



Interstate 91 Viaduct Study Public Meeting Summary

December 15, 2015

5:30 PM to 7:30 PM

Sheraton Springfield Monarch Place Hotel
Mahogany Room, 2nd Floor

Project Team

Ethan Britland, Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)
Michael Clark, MassDOT
Mark Arigoni, Milone & MacBroom (MMI)
Rebecca Augur, MMI
John Hoey, MMI
Van Kacoyannakis, MMI
Emily Christin, Regina Villa Associates (RVA)
Sarah Paritsky, RVA

Present: see attendance below

Meeting Purpose

This was the first public information meeting on the Interstate 91 (I-91) Viaduct Study. The purpose of this meeting was to introduce the study to the Springfield community and to welcome feedback from the community. The project team presented Task 1: Study Area, Goals and Objectives, Evaluation Criteria and Public Involvement Plan; and Task 2: Existing Conditions, Future No Build Conditions and Issues Evaluation.

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. Mr. Britland handed the presentation to Mark Arigoni, Principal-in-Charge of MMI.

Mr. Arigoni explained the difference between the I-91 Viaduct Study and the I-91 Viaduct Rehabilitation Project. They are two separate projects that are happening concurrently. The purpose of the I-91 Viaduct Rehabilitation Project is to replace the bridge deck and rehabilitate the structure to extend its life while alternatives for future changes are being investigated. The I-91 Viaduct Study is a conceptual planning study to identify existing issues and evaluate alternatives for the viaduct section of I-91. Mr. Arigoni noted that this is not the first time the I-91 viaduct has been studied. He listed some of the previous studies of the viaduct, such as the Interstate 91 Corridor Planning Study by the Pioneer Valley

Planning Commission (PVPC), and said that the data collected from these reports will be incorporated into the study.

Mr. Arigoni reviewed the purpose of the study and the six tasks that make up the study process. Tasks 1 and 2 are completed, and the study is in the beginning stages of Task 3 (Alternatives Development). He explained that Future No Build Conditions, part of Task 2, show what the transportation system of I-91 would look like in the future year 2040 if no changes to the viaduct are made.

Mr. Arigoni showed a revised schedule for the study, and noted that a significant amount of work was done in Task 2. He said that there were some delays in the data collection for Task 2, which is why it was extended to December 2015. The study is scheduled to be completed in summer 2016.

Mr. Arigoni reviewed the consultant companies on the study team and their individual roles. They include Milone & MacBroom, the main consultant; TranSystems; Goody Clancy; University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute; RDV; and RVA.

Mr. Arigoni outlined the extensive public involvement plan of the study, noting that there will be two more public meetings following this one. He explained the role and makeup of the Working Group, emphasizing that there is a variety of local and regional representation within the group.

Mr. Arigoni showed a map that outlines the regional and primary study areas (also included in the meeting handout). The regional study area was expanded down to the Connecticut State Line. The primary study area is focused along the I-91 corridor, includes 50 intersections, and also extends down to the Connecticut State Line.

Mr. Arigoni defined the study goals and objectives. He noted that the objectives are ways to reach the study goals. A common theme of the objectives is to improve connectivity between Downtown Springfield and the Connecticut River riverfront.

Mr. Arigoni reviewed the different evaluation criteria for the study. He explained that the evaluation criteria will be used to put value to each of the alternatives developed in Task 3. The evaluation criteria are divided into six categories: mobility and accessibility, safety, environmental effects, land use and economic development, community effects, and cost. Mr. Arigoni presented tables for each category that listed the evaluation criteria and its corresponding measure of effectiveness. He explained that the measures of effectiveness are able to break down broad evaluation criteria into quantifiable measurements. For example, "roadway operational functionality" is an evaluation criterion for mobility and accessibility. There are several measures of effectiveness for these criteria, such as intersection delays and level of service (LOS). The LOS provides an indication of delay at the intersection and varies from A (good) through F (poor).

Mr. Arigoni summarized the existing conditions data collection, and explained that data was collected for the following four categories: traffic and multimodal, land use and economic development, environmental, and public health. Mr. Arigoni shared the results of the traffic and multimodal data collection. He showed examples of the maps that were generated, such as intersection traffic counts,

regional traffic volumes, and locations of vehicular crash clusters. He also showed a map of bike and pedestrian routes, and noted that there are only three pedestrian connections to the riverfront and bikeway from Downtown Springfield. He added that each of these maps and this presentation are available for download on the study website, www.mass.gov/massdot/I91ViaductStudy. Mr. Arigoni outlined the traffic issues and constraints, such as the location of the North-South Rail Line, which inhibits access to the riverfront. Mr. Arigoni said that the at-grade rail crossing at Riverfront Park is a “passive crossing,” meaning it does not have flashing lights or roadway gates installed, and is less safe than a signalized crossing.

Rebecca Augur, MMI, presented the results of the economic and land use data collection. Ms. Augur explained that this data is used in the Future No Build Model to help predict traffic patterns and volumes. The study team gathered data from Springfield and surrounding communities within the regional study area, including local comprehensive plans. She provided examples of the data sources, such as economic growth and development, and other key economic indicators such as population, unemployment rates, and median rent. She showed a graphic of the existing land use near I-91 in the Springfield area. Ms. Augur described the issues and constraints associated with this data, including the recent growth of Springfield’s economy, land use changes such as the construction of the MGM casino, and the shift towards live/work spaces. All of these issues will have an effect on future traffic volumes and data have been incorporated into the traffic model.

Mr. Arigoni presented the results of the environmental data collection. He noted that there is an existing US Army Corps of Engineers certified flood control levee system along the Connecticut River. He reviewed the environmental issues and constraints, including groundwater control issues with new building foundations, which has been a problem in the past. There are also historical and cultural resources to be mindful of.

