



## **I-91 Viaduct Study Working Group Meeting #9**

**March 23, 2017 – 4:00 PM**

**UMass Center at Springfield, Tower Square, 1500 Main Street, Springfield, MA**

### **Summary**

**Purpose:** The ninth meeting of the I-91 Viaduct Study Working Group presented an overview of the alternatives analysis work completed to date and solicited feedback from the Working Group.

**Present:** Ethan Britland, Michael Clark, Stephanie DiNezio, and Rohith Prakash of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT); Mark Arigoni, Nick Armata, John Hoey and Van Kacoyannakis of the project study team led by Milone & MacBroom (MMI); Emily Christin and Sarah Paritsky of Regina Villa Associates; and the following members of the Working Group:

**Rana Al-Jammal**, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC)

**Jenny Catuogno**, Young Professional Networking Groups

**Ashley Eaton**, Live Well Springfield/PVPC

**Donna Feng**, MassDOT District 2

**Ed Hiney**, Springfield Police

**Andrew Krar**, Town of Longmeadow

**Rich Masse**, MassDOT District 2

**Paul Nicolai**, Nicolai Law Group, P.C.

**Patrick Paul**, MassDOT District 2

**Gary M. Roux**, PVPC

**Laura Walsh**, Forest Park Civic Association

**Ben Wood**, MA Department of Public Health

**Thomas Yarsley**

MassDOT Project Manager Ethan Britland opened the meeting, introduced the project study team, and reviewed the agenda.

MMI Principal Mark Arigoni recapped the second public meeting that was held on December 6, 2016, and noted that at this Working Group meeting the attendees will be able to take a closer look at the details of the three alternatives. Mr. Arigoni reviewed the three alternatives and noted that each is being compared to the Future 2040 No-Build condition.

### **Alternative #1 – Sunken, Tunnel, or Combination(s) Following Current I-91 Alignment**

Mr. Arigoni showed the conceptual plans of Alternative #1 that have been presented at previous meetings. The plans for each alternative were broken up into three sections: I-291/I-91 Interchange area, downtown core and riverfront area, and South End Bridge/Agawam/Longmeadow area. He briefly summarized the alternative, which would involve sinking a portion of I-91 following its current alignment, new I-291/I-91 Interchange ramp alignments, new East and West Columbus Avenues, the

potential for new economic development in the downtown area, and improved pedestrian access for the waterfront. There would also be improvements to the Route 57/Route 5 Interchange and Longmeadow Curve, which is a potential mid-term recommendation included in all three alternatives.

Mr. Arigoni presented updated graphics for the alternative, including an isometric view of a 3-D model to help the study team and the public visualize what the alternative could look like. The graphics help viewers understand how the roadways would work and provide a better sense of pedestrian improvements.

### **Alternative #2 – Sunken, Tunnel, or Combination(s) Following Modified I-91 Alignment**

Mr. Arigoni showed the conceptual plans of Alternative #2 that have been presented at previous meetings. He briefly summarized the alternative, which would involve sinking a portion of I-91 following a modified alignment that is closer to the rail corridor, new I-291/I-91 Interchange ramp alignments, new East and West Columbus Avenues, the potential for new economic development in the downtown area, and improved pedestrian access to the waterfront.

He presented an isometric view of the Alternative #2 3-D model, which is to scale and viewed from all angles with the appropriate software.

### **Alternative #3 – Reconstructed Elevated Structure (Modern Viaduct)**

Mr. Arigoni showed the conceptual plans of Alternative #3 that have been presented at previous meetings. He noted that it is important to think about what a “modern viaduct” can look like, as it can be significantly different (longer distances between piers, higher elevation, etc.) than what is currently in place. He briefly reviewed the improvements this alternative would provide, noting that the I-91 North Garage would remain but the I-91 South Garage would need to be relocated or replaced with a surface lot to remove the visual barrier. He pointed out the same Route 57/Route 5 Interchange and Longmeadow Curve improvements as the first two alternatives.

### **Refinement of Evaluation Criteria**

Mr. Arigoni presented the six main evaluation criteria categories that each alternative will be measured against:

- Mobility & Accessibility
- Safety
- Environmental Effects
- Land Use & Economic Development
- Community Effects
- Cost

Mr. Arigoni said the study team has divided each evaluation criteria into further measures and is comparing the results to the 2040 No-Build conditions. He said there is too much detail to present, but the criteria and initial rankings can be viewed at stations around the room. Mr. Arigoni directed Working Group members to visit each of the following three stations:

- Station #1: Mobility & Safety Criteria (Facilitated by Van Kacoyannakis, MMI)
- Station #2: Land Use, Socioeconomic, & Community Effects (Facilitated by Nick Armata, MMI)
- Station #3: Environmental Effects & Cost (Facilitated by Mr. Arigoni)

Mr. Arigoni noted that the study team has begun estimating costs for each alternative, but pointed out that the evaluation criteria handout is still considered a draft as the alternatives may be modified further once the modeling is completed. Mr. Arigoni explained that MassDOT and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) have been coordinating to integrate public health measures into the study's evaluation criteria. He added that there is currently no available ranking for public health, but that it is in the process of being evaluated. He introduced Ben Wood from DPH, who would be available to answer questions about the public health measures.

