

ACEC/NHDOT CONSULTANT QUALITY INITIATIVE (CQI) Meeting

Meeting Minutes – January 18, 2023
2:30 -4:00 PM

Meeting Location: Highway Conference Room

In Attendance:

Bill Oldenburg, NHDOT (Chair)
Mike Long, MJ (Co-Chair)
Kevin Nyhan, NHDOT
CR Willeke, NHDOT
Jim Marshall, NHDOT
Chris Mulleavey, HTA
Rob Faulkner, CHA

Darren Blood, GM2
Marty Kennedy, VHB (Scribe)
Loretta Girard Doughty, NHDOT - remotely
Alex Koutroubas, ACEC
Tobey Reynolds, NHDOT
JoAnn Fryer, F&O

Unable to attend:

Nickie Hunter, NHDOT

- 1) December CQI Meeting Minutes were accepted with couple of minor edits including adding the list of attendees.
- 2) Topics of Discussion:

a) Update on Project Delivery Implementation

Bill Oldenburg shared that the Department is continuing to communicate the new streamlined review process for consultant lead projects at all levels of the Department. The 1-page description of the new guidance will be placed on the DOT website.

Tobey Reynolds noted that communications with PMs is going well. The new process is being implemented on new projects. Implementation of the new process on existing projects is on a case-by-case basis depending on the circumstances.

There was a discussion at the previous meeting to potentially invite Commissioner Cass to a CQI meeting to provide him an update on the implementation of the new process. The Committee agreed that it was too soon for that.

The Committee discussed potential ways of measuring progress on the new streamlined review process. Potential performance measures included:

- Are agreed upon submission dates being met?
- Ad date slippage (DOT already monitors this metric so there is a history for comparison)
- Is the Department getting more projects out each year? If the new process is more efficient, the Department should be getting more projects out.

b) Issues of Common Concern

The Committee discussed whether there was a need to hold an Issues of Concern meeting that would allow consultants to receive feedback on issues that arise during construction. Bill Oldenburg reminded everyone that construction evaluations do get passed along to the design consultant. Jim Marshall noted that there was an internal DOT meeting where design and construction folks discussed issues. Jim will share the meeting notes with CQI Committee members. The Committee agreed that there was no need at this time to hold a meeting but may reconsider in the future.

c) CQI Committee Goals for 2023

Bill Oldenburg stressed that the Department's primary concern is the limited resources (within the Department and within consulting firms) that challenge the Department's ability to get projects designed and out to construction. Bill noted that the Department will increasingly be relying on consultants. Jim Marshall suggested that one long-term solution might be reach out to high schools with a program to encourage students to consider a career in civil engineering.

JoAnn Fryer suggested that the Department consider bringing on more interns, which could raise their interest in civil engineering. The interns could also help with paperwork and other administrative type activities that currently takes the time of DOT PMs and others.

Marty Kennedy reminded the Committee that the limited resources challenge is the reason we developed the streamline review process. Our top priority for 2023 should be to follow through with the implementation of the new process, which has redefined the roles and responsibilities of Department staff and consultants and has the Department and consultants working in partnership (getting away from the "us and them" mentality). Being more efficient will allow the Department to get more projects out despite the limited resources.

As a potential option to address the Department's staff resources issue, the Committee discussed the advantages and disadvantages of the Department retaining consultants to manage/review other consultants similar to ConnDot's CLE program.

d) Direct Expense Reimbursement

Bill Oldenburg presented changes to the guidance on how direct expenses (mileage, meals, and hotel stays) will be reimbursed. The new mileage reimbursement rate (effective 1/1/23 and based on IRS guidance) is 66.5 cents. Meal reimbursement is going to GSA per diem rate – no receipts needed. Hotel rates will also be GSA rates, receipts are required for hotels. The new guidance will become effective Monday 1/23/23 and will be posted on the Standardized Invoicing FAQ sheet on the DOT website.

3) LPA Topics

C.R. Willeke stated that he had nothing new at this point to report.

4) Sub-Committee Updates

Given the long discussion on the earlier agenda items, the Sub-Committee updates were postponed until the next meeting. Darren Blood did note that the Consultant Contract Committee is scheduled to meet on January 25th.

5) Next Meeting – Wednesday – February 15, 2023