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April 25, 2008

CERTIFICATE OF THE SECRETARY OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS
ON THE
ENVIRONMENTAL NOTIFICATION FORM

PROJECT NAME: Reservoir Road Improvements and Scenic Overlook
PROJECT MUNICIPALITY: North Adams
PROJECT WATERSHED: Hudson
EEA NUMBER: 14211
PROJECT PROPONENT: Massachusetts Highway Department & City of North Adams
DATE NOTICED IN MONITOR: March 26, 2008

Pursuant to the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (G. L. c. 30, ss. 61-62H) and Section 11.06 of the MEPA regulations (301 CMR 11.00), I hereby determine that this project **does not require** the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

Project Description

As described in the Environmental Notification Form (ENF), the project involves the reconstruction and widening of a 0.63 mile segment of Reservoir Road in North Adams from its northerly terminus at the intersection of Furnace Street south to 220 feet north of the intersection with Richview Avenue Extension. The project also involves construction of a new scenic outlook and parking area on the east side of Reservoir Road approximately 1,600 feet south of Furnace Street. The City of North Adams and the Massachusetts Highway Department (MassHighway) are co-Proponents on the project.

Reservoir Road serves as the primary connector between downtown North Adams and the Mount Greylock Reservation. The entrance to the Reservation is 1.2 miles south of the project

limit. The project is along a portion of the Mount Greylock Scenic Byway, which runs from the Western Gateway Heritage State Park at the intersection of Route 8 and Furnace Street, over Mount Greylock, and ends in Lanesborough. The roadway currently has an average width of 19 feet with a minimum width of 16 feet in several locations. Existing shoulders are minimal or non-existent and there are no provisions for bicycles or pedestrians.

The proposed work, all of which is located within the City's right-of-way, includes widening up to a maximum of 8 feet at graded roadside areas to create two uniform 10-foot wide travel lanes with 1 to 2 foot wide paved shoulders on either side. At the MEPA site visit for the project, the Proponent indicated that the project design has changed slightly compared to the project as outlined in the ENF. Instead of full depth reconstruction of the roadway, the project will involve a more limited subsurface reclamation. Proposed profile changes will also be reduced from those proposed in the ENF. Existing steel beam guardrails along the easterly side of the roadway will be removed and rest at the new edge of pavement. All existing driveway aprons will be reconstructed.

The proposed new scenic overlook will be constructed on an undeveloped City-owned property. The City will continue ownership and will be responsible for site maintenance. The overlook will be constructed against a steep roadside slope adjacent to a former municipal water pumping station at the bottom of the slope. The approximately 5,600 square foot overlook will be accessed via a 150 foot by 24 foot asphalt driveway. The parking area will accommodate nine standard parking spaces and two handicap-accessible parking spaces.

As outlined in the ENF, the goals of the project include: 1) improvements to the sub-standard roadway pavement and cross-section; 2) safety and visibility improvements along the project corridor; 3) construction of a scenic overlook area with public parking; and 4) improved accommodations for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Jurisdiction

The project is undergoing review pursuant to the following sections of the MEPA regulations: 301 CMR 11.03(6)(b)(1)(b), because it will result in the widening of an existing roadway by 4 feet or more for one half or more miles; and 301 CMR 11.03(6)(b)(2)(b) because it will result in the removal of more than five living public shade trees of 14 or more inches in diameter breast height.

The project requires a Section 404 Programmatic General Permit (PGP) from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) and an Order of Conditions from the North Adams Conservation Commission. It is anticipated that MassHighway will fund 20% of the project and that the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) will fund the remaining 80%. Because the project involves financial assistance from the Commonwealth, MEPA jurisdiction is broad and extends to all aspects of the project with the potential to cause damage to the environment.

Review of the ENF

The project will result in an increase of 0.33 acres of impervious surface. Under existing conditions, stormwater runoff from the road is primarily sheet flow feeding local streams by channels which cross under the road in shallow culverts at regular intervals. The Proponent states in the ENF that the project is considered a redevelopment project under MassDEP's Stormwater Management Policy (SMP), and as such, the project will comply with the SMP standards to the maximum extent practicable. As part of the project, asphalt berms will be installed to help direct stormwater away from residential properties. A new catch basin will be installed within the existing highway layout opposite 118 Reservoir Road. One undersized culvert will be replaced and extended by four feet. A five foot wide paved waterway approximately 150 feet in length will be constructed along the westerly edge of the paved roadway at the northerly terminus of Reservoir Road to channel stormwater away from Furnace Street.

At the proposed overlook, the Proponent will install a stormwater management system to collect and treat overland flow that will be impacted by the overlook. The system will include a grass swale along the back side of the parking lot and deep sump catch basins. All sediment and other materials collected from the catch basins will be periodically removed by the City under its storm drainage maintenance program.

On the east side of Reservoir Road, approximately 0.5 miles from the northern terminus of the roadway, approximately 117 square feet (sf) of Bordering Vegetated Wetland (BVW) will be impacted due to minor widening and the proposed extension of an existing culvert. A 1:1 wetland replication area is proposed at the site. The replication area will be planted with native bushes and a wetlands seed mix. The Proponent has received an Order of Conditions from the North Adams Conservation Commission for the project (DEP #241-0160). Following guidance from MassDEP, the activities associated with the culvert replacement will be conducted during periods of low flow.


Approximately 60 public shade trees will be removed as a result of the project. The Proponent does not intend to replace any of the impacted trees. I note concerns from the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) that the tree removal may adversely impact the scenic and rural quality of the roadway. In addition, the new cleared areas together with a slight increase in travel lane width may result in faster rates of speed along the roadway. Following comments from the BRPC, I encourage the City to consider a reduction in the design speed for the roadway, which could possibly result in less required cutting and filling and tree removal and a possible extension of the project. The Proponent should also consider suggestions that materials for guardrails and fencing at the overlook be chosen to blend in with the rural feel of the scenic byway.

During the site visit for the project, MassDEP observed a building identified as an inactive North Adams Water Department monitoring station. The facility has a catch basin with drainage pipes tied into the culvert that is proposed to be extended as part of the project. The Proponent should contact the North Adams Water Department to confirm that the facility is inactive and that work may proceed without impacting the drinking water infrastructure.

Conclusion

The impacts of the project do not warrant the preparation of an EIR. I conclude that no further MEPA review is required.

April 25, 2008
Date



Ian A. Bowles

Comments received:

4/14/2008 Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
4/15/2008 Department of Environmental Protection, Western Regional Office

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