
To: John Fallon
MassDOT

Date: September 26, 2019

From: Taylor Miller
Howard Stein Hudson

HSH Project No.: 2017033

Subject: MassDOT
Gleasondale Road Bridge Rehabilitation Project - #605342
25% Design Public Hearing
Meeting Notes of August 15, 2019

Overview

On August 15, 2019, members of the MassDOT Highway Division team for the Gleasondale Road Bridge rehabilitation, held the 25% design public hearing in Stow to present the proposed project and receive public feedback on the design.

The meeting began with opening remarks by Senator Jamie Eldridge and Representative Kate Hogan. Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) Project Manager John Fallon began the presentation by introducing the project team, stating the purpose for the meeting, presenting project goals, and providing an overview of the project. Melissa O'Day, the Right of Way Agent for MassDOT, explained the procedure for acquiring the necessary rights of public and private way for the implementation of the project. An overview of the project was provided by Nathaniel Cabral-Curtis of Howard Stein Hudson, and Jaime French of Fuss & O'Neill followed with a detailed description of the construction process. Cabral-Curtis and Fallon finished the presentation by outlining the project's next steps regarding public involvement, permit acquisition, and construction timeline.

The audience was very satisfied with the level of communication between the Project Team and the public. They shared that they felt listened to throughout the meeting and the project process as a whole. The audience's response to the design was strongly positive. The discussion included residents asking for adequate notice for overnight bridge closures, suggestions for how to accommodate canoers and kayakers during bridge construction, and feedback on whether a width-restricted portion of road should become either a bike lane or a sidewalk.

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Detailed Meeting Minutes¹

Welcome & Opening Remarks

C: Nathaniel Cabral-Curtis: Hello everyone and thank you for joining us this evening. My name is Nathaniel Curtis and I am the project’s public involvement specialist. Before we start tonight’s presentation, I would like to recognize the elected officials in the room, including Senator Eldridge, Representative Hogan, Chair Salvie of the Board of Selectmen, and Selectman Burke and Selectman Ryan. We offer the Senator and Representative opportunities to make any opening remarks before the MassDOT team begins the official program.

C: Representative Kate Hogan: Thank you for coming out tonight. I am very pleased with the Gleasondale Road Bridge Rehabilitation Project. The collaboration at these meetings tells us that people are listening and working to make sure that everyone’s voice is heard. I am very pleased and glad to see so many people here.

C: Senator Jamie Eldridge: I want to thank MassDOT for conducting the 25% Design Public Hearing. I also want to thank Representative Hogan and her staff for taking the lead and advocating for the improvements of Gleasondale Bridge, including access for boating and the addition of bicycle lanes. I represent Hudson and Stow, and this bridge carries a critical road that connects the two towns and provides access to the apple orchards. I am here to lend my support and advocate for State funding for this bridge proposal. I know that the current conditions have been very frustrating, but all things considered it seems to have been working well. Thanks again to MassDOT for being here, and if I could be a resource, please contact my office.

¹ Herein “C” stands for comment, “Q” for question and “A” for answer. For a list of attendees, please see Appendix 1. For copies of meeting flipcharts, please see Appendix 2.

A: Nathaniel Cabral-Curtis: Thank you very much Senator and Representative. At this time, I would like to bring our Project Manager John Fallon up to begin the presentation.

Presentation

C: John Fallon: Thank you Nate. My name is John Fallon and I am the project manager for the Gleasondale Road Bridge Project. Once the meeting has closed, the attendance sheet will become part of the public record, so if you want your attendance noted we have a sign-in sheet in the back next to the project handout sheets.

The agenda for tonight includes an introduction of the project team, existing conditions at the bridge site, the project goals, the proposed bridge rehabilitation and construction staging, and finally public comments and testimonies.

From MassDOT's District 3 office we have assistant bridge engineer Mickey Splaine, our Right-of-Way representative from MassDOT is Melissa O'Day, our consultant representation from Fuss & O'Neill is Jaime French and Kristen Hayden, our public outreach coordination consultant is Howard Stein Hudson represented by Nate Curtis and Taylor Miller, and our stenographer tonight from Arlington Typing is Greg Toabox, who will be making a verbatim transcript from the hearing.

