



Interstate 91 Viaduct Study Public Meeting Summary

December 6, 2016

6:00 PM to 8:00 PM

UMass Center at Springfield

Tower Square, 1500 Main Street, Springfield

Project Team

Ethan Britland, Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)

Mark Arigoni, Milone & MacBroom (MMI)

Tim Baird, MMI

Rich Doughty, MMI

John Hoey, MMI

Van Kacoyannakis, MMI

Emily Christin, Regina Villa Associates (RVA)

Sarah Paritsky, RVA

Present: See attendance on pages 7-8

Meeting Purpose

This was the second public information meeting on the Interstate 91 (I-91) Viaduct Study. The purpose of this meeting was to present an overview of three long-term alternatives for the I-91 viaduct, as well as short and mid-term improvements for the study area. An open house session followed the presentation in which participants visited four stations to study the alternatives in more detail and provide feedback to the project team.

Presentation

Ethan Britland, MassDOT Project Manager, opened the meeting and welcomed the participants. Mr. Britland introduced the members of the project team and reviewed the meeting agenda. He described the Working Group which includes representatives from local organizations and city officials, and said the purpose of the meeting is to gather input from the public. He noted that the three alternatives being presented are conceptual recommendations only and will not result in construction, but rather a set of recommendations to move forward to project development.

Mr. Britland summarized the study purpose and said the current I-91 Viaduct is a major barrier in the city. The recommended alternatives would improve overall connectivity and access between the downtown core and the waterfront. He showed a map of the regional and primary study areas. The primary study area encompasses the I-91 Viaduct and central core of Downtown Springfield.

Mr. Britland reviewed the six tasks that make up the study process. Tasks 1, 2 and 3 are completed, and the study team is currently working on Task 4 (Alternatives Analysis), which will incorporate the feedback received at this meeting. Another public information meeting will be held for Task 5 (Recommendations) before the Final Report is developed (Task 6).

Mr. Britland presented a summary of the work completed to date. This included an extensive public and stakeholder involvement process, existing conditions analysis, and ongoing collaboration with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) for an integrated health impact assessment (HIA). Mr. Britland noted that the work with MDPH is a pilot program, because typically the HIA is only carried out after the transportation study has been complete. The study team also created line drawings of the potential alternatives, identified impacts and benefits of the alternatives, and developed short and mid-term improvements. Mr. Britland handed the presentation to Mark Arigoni, Principal-in-Charge of MMI.

Mr. Arigoni noted that attendees will be able to view detailed maps and drawings on all three alternatives on the maps at the back of the room after the presentation. He said staff will be present at each station to answer questions and hear feedback. Mr. Arigoni described how the study team has added width to the line drawings for the three advanced alternatives for better analysis of their impacts and feasibility. Mr. Arigoni showed the line drawings of the five alternatives which were removed for further consideration at previous Working Group meetings due to their high impacts and/or limited benefits:

- At-Grade Option
- I-91 North & Southbound Split (East & West Side)
- New Route 5 Bridge Connection (East & West Side)
- Tunnel Only Option
- I-91 and Railroad Relocated to West Side (Agawam & West Springfield)
 - Mr. Arigoni noted that after this alternative was originally removed from the running, the Working Group requested that the study team take a closer look at its feasibility. The study team determined after a closer look that its impacts to surrounding neighborhoods were unacceptable and were not balanced out by its potential benefits. A letter identifying the removal of this alternative will be provided on the study's website.

Mr. Arigoni presented drawings and illustrative proposed cross sections of the three alternatives for the I-91 Viaduct that are being advanced for further analysis, and provided a quick overview of each:

- Alternative #1: Sunken, Tunnel, or Combination(s) Following Current I-91 Alignment
- Alternative #2: Sunken, Tunnel, or Combination(s) Following Modified I-91 Alignment (section of combined rail and highway corridor)
- Alternative #3: Reconstructed Elevated Structure (Modern Viaduct)

Mr. Arigoni presented the short term alternatives that can be implemented more quickly and as smaller, separate projects. Some examples include improvements under the current viaduct and several pedestrian access improvements to the Connecticut Riverwalk & Bikeway. He noted that during the line

drawing development for alternatives, the study team looked into relocating the rail line. The team determined it to be infeasible, but will continue to look at improving access to the riverfront. Mr. Arigoni showed a photo of the current at-grade crossing to the riverfront, and noted the City of Springfield is looking into upgrading the crossing. Another short term alternative includes improving sidewalks, roadways, and signals to 45 intersections in the study area.

