

Public comment requested on replacing the Route 1B (Wentworth) Bridge:

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RYE? The United States Coast Guard is soliciting public comments on a proposal by the New Hampshire Department of Transportation to replace an existing movable bascule bridge, the Route 1B (Wentworth) Bridge, with a fixed bridge.

The reason for this proposal is due to the limited number of requests to open the bridge since 2010, according to a Coast Guard press release. The purpose of this project is to provide a safe, functional and efficient crossing that serves the needs for highway, pedestrian and marine traffic. The need for this proposal is to replace a structurally deficient, functionally obsolete bridge with a condition rating of 'serious.' A Coast Guard Bridge Permit application has not yet been submitted but would be required for this project.

A previous Preliminary Public Notice for this project was issued by the Coast Guard on Aug. 25, 2015. The Coast Guard is issuing this Preliminary Public Notice to solicit updated information on waterway usage. Interested parties who submitted information to the original Preliminary Public Notice are encouraged to do so again and include any updated information. Information received from the original Preliminary Public Notice will also be considered.

The waterway affected is Little Harbor, mile 0.8 between Rye and New Castle, N.H.

The existing bridge is the only movable bridge allowing access for vessels with a height of 14 feet or greater to the back channels of Portsmouth Harbor and Sagamore Creek watersheds at mean high water. The proposed fixed bridge would have a vertical clearance of 17.3 feet (MHW) and 25.9 feet (MLW). Vertical clearance through the existing bridge when open is limited by overhead wires.

Since 2010, the bridge has received an average of 3.9 openings per year. For the past five years (2018 to 2022), there have been 12 bridge openings (2.4 per year) with one vessel asking for 10 of the 12 openings.

The existing bridge requires four hours advance notification for opening.

Mariners are requested to comment on navigational access and safety issues, including the need for clearance gauges, the four-hour advance notification for opening requirement, and extended nighttime navigation through the bridge.

Boat owners in the project vicinity are requested to provide information about their vessels including type of vessel, length overall, draft, beam and height from the waterline to the highest fixed point and to appurtenant structures such as tuna towers, flying bridges, fixed antennas, outriggers and radar units, and whether these appurtenant structures can be lowered. Also provide where the vessel is primarily moored and the frequency of passage under the proposed bridge.

Interested parties are requested to express their views in writing on the proposed bridge project, giving sufficient detail to establish a clear understanding of their reasons for support of or opposition to the proposed work. Comments will be received for the record at the address above or by e-mail to SMB-D1Boston-Bridges-PublicNotices @uscg.mil through Nov. 15, 2022.