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Construction begins on redeveloping Hooksett Welcome Centers on I-93

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Calling it an innovative public-private partnership, Governor Maggie Hassan helped kick off construction work on a major upgrade of the Hooksett Welcome Centers on I-93 that will provide New Hampshire residents and visitors a wide range of new and improved services, including multiple dining options, an interactive visitors center, a N.H. Liquor and Wine Outlet store, a country store, a bank, and fueling stations.

The governor led the groundbreaking for the project that brings together the State of New Hampshire and The Common Man family of restaurants to provide new, high-quality facilities replacing the existing northbound and southbound Welcome Centers.

"The Hooksett Welcome Centers project is an innovative public-private partnership that will help boost our economy and support our tourism industry by providing a high-quality welcome for all visitors to the Granite State," governor Hassan said. "With the project estimated to create 137 long-term jobs, the new welcome centers will help spur economic growth and offer a uniquely New Hampshire experience that showcases what makes our state special."

Under a 35-year ground lease with the state of New Hampshire, The Common Man family of restaurants is funding the design, construction, maintenance, and operation of both service areas, with the exception of the N.H. Liquor and Wine Outlet stores, which will be funded and operated by the N.H. Liquor Commission.

"This is a unique and innovative project involving all New Hampshire-based companies from the owner/operator, bank, architects, construction, and other partners," said Alex Ray, owner and founder of The Common Man family of restaurants in New Hampshire. "As a long-time resident and business owner in New Hampshire, I'm really looking forward to a fresh statement for visitors and residents at these welcome centers and service areas."

The redevelopment project will construct new buildings on both sides of the highway that will feature mill-building architectural style and house all Common Man food options in a food court setting, including a 1950s style diner, an Italian Farmhouse restaurant, a deli, and a breakfast shop. A 24-hour convenience store, two new N.H. State Liquor & Wine Outlet stores, a bank branch, and an interactive and informative visitors center are also part of the redevelopment plan. Irving Oil fueling stations for passenger vehicles will be added at each location, and a test run of plug-in stations for electric vehicles will launch at the new facilities. When completed, the project will bring an estimated 137 new full-time jobs to the area.

"The Welcome Centers are often the first impression that visitors have of the state and this new facility will put our best foot forward. Providing modern and convenient facilities will help enhance our visitors' experience," said New Hampshire Department of Resources and Economic Development commissioner Jeffrey Rose. "With tourism being the second-largest industry in the

state, this will ensure that visitors have a positive impression of New Hampshire."

The new 20,000 s/f N.H. Liquor and Wine Outlet stores will more than double the size of the existing stores.

"These will be model Welcome Centers for New Hampshire," said New Hampshire Department of Transportation commissioner Chris Clement. "It's a great project for the Turnpike System, the DOT, the N.H. Liquor Commission, and the state. The new Welcome Centers will be a must stop for commuters, tourists, and liquor store patrons."

"These two new high-profile NH Liquor and Wine Outlet mega stores will benefit traveling guests and residents alike," said NH Liquor Commission (NHLC) chairman Joseph Mollica. "Customers will experience the retail future of the NHLC thanks to numerous design improvements resulting in a more enjoyable shopping experience. Spirit selections will increase by 50% and wine offerings will increase 75%, introducing customers to the hottest new brands and more exclusively allocated items. All these factors lead us to project up to \$6 million in sales increases between the two locations."

In Fiscal Year 2013, sales at the I-93 N.H. Liquor and Wine Outlet stores at the Hooksett Welcome Centers were approximately \$34.5 million.

"This development will set a new standard for the traveling public and shows our commitment to expand our retail network in New England with high quality destinations for travelers," said Paul Browning, president & CEO of Irving Oil. "Irving Oil has a long tradition of providing excellent customer service and high-quality products to motorists; working with our partners, we're delighted we will soon have the opportunity to enhance our service to both the local community and drivers on I-93."

Both Hooksett Welcome Centers, as well as the N.H. Liquor and Wine Outlet stores, will remain open throughout the construction project. The new Hooksett Welcome Service Centers are scheduled to be completed in April 2015.

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