Mr. Arigoni presented the mid-term alternatives, which include improvements to the Longmeadow Curve (maintaining three lanes on I-91, two new intersections at the current rotary for the Route 57/Route 5 Interchange) and the I-291/I-91 Interchange (new off-ramp to I-91 South and Memorial Bridge). He noted that these improvements can be viewed in more detail on the display boards during the open house session. He said these recommendations could be implemented as a separate project regardless of which of the three I-91 alternatives is chosen. A list of the short and mid-term alternatives can be viewed in the presentation, available on the [study website](#).

Mr. Arigoni summarized the refinement of the study evaluation criteria and the alternatives. The coordination with MDPH ensures that the alternatives are measured against public health goals. Mr. Arigoni reviewed the goals of the study and noted that each alternative will be evaluated against these goals.

Mr. Arigoni showed a conceptual plan of Alternative #1 with boxes outlining three different sections of the corridor, and noted that each section is available in a larger format in the back of the room for a more detailed discussion. He said that these plans include details such as shoulders and lane striping on the highway. He explained that this part of the presentation will provide context for what attendees will be looking at during the open house session. The plans show greenspace as well as economic development opportunities in brown. The plans can be reviewed in the presentation on the [study website](#).

The sections include the I-291/I-91 Interchange area, the Memorial Bridge/Downtown Core area, and the South End Bridge/Longmeadow Curves area. Each alternative was divided into these sections, and described by Mr. Arigoni as follows:

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

I-291/I-91 Interchange area: Mr. Arigoni showed a map of the potential development opportunities, and noted that at this point the study team does not know how many stories the buildings would be or what kinds of uses they will have (residential, commercial, retail, etc.). He added that the study team is aware of the need to add parking to accommodate the new development in this area. The team has estimated square footages which will be fed into the traffic demand regional model.

Memorial Bridge/Downtown Core area: Mr. Arigoni described how I-91 is not seen in this section because it is fully covered and depressed in the downtown area (in the current alignment), which opens up many opportunities for open space and access to the riverfront. The highway would elevate at a gradual grade to meet the current elevation of Boland Way/East Columbus Avenue. He noted the CSX rail is in dark gray and is kept at its current elevation with the potential to cover the rail and add development space on top of it. Mr. Arigoni pointed out the realigned on- and off-ramps and said the

sunken highway would emerge at ground level again at Union Street, which can be seen on the display boards.

South End Bridge/ Longmeadow Curves area: Mr. Arigoni explained that the current traffic circle at the Route 5/Route 57 Interchange is removed and replaced with a signalized intersection. He said the Working Group considered and dismissed the possibility of a flyover ramp from Route 5 to Route 57. Three lanes are maintained on I-91 and the on- and off-ramps have been realigned into a “peanut” shaped interchange which would be above I-91. Frontage roads would be on both sides of I-91.

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

Mr. Arigoni noted that this is similar to Alternative #1 except the highway is aligned closer to the rail line and the existing curvature is removed which allows for more open land for potential development. I-91 is sunken at the same parameters as in Alternative #1. He added that elements of each alternative can be interchanged with one another.

I-291/I-91 Interchange area: Mr. Arigoni pointed to the new off-ramp from I-291 West to I-91 South which is very elevated. He said there would be no possible connection to the Memorial Bridge from I-291 West due to grade constraints.

Memorial Bridge/Downtown Core area: Mr. Arigoni explained the highway and rail are completely covered with development space on top. East and West Columbus Avenues are improved for both Alternatives #1 and #2. There are greenspace and streetscape improvements throughout this section. The properties would overlook the park space and the frontage roads. Mr. Arigoni added that this would completely change the view from potential development properties.

South End Bridge/ Longmeadow Curves area: Mr. Arigoni said this section is the same in all three alternatives and could become a breakout mid-term project.

Alternative #3 – Reconstructed Elevated Structure (Modern Viaduct)

Mr. Arigoni noted that most improvements and development would take place beneath the viaduct with this alternative. Street improvements, including lighting underneath the viaduct, could happen immediately, and there would be a lot of usable space. Mr. Arigoni also explained that there might not be a need to keep both I-91 South and I-91 North Garages. He said the I-91 South Garage is currently a major barrier and is blocking a lot of light and air under the viaduct. A potential option would be to keep the I-91 North Garage and make up for the parking loss of removing the I-91 South Garage in another development.

I-291/I-91 Interchange area: Mr. Arigoni pointed out the new off-ramp from I-291 West to I-91 South, and noted a new access point to the rear of Avocado Street.

Memorial Bridge/Downtown Core area: The I-91 North Garage remains, but Mr. Arigoni said the I-91 South Garage would be removed to enhance connection underneath the viaduct. The plan shows significant enhancements to riverfront access and modifications to on- and off-ramps on the viaduct.

Mr. Arigoni said the area underneath the new viaduct would be completely transformed and could include developments.