Mr. Arigoni introduced Margaret Round, Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) - Bureau of Environmental Health, to present the public health data collection. He explained that unlike other transportation studies, the I-91 Viaduct Study is being done in tandem with a Health Impact Assessment (HIA). Ms. Round explained that the Transportation Reform Law, signed by former Governor Patrick Deval in 2009, requires DPH to conduct a HIA for new transportation studies.

Ms. Round explained that the purpose of carrying out an assessment of public health considerations for the I-91 Viaduct Study (and any other transportation or planning project) using the HIA framework is to identify and illustrate the relationships between, and consequences of, potential changes to the I-91 Viaduct and the health of the affected population. She stressed the importance of including community stakeholders, including Working Group members, in a transparent decision making process, and informing the public throughout the study of potential health impacts.

Ms. Round outlined the basic steps of an HIA that provide the framework for integrating health considerations into the transportation planning process; currently, the team is in the early stages of the scoping phase to determine which health impacts need to be evaluated. She noted that the approach for this study is referred to as a “rapid HIA” that will be completed in 6 months. The team is also

beginning to identify the baseline health conditions. Ms. Round explained that during the scoping stage, DPH works with stakeholders to help frame the scope of the analysis, and to receive feedback on which health determinants are most important to the community.

Ms. Round reviewed the wide range of health determinants that are evaluated in the analysis, including factors related to the physical environment; built environment, and social and community factors. She then highlighted transportation-related health determinants that can be considered in a transportation project.

Ms. Round shared some data sources for a baseline health assessment of the I-91 Viaduct Study area, including Behavioral Risk Factors Surveillance System (BRFSS) data for Springfield and surrounding zip codes, as well as hospitalizations for asthma and heart attacks. DPH will carry out a comparative analysis of this data compared to statewide data.

Ms. Round reviewed an example of a pathway diagram created by a pilot HIA for the McGrath Highway Project in Somerville. The diagram illustrated the various immediate impacts, intermediate impacts, and outcomes of a new transit-oriented development. For example, a change in the highway structure leads to a change in sidewalk space, which affects mobility and connectivity. This leads to a change in access to open space, parks, and recreation, which impacts access and usability of public resources. This can lead to an increase in physical activity, which finally results in a change in cardiovascular disease and other health outcomes.

Ms. Round also noted that demographic census data and the consideration of Environmental Justice (EJ) populations, as defined by the 2010 Census, are crucial in evaluating public health impacts. She shared an example of an EJ map created by the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA). She noted that there are also numerous social determinants on public health.

Ms. Round outlined the next steps of this effort, including the establishment of a Public Health Subcommittee made up of Working Group members and other interested stakeholders. A meeting will be convened in January. She added that all attendees at tonight's meeting are welcome, and a public health background is not necessary to be on the subcommittee.

Mr. Arigoni reviewed the study opportunities, including the addition of links to the Riverwalk, which is currently underutilized, and the relief of traffic on the Longmeadow curve of I-91. Mr. Arigoni summarized the work completed so far, including the Future No-Build Conditions for the year 2040 - Transportation Demand Model (TransCAD).

Mr. Arigoni summarized the preliminary modeling results from the Future No-Build Conditions TransCAD and micro-simulation models of 50 intersections:

- If no changes are made to the I-91 viaduct, there would be no significant impacts to the LOS of the observed freeways (I-91, I-90, I-291, I-391, Rt. 5) between now and 2040, if three lanes are available on I-91 North and South through the Longmeadow Curve.

- Of the 42 ramps analyzed, those with an LOS of E (delays of about one minute) would increase from four to six between now and 2040.
- Of the 16 weaving sections analyzed, those with an LOS of E would increase from seven to ten between now and 2040.
- Of the 15 unsignalized intersections analyzed, those with an LOS of E would increase from six to nine between now and 2040.
- Of the 39 signalized intersections analyzed, those with an LOS of E would increase from five to 14 between now and 2040. This may be because most of these traffic signals are located in Downtown Springfield.

Mr. Arigoni reviewed the recent and future tasks of the study. He encouraged all attendees to come to the next public meeting when the team will present alternatives for feedback. He reviewed the next steps for the study, including the development of short- and medium-term alternatives to improve traffic flow and safety.

Mr. Arigoni showed a graphic of an example of a long-term alternative for I-91, which included some realignments and a below-grade roadway. He explained that this is the type of alternative that will be presented at the next public meeting.

Mr. Arigoni and Mr. Britland thanked everyone for attending, and encouraged participants to view the large maps in the back of the room. There were no comments or questions.

Attendance:

Rana Al-Jammal, PVPC
 Price Armstrong, PVTA
 Tim Brennan, PVPC
 Bill Caplin
 Mary Caplin
 Jeff Ciuffreda, Springfield Regional Chamber
 Jim Czach, Town of West Springfield
 Matthew Dovell, City of Springfield
 Michael Eger
 Dan Fielding, MassDOT
 Ruben Flores-Marzan, Westover ARB
 KC Jones, HGI Springfield
 Sgt. M. K. Kwatowski, Springfield Police Department
 Tom Leonard, Cianbro
 Paul Marcelina, Sheraton Springfield
 Douglas Mattoon, Town of West Springfield
 Bill Meier, HAKS
 Yaitza Monge, Office of State Rep. Carlos Gonzalez
 Anna Nadler, MassDOT

Paul Nicolai, EDC

Hardy Patel, MassDOT

Josh Rickman, PVTA

Dave Roback, The Republican

Ralph Romano, MassDOT

Margaret Round, Mass DPH

Paula Simmons, MassDOT