

Bridge 31 – Background and Flood Event History

Prior to July 2023, Bridge 31 functioned as a local transportation crossing with typical age-related wear.

During the July 2023 flood event, significant sediment transport from Stannard Brook and the Upper Lamoille River resulted in delta formation at the confluence immediately upstream of the bridge. This altered flow patterns and increased hydraulic pressure on the abutments.



Post-event assessment determined that the structural stability of the bridge was compromised. The Town removed the bridge on an emergency basis to address safety risk and prevent further channel obstruction.

Field observations and geomorphic context indicate that channel conditions at this confluence have materially adjusted since the flood event. Any reconstruction would occur within this altered hydraulic and sediment regime.

Relevant Planning Context

The 2009 Upper Lamoille River Geomorphic Assessment identifies bridge constrictions and tributary confluences as areas vulnerable to sediment accumulation, ice jamming, and channel instability. The Stannard Brook confluence is identified as a sediment storage area contributing to overall river system function.

Reconstruction at this location would reintroduce a structural element within that geomorphic context and should be evaluated accordingly.



Community Impact Survey – Overview

To better understand how the removal of Bridge 31 has affected travel patterns, the Town distributed a voluntary community survey in early 2026. The survey received 138 responses.

The survey provides insight into how Bridge 31 functioned for nearby residents and frequent users, while recognizing that the responses represent a self-selected group rather than the full Hardwick population. The Town of Hardwick has approximately 2,900 residents, and many residents in other parts of town may have had little or no regular interaction with this crossing.

Because participation was voluntary, the results should not be interpreted as a statistically representative poll of the entire community. However, the responses do provide useful information about how the bridge functioned for residents and commuters in the surrounding area.

Community Impact Survey – Key Findings (138 Responses)

Use Patterns

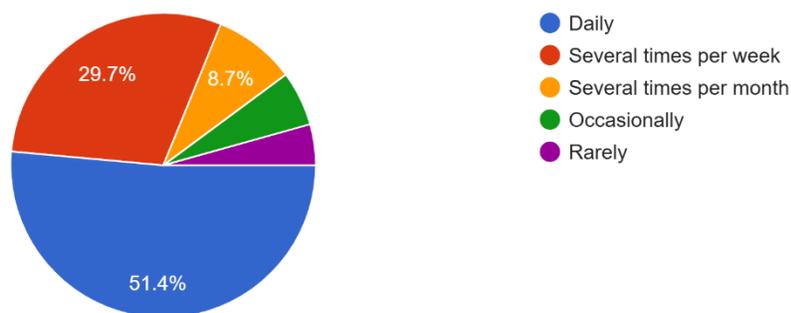
Many respondents reported frequent use of the bridge prior to its removal.

- Daily use: 71 respondents
- Several times per week: 41 respondents
- Several times per month: 12 respondents

This suggests that the crossing functioned as a regular connector for individuals living or traveling within the immediate area, particularly for nearby residents and frequent regional users.

How often did you use Bridge 31 - East Hardwick/Greensboro Bend Bridge?

138 responses



Reasons for Travel

Respondents reported a variety of reasons for using the bridge, including:

- Access to services or businesses – 72 responses
- Work commute – 66 responses
- Visiting family or neighbors – 54 responses
- School or childcare – 40 responses
- Emergency or medical access – 25 responses
- Farm or business operations – 20 responses

These responses suggest the bridge supported a mix of commuting, daily errands, agricultural activity, and local travel.

Travel Impacts

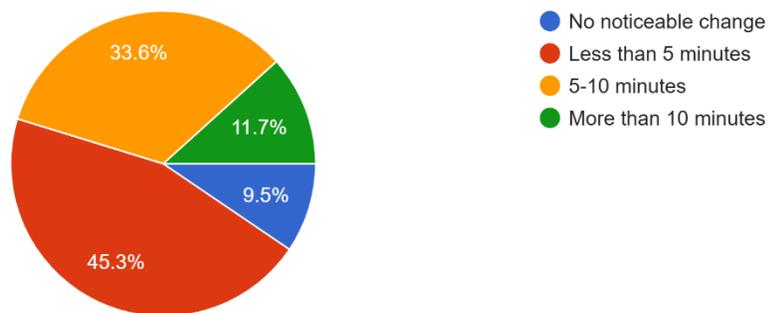
Most respondents reported that the current detour adds a modest amount of travel time.

- Less than 5 minutes: 62 responses
- 5–10 minutes: 46 responses
- More than 10 minutes: 16 responses
- No noticeable change: 13 responses

While the additional travel time is limited for many users, frequent users reported that the detour affects daily routines.

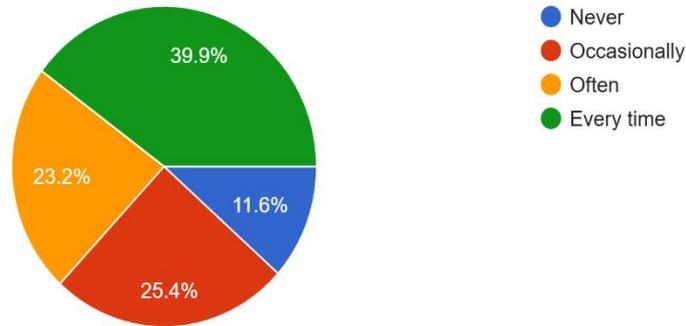
How much additional travel time does the detour usually add?