### **Breakout Session**

The facilitators for the three stations provided the following summaries of comments heard during the breakout session:

#### **Station #1: Mobility & Safety Criteria**

Mr. Kacoyannakis said the majority of comments he heard were regarding direct vehicle access from I-291 to the Memorial Bridge, which is not accommodated in Alternative #2. Paul Nicolai, Nicolai Law Group, P.C., asked how this access could be incorporated into the evaluation criteria and said once the current deck replacement project is complete there will no longer be a direct connection from I-291 to the Memorial Bridge, which is desirable to the public.

Mr. Kacoyannakis said he also received a lot of comments on the safety improvements to pedestrian and bicycle access on West and East Columbus Avenues, the reduction of weaving sections and on- and off-ramps, as well as comments on including a connection from Forest Park to the Connecticut Riverwalk and Bikeway. An attendee pointed out that many citizens cross West Street, mid-block near the Pride Gas Station, to shop and access the bus stop from the housing that is directly across the way. Mr. Arigoni added that the connection to Forest Park was added late in the study process based on feedback from the Working Group.

#### **Station #2: Land Use, Socioeconomic, & Community Effects**

Mr. Armata said attendees expressed concerns with providing sufficient access to the riverfront for all three alternatives, as well as roadway crossings for pedestrians and bicyclists. He said attendees asked the study team to keep in mind the idea of a gateway to Springfield while preparing the study recommendations. There were comments regarding the length of traffic disruption in the area during construction of the recommended alternative.

Mr. Armata said attendees were indifferent regarding the redesign of the elevated highway deck, the streamlined areas beneath the deck, and the elimination of one of the parking garages. He added that some attendees were concerned with parking availability if the parking garage is removed.

Mr. Armata said there were questions regarding how many lanes are in the proposed East and West Columbus Avenues for each alternative. Mr. Kacoyannakis clarified that there would be three lanes in both directions for Alternatives #1 and #3, and mostly two lanes in both directions for Alternative #2, plus auxiliary lanes at intersections. Mr. Arigoni added that all intersections and signals will be upgraded to meet ADA accessibility standards, with Complete Streets elements.

Mr. Armata said attendees also were concerned that the addition of bicycle access to East and West Columbus Avenues may take away from potential space for pedestrians. There were other comments

about whether building the highway close to the Connecticut River would be cost effective, and of the potential for gentrification of the downtown neighborhoods. Some attendees identified the alternatives as being a catalyst for downtown neighborhoods, while others thought the South End neighborhood (south of the casino) would not be gentrified by any of the alternatives.

### Station #3: Environmental Effects & Cost

Mr. Arigoni thanked Rich Masse, MassDOT, for pointing out that the cost for annual maintenance of the existing system should be \$500,000. Based on comments he heard, Mr. Arigoni said the study team will consider adding a life cycle maintenance cost measure to the evaluation criteria for each alternative. He said an attendee asked if the study team considered the potential economic development and cost for structural upgrades needed if a multistory building were to be built on top of the corridor. Mr. Arigoni said the study team will look into this further. Gary Roux, PVPC, commented that PVPC uses a 4% inflation rate when estimating future costs.

Mr. Arigoni said other attendees asked what the cost would be if the Longmeadow Curve and the “peanut” rotary (at the Route 57/Route 5 interchange) improvements were to be carried out separately. Mr. Arigoni said the study team will look into estimating costs for each mid-term alternative. Mr. Britland later noted that the team is still developing rehabilitation costs for the viaduct.

### Questions and Answers

**Comment from Paul Nicolai, Nicolai Law Group:** If the I-291/I-91 Interchange is separated as a mid-term alternative, that would presume which long-term alternative would be built. He added that it can only be a mid-term alternative if the study team knows which long-term alternative will be recommended.

**Comment from Rana Al-Jammal, PVPC:** The maps at Station 2 that show the pedestrian and bicycle access were unclear. She said she didn’t see a connection between West Columbus Avenue and the South End Bridge for Alternative #3, but it was shown for Alternatives #1 and #2. Mr. Arigoni said he will check whether or not there is a barrier that would prevent that connection for Alternative #3, and will speak to Ms. Al-Jammal further after the meeting.

**Question from Ms. Al-Jammal:** Will there be an isometric image for the “peanut” rotary or for the I-291/I-91 Interchange at the next meeting? Mr. Arigoni said there is a limit on how many isometric images the study team can do, but there will be a VISSIM model for the “peanut” rotary and possibly for the I-91 Interchange with the South End Bridge as well. Mr. Arigoni said he will look into providing the full 3-D model at the next meeting.

### Schedule and Next Steps

Mr. Arigoni noted that the study is scheduled to be completed in June. The study team plans to have a final evaluation criteria and summary to present to the Working Group in approximately four weeks. There is one additional Working Group meeting remaining, as well as a final public meeting.

Mr. Britland added that there will be a lot of public health analysis forthcoming, including a public health subcommittee meeting which is open to Working Group members.

Mr. Arigoni thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.