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James:

I've reviewed the Middlebury Rail Project WCRS-23 (the "Project") extensively over the last year as a result of personal and professional interest.

I hold a BS in Structural Engineering from the University of California-San Diego. I also hold a Master's Degree in Engineering Management from Duke University. As a Project Manager, I recently completed a 5-year, \$210 million industrial construction project. I oversaw and was responsible for navigation of Federal regulatory process in Canada, including a thorough environmental assessment, impacts of rail and marine traffic increases, negotiation with aboriginal communities and local stakeholders, and ongoing responsibility for Health, Safety, Environment, and Quality programs during construction. The physical works I was responsible for included over 20 km of railroad work including new railroad construction, track realignment, and major track maintenance (tie replacement, rail grinding, ballast replacement, etc.). I oversaw the levelling of approximately 50 acres of land, requiring daily drilling and blasting of over 700,000 cubic meters of rock, extensive evacuation and safety protocols, and precise operational planning. During the course of construction, the industrial facility continued operations processing approximately 100,000 railroad cars/year (275 cars/day).

Based on my experience and background, I believe the vehicle and pedestrian bridges over the VTR railroad track on Main St. and Merchant's Row can be replaced quickly and relatively inexpensively. A simple replacement of the bridge decks and upgrading of the support abutments at either end can be accomplished for under \$2.5M per bridge, for a total project cost of \$5M. To be more clear, material and installation of the bridge decks themselves will cost ~\$500k per bridge, with the remaining \$2M allowed for demolition and replacement of the abutments.

Assuming the stoppage of rail traffic during construction, the closure of Merchant's Row and Main Street sequentially, and 24 hr construction, each bridge can be completely replaced in under 1 month. In order to maintain vehicular and pedestrian traffic in the historic downtown of Middlebury, I recommend the sequential (rather than simultaneous) replacement of the two bridges. Assuming a 1-month period between the replacements to reposition men, equipment, and material, the entire process can be completed and all disruption to residents and commercial rail traffic removed in 3 months. Coordination and collaboration between the engineer and civil contractor should identify means to reduce the schedule even further, with a goal of achieving complete replacement of both bridge decks and abutments in under 2 months.

Sincerely,

Matthew LaFiandra  
Vice President