137 responses



How often does the detour affect your daily routines?

138 responses



Safety and Infrastructure Concerns

Several respondents reported safety concerns associated with the alternate route.

- Safety concerns on alternate route: 81 responses
- Winter travel concerns: 42 responses
- Emergency or medical access concerns: 40 responses
- Increased fuel or vehicle costs: 39 responses

When asked to compare the alternate route to the former crossing:

- About the same: 34 responses
- Somewhat less safe: 45 responses
- Much less safe: 50 responses

Written comments frequently referenced increased traffic through Greensboro Bend village, limited visibility at the Route 16 intersection, and pedestrian activity near the daycare, park, and rail trail.

Regional Use

Survey responses indicate that the bridge served a regional user base extending beyond Hardwick residents.

Town of residence responses included:

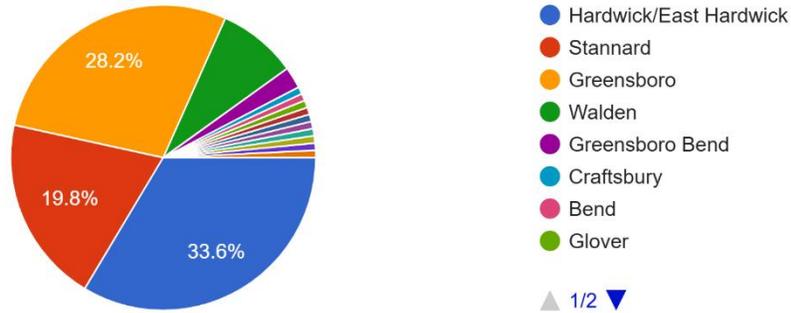
- Hardwick / East Hardwick – 44
- Greensboro – 37
- Stannard – 26
- Walden – 11
- Other nearby communities – small number

This pattern suggests that the bridge functioned as a connector for multiple nearby communities.

Community Perspectives on Future Options

Town of Residence (optional)

131 responses

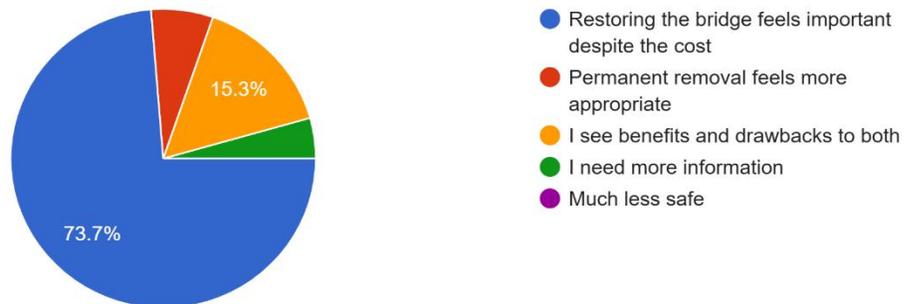


When asked which statement best reflected their current view:

- Restoring the bridge feels important despite the cost – 101 responses
- Permanent removal feels more appropriate – 9 responses
- I see benefits and drawbacks to both – 21 responses
- I need more information – 6 responses

Which best reflects your current view?

137 responses



Fiscal Context

Under current funding structures:

- FEMA funding for reconstruction has not been obligated at this time.
- Any required municipal cost share would be borne by Hardwick.
- Traffic and infrastructure impacts occurring within Greensboro are outside Hardwick's jurisdiction.

Long-Term Pathways Under Consideration

The conditions described above result in two general pathways that communities typically evaluate when a crossing is removed following a major flood event.

Option 1: Rebuild Bridge 31

Considerations may include:

- Restoration of direct transportation access
- Reduced detour travel time for nearby residents and commuters
- Capital construction cost and funding availability
- Long-term maintenance obligations
- Reintroduction of a structure within an active sediment and floodplain environment

Option 2: River Corridor Restoration / Permanent Removal

Considerations may include:

- Maintaining the current transportation pattern
- Removal of a structural element at the river confluence
- Avoidance of major capital replacement costs
- Potential need to consider off-site traffic or safety mitigation

Bridge 7 Context

State inspection currently rates Greensboro Bridge 7 in fair to satisfactory condition with no emergency designation. Bridge 31 and Bridge 7 are in separate jurisdictions and are evaluated independently.

Decision Considerations for the Board

The Board will need to weigh several factors in determining a path forward, including:

- Transportation access and regional reliance
- Documented geomorphic and floodplain conditions
- Fiscal exposure and funding uncertainty
- Jurisdictional authority
- Long-term maintenance responsibility
- Emergency response considerations

At this stage, the Board may wish to consider what additional information or analysis would be helpful before determining a long-term direction for the site.

The purpose of this overview is to summarize existing conditions, survey input, and factors that may inform future discussion. No final recommendation is provided in this document.