Allenstown had his constituents come to him and ask if there was anything that he can do about these rumble strips. Him and I got together and co-sponsored legislation and went before the transportation committee. It was shot down twice. We got it turned into a study committee so we could talk about it. The vote was 18-0. There was no debate

on the House floor. We are in control. If we don't like something, you have to listen to us. There is a remedy to this.

Ritchey Lane stated that he was on his motorcycle and the road was dry but there was still water in the rumble strips. A car passed and I got soaked. I could not see. I am vehemently against these rumble strips. They were put in wrong to begin with. They are too deep and the hot top is coming out of the center. The water is getting in between the two layers of pavement. It will destroy the road. The money could be very well spent in fixing the roads instead of destroying the road by putting the rumble strips in. They do damage to a car. I say no.

Sylvia Leggett stated that she has a brief thing to read but she would she would like to comment on two things. You are going to be creating a double nuisance because the trucks are hitting that shoulder rumble strip and the people who are going by those trucks are going to be hitting the centerline rumble strip. When you go across Route 393 and you exit 393 south onto Route 93, the rumble strips have been milled and filled. The person who is absent here tonight is Ronald Grandmaison. In 2016 when these went in I asked him why those rumble strips on the side of 93 had been filled in. His comment three years ago was we are going to be doing a construction project. I think those rumble strips were removed because of noise. Bill Cass stated that the reason part of that was done was because of race day traffic. The new guidelines state that the installation of rumble strips be done proactively and systematically along stretches of roadway with particular characteristics rather than in response to crashes that have occurred. These locations include any highway with a minimum speed of 40 miles per hour. Sylvia stated basically, put the rumble strips everywhere. Another method discussed is called specific Corridor Safety improvements. Route 28 in Alton is one of the scenic and cultural byways. This program was established in 1992 under RSA 238:19. To provide the opportunity for residents and visitors to travel a system of highways which feature the scenic and cultural qualities of the state within the existing highway system. Our 8 miles of roads is part of the scenic and cultural byways. Alton is a vacation destination and rural residential community. I urge you to reconsider the installation of rumble strips on Route 28.

Belinda McLin stated that she can't sit in her backyard because it echoes. I can hear bikes coming from Wolfeboro. Take into consideration where you are locating these things. It creates anxiety and causes damage to vehicles. Everybody that is 100 feet from a rumble strip should get a tax abatement. This is a vacation destination.

Robin Lane stated that she believes no one in this town would want to see anyone hurt or killed in a car accident. There are no statistics that prove that rumble strips do save lives. She briefly read some statistics. Residents lives are important too.

Jeb Bradley from Wolfeboro stated that he hopes they would reconsider re-installing the rumble strips. They undermine safety too. If they are going to come back, please do not do them in passing areas.

Kathy Fairman Eaton stated that her family has lived on Miramichie Road for over 65 years. The rumble strips have been a terrible addition. The noise factor alone is pollution. We have to protect rural nature. When you repave fill those spots up and don't put anymore in. She owns a Trolley company. Going over the rumble strips with the trolley is dangerous.

Lael Paulson stated that he would prefer that the shoulder rumble strips not be re-installed. Do some careful planning. He asked if the reason that they are not installing sinusoidal rumble strips everywhere was solely cost related. Bill Cass said that it was debated quite a bit and it wasn't solely cost.

Desmond Douglas stated that Alton is going to have more rumble strips than anywhere in the state.

Scott Ducharme from Wolfeboro stated that he feels like he is beating a dead horse. He has talked to everyone in the state. He took Jeb Bradley for a ride. He could not believe how dangerous it was. He stated that people are sick of hearing this. He stated that they are wrecking the integrity of the road. On Route 16 they are half the thickness as they are here in Alton.

Sally Gunn stated that the size of the rumble strips go from 1/16 to 1/2 inch in depth. She stated that the regular rumble strips are .32 cents per foot and the sinusoidal strips are .60 cents per foot.

Joanne Warhouse stated that the Route 16 rumble strips are not as loud as they are on Route 28. There is no peace and tranquility.

Barbara Howard stated that she does not live in close proximity to the rumble strips but she spun around in the snow. She was in Barnstead at the time. She believes that they are dangerous. Listen to the people. I am not in favor of the rumble strips. We do not want them.

Shania Loring stated that she just moved to Swan Lake. She hears it all day long. If there are no passing zones then there should not be rumble strips. We do not want rumble strips. She asked if they are going to put them back in.

Bill Cass stated that there is a valid safety point to them. He understands. We are going to take the feedback. We are going to put them back in with the new revised guidelines. They are going to try to strike a balance with the safety benefits.

Joe MacDonald stated that he lives on Lily Pond Road. He has not had a full night's sleep since the rumble strips were put in. He stated that the state has not done their research. They are breaking town ordinances. They destroy life in this town.

Paulette Alden-Brooks asked how much of a grant is there. What is paying for rumble strips. She asked if there is no tie to funding between the rumble strips and resurfacing. She doesn't think statistics prove anything.

Virgil MacDonald gave the statistics from January 2012 to May 2018. We don't want the rumble strips.