The public hearing notice was placed in the MetroWest Daily News on August 1st and August 8th. It was placed in the Maynard Beacon Villager on August 1st and August 8th. It was also in the Stow Independent and Bolton Independent July 26th and July 31st. A copy of the public hearing notice will be attached to the meeting transcript.

MassDOT's in-house bridge design group has been and will be designing the bridge, and Fuss & O'Neill will be doing all other highway design, utility coordination design, and environmental permitting. Howard Stein Hudson is assisting us with public involvement. The Town of Stow has been a great team member on this project by identifying important aspects of the bridge's location and concerns of the citizens.

The handout explains the purpose of the public hearing, which is to give MassDOT a formal presentation of the proposed project and receive public feedback on the design to date. We are currently in the 25% design phase, which means that we've developed a design that is ready for presentation and public comment.

The purpose of this project is to address the current structural elements of the bridge that have caused it to narrow to one, alternating travel lane. The Gleasondale Road Bridge Rehabilitation Project involves replacing the bridge's superstructure, which is the top part of the bridge, the surface that you drive on, the railings, and the beams and one abutment. There will also be minor roadway work.

We estimate that the total project will cost approximately \$6.5 million, 80% of which will come from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and 20% from MassDOT. In order for this project to be funded and advertised for construction, it has to be programmed on a state-wide transportation improvement program or TIP. This project is programmed at the 2020 fiscal year, so money has been allocated for this construction. The estimated cost does not include any right of way acquisitions. Design is expected to be completed in the summer of 2020 and construction is estimated to last 2 – 2 ½ construction seasons.

Melissa O'Day from MassDOT's right of way will now give an overview of the right of way process.

C: Melissa O'Day: Good evening, my name is Melissa O'Day and I represent the Right of Way Bureau at MassDOT. The Right of Way Bureau is responsible for acquiring all the necessary rights of public and private way for the design, construction, and implementation of this project.

The current design plans indicate that fee takings and permanent easements may be required, and other areas may require temporary construction easements. Affected property owners' rights are protected under Massachusetts general laws, primarily Chapter 7 B9. If a project is receiving federal funds, property owners' rights are further defined under Title III of the Real Property Act of 1970. I will be happy to answer any of your general questions regarding right of way activities during the open forum for questions. Also, I will be available after the public hearing for any specific questions you may have.

C: John Fallon: Thank you Melissa. Before we turn it over to Nate for the rest of the presentation, I just want to note that we're presenting preliminary engineering plans. That being said, there may be questions that we cannot answer at this time.

C: Nathaniel Cabral-Curtis: First, we will look at the project area. You can see the bridge and the homes of abutters who we've joined on a few sight walks. Nearby, you can see the apple orchards that are very important to the town.

In this image of the underside of the bridge, you can see its deteriorating conditions. As everyone in town is aware, the bridge has been a single, alternating lane with traffic signals since 2015 when a bridge inspection set weight limitations on the structure. As John mentioned, there are parts of the bridge that are at the end of their useful lifespan and can't be repaired, including the deck and the rails, the beams that support the roadway deck, and the northern abutment. The southern abutment is in reasonable condition and will be reused.

This is an important commuter and trucking route. It provides access to Stow's apple orchard which see a considerable amount of traffic between Labor Day and Columbus Day, and it provides access to the Gleasondale Industrial Park. We know from our talks with Stow First Responders that Route 62 is an important corridor for moving through the area to respond to emergencies. The bridge is closely abutted to homes to the north and south. There is a canoe and kayak launch in the bridges northeast corner. The Assabet River which the bridge crosses over is an environmentally sensitive resource. In its current condition, the bridge is subject to a stepped-up inspection schedule which causes more closures and traffic impacts than if it were in good condition.

The design effort was launched in 2017. Leading up to that, we have had extensive public outreach, including open office hours at Town Hall. In advance of tonight's meeting, there were flyers placed on homes around the corridor, drops of flyers at the Town Hall, Post Office, and Public Library, and we spent two hours last Thursday distributing flyers at the Shaw's on Great Road to make sure that we got enough people to this hearing, and it looks like we did. I will now turn the presentation back over to John.

