

Warner Capital Improvements Program Project 2020-2025
Summary of Kearsarge Mountain Road Potential Emergency Egress Alternatives
by Central NH Regional Planning Commission (CNHRPC)
October 2019

PROJECT VALIDATION

After CNHRPC assisted the Town with developing its updated Hazard Mitigation Plan 2019, the Warner Emergency Management Director, Ed Mical, requested CNHRPC to provide information for the Town to begin implementing one of its critical mitigation actions. This task is to identify potential future emergency egress routes off Kearsarge Mountain Road (KMR) since no known existing connection to North Road is readily available. With a population of over 600 people on the mountain, which is about 21% of Warner's population, finding a location for constructing an emergency egress route is essential. With increasing natural disasters impacting Warner, including two tornadoes in three years (May 2018 and July 2015), future disasters could impede travel up or down KMR if the road experiences treefall, downed power lines, a washout, or wildfire. Emergency services may be unable to access those in need while residents may be unable to evacuate.

METHODOLOGY

CNHRPC and Ed Mical utilized Geographic Information System (GIS) technology of map layers and geodatabases for analyzing KMR egress possibilities. The Town's digital tax parcel layer, transportation and hydrography, and the physical constraints of wetlands, floodplains and topography on an aerial imagery base were utilized in this GIS evaluation. Two plausible emergency egress routes emerged between KMR to North Road for further consideration. These two options were mapped and they accompany this summarization to provide a visual perspective for the Planning Board for inclusion into the Capital Improvements Program.

KMR TO NORTH ROAD ROUTE ALTERNATIVES

1) Egress Alternative from Northeast Catholic College to Town Forest

Northeast Catholic College is situated about 2.5 miles from Main Street (NH 103). An emergency egress could be constructed at the back side of the College, perhaps taking advantage of some of the existing skidding tracks from logging where possible, but more likely the construction of a new roadway would be required. The slope appears to be about 18% from the College to the telecommunications tower. The tower has an existing maintained road which can be utilized to fulfill the connection to North Road.

Advantages of an emergency egress at this location include the Town's ownership (Warner Town Forest) of the parcel where the new road would be constructed, and how far the egress alternative is located from Main Street, enabling emergency access to a greater number of people in the event of a KMR blockage incident. The only non-Town landowner from which permission would need to be secured is the College, and from initial reports, they seem interested in the project. A straight emergency egress road from the College across the Town Forest to the tower's road would span about 2,200', but a longer switchback road is likely prudent to keep the slope more reasonable to traverse in all weather

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conditions. The primary challenges appear to be steep slopes, and a roadway on a steep grade may prove expensive to build and maintain, particularly if needed during or after severe weather events.

2) Egress Alternative via Utility Easement to Latting Lane

A Town utility easement approximately 2,500' in length is located off Latting Lane, about 1.0 miles from Main Street (NH 103) and situated across from the Mt. Kearsarge Indian Museum. The utility easement cuts through the forest in a cleared track about 30' wide and continues southwest to the North Ridge Housing complex and its cul-de-sac. This facility connects to North Road across from the backside of Market Basket. From Latting Lane to the North Ridge cul-de-sac, the slope is approximately 6%, although the easement track has two or three sharp turns.

Advantages of an emergency egress at this location include the existing filed easement deed, a cleared and maintained track following its length, and a gradual incline. Since Latting Lane enters KMR only 1 mile up the mountain, fewer people would be served during a KMR blockage incident. An egress road's challenges here may be many. The easement appears to pass through at least four parcels and all may have deed restrictions that limit the easement's usage, which is presently underground. The Nichols property, which has its frontage off Split Rock Road, hosts 1,500' of the utility easement, so an emergency access road would effectively bisect the property and limit future development options. There is a section of wetlands an emergency access road would need to cross.

FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR EMERGENCY EGRESS ALTERNATIVES

Moving forward with the project would require the development of a feasibility study which examines in detail the prospective obstacles, points for consideration, whether either of these alternative routes could be constructed, and may include an anticipated cost for each alternative. General issues to consider within the assessment of each egress alternative may include: undertaking a public process, review of zoning and local, State and federal regulations; surveying work; deed research; potential need of new easements; potential land or easement purchase; permits; estimated construction materials and labor; a draft timetable; and a long-term viability and maintenance plan and prospective budget.

The estimate for the Kearsarge Mountain Road Potential Emergency Egress Alternatives Feasibility Study is \$10,000.