South End Bridge/ Longmeadow Curves area: Mr. Arigoni said this section is the same in all three alternatives.

Mr. Arigoni introduced Tim Baird, MMI, to present the economic development summary. Mr. Baird described the process the study team completed for each alternative to determine its potential for development opportunities and socioeconomic impacts. Mr. Baird said the team approached this task with an urban design perspective and collaborated with the UMass Donahue Institute to produce the potential development information for each alternative (square footage, types of housing, etc.). UMass then compared the numbers with other comparable cities to observe how they have responded to similar transportation changes and developments. This will provide estimates for potential job creation and population change. Next steps include entering the information into regional and local models to see impacts and shifts in traffic demand, which will also be critical for the HIA and determining impacts to Environmental Justice populations.

Mr. Arigoni reviewed the next steps for the I-91 Viaduct Study, which include completing the Transportation demand regional model (TransCAD) for each alternative, completing local modeling using Synchro and VISSIM to observe impacts to the 45 intersections in the study area, and finalizing the evaluation criteria rating process to select a preferred alternative. Mr. Arigoni added it is possible that components of each alternative may be incorporated into a preferred option. He thanked the Working Group members for their continued participation in the study. Mr. Arigoni showed the project schedule and noted that there are two remaining Working Group meetings (likely January and March 2017) and one more public meeting (likely April or May 2017) to present the final recommended alternative.

Mr. Arigoni explained the four stations that attendees will be viewing in the open house session:

1. Station 1: I-291 & I-91 Interchange
2. Station 2: Memorial Bridge & Downtown Core
3. Station 3: South End Bridge & Longmeadow Curves
4. Station 4: Economic Development and Bicycle/Pedestrian Improvements

Attendees can view large maps and plans of the alternatives at each station. Station 4 displays more information regarding the improvements for pedestrians and bicyclists as well as economic development.

Sarah Paritsky, RVA, explained the dot exercise. Attendees can place a dot sticker next to any element they like on any of the maps as a way of voicing support, with a limit of one sticker per element.

Mr. Britland thanked the attendees for coming and concluded the presentation portion of the meeting.

Open House

The study team staffed four stations around the room and described the alternatives in more details to participants. The following display boards were available at the stations for attendees to review and place stickers on as a voice of support.

Station 1: I-291 & I-91 Interchange

Display Board Title	Number of Stickers
Conceptual plan of Alternative #1: Sunken, Tunnel, or Combination(s) Following Current I-91 Alignment	7
Conceptual plan of Alternative #2: Sunken, Tunnel, or Combination(s) Following Modified I-91 Alignment	4
Conceptual plan of Alternative #3: Reconstructed Elevated Structure (Modern Viaduct)	0

Station 2: Memorial Bridge & Downtown Core

Display Board Title	Number of Stickers
Conceptual plan of Alternative #1: Sunken, Tunnel, or Combination(s) Following Current I-91 Alignment	0
Conceptual plan of Alternative #2: Sunken, Tunnel, or Combination(s) Following Modified I-91 Alignment	12
Conceptual plan of Alternative #3: Reconstructed Elevated Structure (Modern Viaduct)	10
Illustrative proposed cross section of Alternative #1	16

Station 3: South End Bridge & Longmeadow Curves

Display Board Title	Number of Stickers
Conceptual plan of Alternative #1: Sunken, Tunnel, or Combination(s) Following Current I-91 Alignment	4

Conceptual plan of Alternative #2: Sunken, Tunnel, or Combination(s) Following Modified I-91 Alignment	8
Conceptual plan of Alternative #3: Reconstructed Elevated Structure (Modern Viaduct)	2

Station 4: Economic Development and Bicycle/Pedestrian Improvements

Display Board Title	Number of Stickers
Draft Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements	10
Shared-Use Path – Link Forest Park to CT Riverwalk & Bikeway	11
Potential Development Scenarios	0

Attendance:

Jim Czach, Town of West Springfield
 Matthew Dovell, City of Springfield
 Donna Feng, MassDOT
 Stephen Gazillo, Longmeadow Conservation Commission
 Laura Hanson, MassDOT District 2
 Betsy Johnson
 Doug Johnson
 Rob Kapner
 Sgt. M. K. Kwatowski, Springfield Police Department
 Bill Malloy, Green Springfield
 Patrick Marvin, MassDOT
 Douglas Mattoon, Town of West Springfield
 Steve Mitchell, AECOM
 Paul Nicolai, Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts
 Hardy Patel, MassDOT
 Patrick Paul, MassDOT
 Juan Prieto, Davenport
 Catherine Ratté, Live Well Springfield/Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC)
 Shira Rockowitz
 Gary Roux, PVPC
 Jim Scheffler
 Thomas Yarsley