C: John Fallon: At the beginning of this project, goals were established through public outreach efforts. The goals include bringing the bridge up to current functional and design standards, return to two lane traffic, provide sidewalks on both sides, add bicycle-accommodating shoulders, maintain the footprint of the bridge, reduce the frequency of inspections so that there are less closures, and not preclude any future town improvements.

Proposed bridge improvements include two, 10 ft travel lanes, a 5 ft bicycle-accommodating shoulder, sidewalks on both sides, a new crash-tested railing that's modeled after a bridge in Hudson, and discharge of treated drainage indirectly to the river. At this point, I will turn the presentation over to Jaime who will describe the construction process.

C: Jaime French: This image shows what the bridge will look like when it's done. The northern abutment is going to be replaced due to its deteriorating condition. The two piers and the southern abutment will be maintained as they are in good shape. Everything on the top, the

bridge deck, girders, railings, will all be replaced. It's going to look a lot like it does now, but better.

Part of what we need to do to construct the project is relocate a lot of the utilities. There are a lot of utilities on site, overhead and in the ground, so the first thing we're going to do is relocate them. We will have to create an access to reach a utility pole. It will be about 5 ft wide with a gravel surface and drainage on the inside corner directed into the river. We will leave the access for folks to use as they do now. We will be extending the sidewalk on the side with the access.

The bridge will be built in two stages. We are estimating that it will take 2 – 2 ½ construction seasons to complete. We will be replacing one half of the bridge at a time. For the first stage, it will stay in its current configuration of one alternating traffic lane. Pedestrian access will be maintained throughout the process. We will need to fully close the road for a couple of construction activities: removing the existing bridge and setting the new beams. We will be using a crane for these activities. As the crane placement will take up most of the roadway width and we don't want to be swinging the crane above active traffic, those activities will happen at night in order to impact users minimally. We estimate that removing the existing bridge will take three 12-hour nights and setting the new beams will take two 12-hour nights. That will happen in each of the two phases to equal 60 hours of closure in each phase. We have coordinated with emergency service to confirm that nighttime is the best time for closures.

Construction will start on one side with utility work. Then the abutment will be replaced, the piers will be patched up, and we will begin work onto the deck. Once completed, we'll flip it, putting traffic on the newly completed side as we complete the second phase of construction.

In the southwest corner there is a stone wall that limits the width of the roadway. In the space we do have, we can either have a bike lane or a sidewalk. We would like to hear feedback tonight on what you would like to see there.

The canoe and kayak access will be closed for the duration of the construction. It's going to be ripped up right away to put in the utility work. When construction is complete, it will return to as it is now. If there are other areas with canoe and kayak access, preferably down stream of here, MassDOT is willing to work with folks to make sure that information is out there so that people know where to go.

Doing work over a stream is environmentally significant, so at this stage we will make sure that there are protections in the contract prohibiting contractors from getting sediment into the stream. We are also aware that there are septic tanks and wells located very close to the project

site. They will be noted on the plans so that contractors know that they must provide appropriate protections. I will now turn the meeting back over to Nate.

C: Nathaniel Cabral-Curtis: We organized a series of meetings with the town's fire chief that were extremely helpful in identifying the best time for the road closures. When those closures happen, they will be the first to know, receiving a 30-day notice in advance of the closure. The fire department has offered to broadcast that news to surrounding first responders during their daily radio check to about 30 communities in the area. They will determine if staged equipment is needed to the south of the bridge during periods of full closure.

When it comes to detouring traffic during those road closures, the closest logical route also has a weight-limited bridge. During those full closures we will need to work with Stow police as well as the Mass Motor Trucking Association to get out the information to truckers.

The outreach for this project will not end with the start of construction. We anticipate that there will be a public meeting in advance of the construction beginning where the contractor will be present and convey how they will undertake this work. MassDOT has gotten very good about issuing regular emails on project progress, so if you join the stakeholder database you will get an email every couple of weeks outlining what has been achieved and what can be expected. Also, there will be specialized outreach in advance of the full closures. We plan to do the closure outside of the apple orchard's operating hours and busy season. With the help of TomTom, we will also be reaching GPS services by inputting the bridge closure and directing drivers to detour routes. To conclude this presentation, John will explain the next steps in the project.