Andrea Dudley from Wolfeboro is concerned with the stretch from Wolfeboro Falls to Route 28. It may look commercial but it is very residential dense. Don't implement these. She would like to applaud the Alton Board of Selectmen. She would like to know if they are going to be meeting with Wolfeboro. Bill Cass said they are open to meeting with Wolfeboro.

Mrs. French from Trask Side Road was curious if there is some kind of federal funding behind the project. Bill Cass said not specifically.

Linda Murray from the Wolfeboro Select board. Wolfeboro would like to have a public hearing. We do care about our New England charm.

Ritchie Lane asked for the names of the people from the Department of Transportation.

Sandy Hammond would like to point out that their own statistics have nothing to do with preventing accidents. She listed things that the rumble strips wouldn't be able to prevent. They affect people's health and sleep patterns.

Bill Cass points out that all the different types of causes may not be all saved by the rumble strips.

Madge Nickerson states that everyone knows you can make statistics read whatever you want. She gets woken up in the summer.

Karen Alden states that the last time when the rumble strips went in it was a hot button issue. She asked if they will start at Barnes Avenue. The noise is not acceptable even when you are in the car. She asks if the speed limit could be lowered. She asked if the Town could petition to drop the speed limit.

Wilson Green stated that he gets the noise from the rumble strips. He asked if there was a possibility to put in a test strip.

Bill Cass stated that he will consider it.

Sally Gunn stated that Danville has the new strips.

Tim Pellowe stated the problem is you have a passing zone. He thinks that the speed limit should be lowered. He stated that he sent an email to Mr. Cass in 2017 and still is waiting for a response. Please take these people serious because I think you are giving these people "Lip Service".

Ritchie Lane stated that tomorrow he will call the Governor's Office. He will tell them that they are not listening to the people. He will express his concerns to the Governor.

Bill Cass stated that they are trying to strike a balance. They have tried to listen.

Dave Hussey stated that he has a DOT license and had to get a CPAP so he could go to sleep. He wakes up because of the rumble strips. They are giving him sleep deprivation.

Dave Countway stated that he testified before the DOT. He works as a realtor. He stated that a client has been trying to sell their home for 3 years. Many people have looked at the property. Potential buyers pass over the home because of the noise factor. It is a loss of value by the state. How is this safety improvement going to impact the community. He is concerned with the Police and Fire Departments who have asked their members not to aggressively respond to an emergency on Route 28.

Tracy Drew stated that she is woken up at all hours of the morning. Can't even open the windows. She can hear the rumble strips in the middle of the lake. They do not belong in Alton.

Mike Hoyt stated that putting the rumble strips back in would make him not sleep again.

Mark Northridge urged the Board of Selectmen to take a strong approach with the state on this. He encouraged them to create a warrant article to raise money for legal action.

Robin Lane asked what law says they have the right to install these in Alton. She states that peoples statements tonight should make a difference. The sounds echo over the water. It is clear that we don't want the rumble strips.

Jim Gray stated that the second major issue people have contacted me about. The first was the 2nd amendment. He states that the people feel they are being lied to. There is no Legislative support for the people who support the rumble strips. Try them somewhere else not in Alton.

Kathy Fairman Eaton stated she feels the consensus here is you are just going through the motions. This public hearing needs to be listened to. You need to listen to that.

Joe MacDonald asked how they justify disrupting 100% of the quality of our lives for less than 1% of the people having an accident.

Larry Helene asked how many phone calls, emails, and letters have they received in favor of the rumble strips. Bill Cass stated a handful.

Paul LaRochelle stated that he swore he would stand by the people. He asked them to consider the people. The research has already been done. We don't need them.

Desmond Douglas asked if any of the roads on their statistics have any rumble strips. He asked how many lane departures they've had.

Loring Carr stated that he was at the Selectmen's meeting when they were last there. He asked if there were any studies done with people not sleeping. He states that it shortens people's lives. It is a nationwide problem.

Sally Gunn addresses the noise and vibration of the rumble strips. They do cause a lot of noise. They look to balance safety and quality of life. There were many states that have done a lot of research. Minnesota is leading the research on that.

Sylvia Leggett stated she has done a lot of reading on rumble strips. Other states are removing rumble strips because of the harm they are causing. Crashes are reduced by 18% for centerline and 14% for shoulder rumble strips. She stated that limited access highway no longer exist in Alton.

Maggie Stier stated there are several of us here from Wolfeboro. It impresses me that there are a lot of people passionate about not putting in the rumble strips. She asked for them to please reconsider the choice.

Mrs. French stated that this town is different. This is corrosive in this type of community. There is a spirit here in New Hampshire to be responsible for themselves and very self-reliant.

Suzanne Ryan from Wolfeboro asked if the engineering division has done some kind of study for the decibels. Bill Cass stated that they have and the data is on their website. Rumble strips are one of the engineering strategies. The Federal Highway Administration that it is a proven low cost safety mechanism. She stated it is at the expense of the people in Wolfeboro and Alton. It is a deterrent to tourism.

Ray Howard stated there is a lot of talk in Concord about mental health. He thinks this is contributing to it.

Other Business (if deemed necessary)

None

Adjournment

Reuben thanked the panel and audience; closing the meeting at 8:44 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Mary K. Jarvis

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Recording Secretary