C: John Fallon: Right now, we are at the 25% Design Public Hearing, so the next design submission will be the 75% design which we anticipate will be in winter 2019 or early 2020. The 100% design would then follow in spring 2020. Just like with this meeting, subsequent design will be shared with the town and their departments for feedback. We anticipate advertising for construction in fall 2020 where the plans will become available for contractors to place their bids on, and we anticipate construction to begin fall 2021 and take 2 – 2 ½ construction seasons.

As mentioned earlier, there are important resources in the bridge area, so we will be filing environmental permits such as Section 106 with the Massachusetts Historic Commission, a Water Quality Certificate with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, Categorical Exclusion, and Section 404. We will also need to prove that we are compliant with the national Environmental Policy Act.

As we transition into public comment, I want to restate that some plans are not yet complete so there may be some questions that we are unable to answer. Please come forward to state your question so that we can pick up all the information on the microphone. State your name, and spell it please, and list your affiliation. Finally, for people who don't want to speak tonight, there is a mail-in sheet that you can write your feedback on and leave it here tonight or mail it into MassDOT within ten days.

Are there any elected officials who would like to offer comments first?

Discussion

Q: Jim Salvie: I'm a member of the town's Board of Selectmen. Thank you for being here and doing this. Public involvement has been an important part of this process since October 2015. First, will you be giving residents notice of the 12-hour night work sessions that will be occurring?

A: Nathaniel Cabral-Curtis: Yes. Howard Stein Hudson, the public involvement firm that has worked on the project so far, will continue with the general contractor to provide those notices.

Q: Jim Salvie: Will you give them notice in enough time for them to make alternative arrangements?

A: Nathaniel Cabral-Curtis: Yes, we typically try to provide at least a week's notice.

Q: Jim Salvie: Is it possible to be notified any earlier?

A: Nathaniel Cabral-Curtis: We can certainly try for two weeks.

Q: Jim Salvie: Ok. The utility corridor access ramp is a nice feature. Who will own it? And will the town be given an easement for public access?

A: John Fallon: Right now, the map shows that it takes place on state-owned property that's associated with the bridge. Ownership will remain with the state.

Q: Jim Salvie: I assume that there will be public access?

A: John Fallon: Yes.

Q: Jim Salvie: Will there be an easement grant to the town to keep that title?

A: John Fallon: I don't know that at this moment, but we envision it being accessed as it currently is today. I'm not sure if there are any easements on that land today.

C: Jim Salvie: I'd like for people to have a right to go on that land. Something that, if it were ever to be taken away, notice would have to be given.

A: John Fallon: I would need to look into that.

C: Jim Salvie: Ok. My last comment is that it makes sense to put a sidewalk on the portion of road that is restricted by the stone wall. Bicycles should go in the road and pedestrians shouldn't. Please put some thought into the transition of bicycle lane to road because there are some places where the bicycle lane disappears and cyclists are suddenly in the road or in a travel lane without notice to anyone.

C: John Fallon: That is a really good point. We'll make sure that the design includes signage or road markings to show that there's a transition.

Are there any more local officials who would like to speak?

Q: Lissa Coolidge: I live in Gleasondale and am a tenant in the mill building. Do you know what land, if any, you are planning to take from private owners?

A: John Fallon: The project will include temporary easements. If there's a particular parcel you'd like to talk about we can talk after the hearing.

Q: Lissa Coolidge: The bridge looks a little wider in the photos, so is it going to encroach sideways on the land at the ends extending further than it now goes?

A: John Fallon: The rehabilitated bridge will be practically the same width as the existing bridge. There will be temporary easements taken for the process of constructing the bridge.

A: Jaime French: There will be temporary easements for contractors to get down to the river and access the piers. There will be some minor, permanent takings and that's mostly for roadway slopes, guardrails, and things like that.

Q: Bill Ross: I live on Gleasondale Road and I'm wondering if there was any consideration to limit the speed going across the bridge, and what the speed limit going across the bridge will be?

A: Nathaniel Cabral-Curtis: One thing to notice in the presentation is that the road will be narrowed with the addition of two, 5 ft bicycle-accommodating shoulders and two 10 ft travel lanes. That width is obtained by pulling space out of the travel lanes which today are 11 feet each. Narrowing the roads provides a calming, slowing affect to traffic. So, there will be that natural speed-controlling element.

A: Jaime French: I believe that the speed limit out there right now is 30 MPH and it will remain at 30 MPH.

Q: Bill Ross: I live just past the bridge on the south side, and it has been my experience that people come across the bridge and speed through. Could there be some realignment so that when you come off the bridge you aren't heading straight? That would calm down the traffic also. They did something similar where Marlborough Road comes off Gleasondale Road. There is a turn that keeps drivers from speeding through there.

C: Jaime French: It's going to be difficult to change the orientation of the bridge because we're keeping the existing structure.

C: Bill Ross: I know that. But maybe the way you put lines on it or the way you construct the sidewalks might calm traffic a bit.

A: Jaime French: The space is pretty limited out there now and our goal is to match the alignment with what exists there now.

C: Bill Ross: To whatever extent that you can try, I appreciate it.

C: John Fallon: We are aware that the Town of Stow is looking into a Complete Streets study for street networks in the area and that could possibly address some of your concerns as it goes forward.

Q: Allan Fierce: I live in the northeast part of town and I want to say thank you for listening to our concerns. I think that your plan with respect to the utilities and leaving the access is a terrific idea. Right now, parking for that access is very informal and can accommodate two or three vehicles. Earlier when we talked, you said that you would do what you can to continue to let that informal parking occur there. Thank you. The only downside is that during construction we won't be able to use the access. You mentioned that construction will begin in spring 2021 and end in fall 2022. So that's the period that we won't have access?

A: Jaime French: Yes, that's correct.

C: Nathaniel Cabral-Curtis: If there are other locations that you know of in the area that allow people to access the river we are happy to generate materials for you that you can disburse through your membership telling people where to access the river and how long this access will be closed.

C: Allan Fierce: Yes, we're going to need some signage or something to warn people not to go down there because it will be dangerous.

As a cyclist, I want to thank you for adding the bicycle lane. Regarding Mr. Salvie's comment on what to do about the road, I second making it a sidewalk. I'm happy to ride in the road. Thank you again for being responsive to our comments.

Q: Jesse Steadman: I am a town planner with the Town of Stow. MassDOT has a pretty stringent right of way process. When would they let folks know of temporary easement takings?

A: Melissa O'Day: That process will be assigned to us, and we will send notifications out eight months prior to construction beginning. We'll come out and explain everything to the property owners who will be affected. That will be around April of next year.

C: Nathaniel Cabral-Curtis: If there are no more questions, then it falls to our MassDOT project manager to call this meeting to a close.

C: John Fallon: Before I call this meeting to a close, I want to thank the Town of Stow for the use of this facility. I also want to thank Jesse Steadman, Mike in the highway department, and the police and fire for the work they've put into this preliminary phase. I look forward to working with you all during the final design.

With that, it is 7 PM and I declare this hearing closed. Thank you.

Next Steps

The project will now advance towards the 75% design level. 75% and eventually 100% design plans will be shared with the Town of Stow for the municipality's review and comment. Public involvement will continue throughout design and into construction. Questions, comments, and feedback can be sent to at john.fallon@state.ma.us.

Public involvement will continue throughout all phases of the project.

Appendix 1: Meeting Attendees

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation
Steve	Angelisi	Resident
Mary	Austin	Resident
Emily	Beyette	Resident
William	Byron	Resident
Nathaniel	Cabral-Curtis	Howard Stein Hudson
Steve	Conor	Resident
Laurel	Conor	Resident
Lissa	Coolidge	Resident
E	Dodd	Resident
Jamie	Eldridge	State Senator
John	Fallon	Massachusetts Department of Transportation – Highway Division
Allan	Fierce	Resident
Karen	Frecker	Office of Representative Hogan
Jaime	French	Fuss & O'Neill
Kristen	Hayden	Fuss & O'Neill
Kate	Hogan	State Representative
Taylor	Miller	Howard Stein Hudson
Melissa	O'Day	Massachusetts Department of Transportation – Right of Way
Bill	Ross	Resident
Tom	Ryna	Resident
Jim	Salvie	Stow Board of Selectmen
Marty	Sheehan	Resident
Mickey	Spaine	Massachusetts Department of Transportation – Highway Division
Dot	Spaulding	Resident
Jesse	Steadman	Stow Town Planner
Gregory	Torbox	Arlington Typing