



I-91 Viaduct Study Working Group Meeting #2

April 9, 2015, One Financial Plaza, Springfield MA

Summary

Purpose: The second meeting of the I-91 Viaduct Study Working Group was to provide an update on the progress of existing conditions data collection efforts of the consultant team.

Handouts: Copy of the meeting PowerPoint presentation

Present: See the attached attendance list; representatives of Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) Office of Transportation Planning (OTP) and MassDOT District 2; the project study team led by Milone & MacBroom (MMI); and the following members of the Working Group:

Michael Albro, Town of Agawam

Rana Al-Jammal, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

Jenny Catuogno, Young Professional Networking Groups

Chris Cignoli, DPW Springfield

Jeffrey Ciuffreda, Affiliated Chambers of Commerce of Greater Springfield

William Cochrane, SPD

Robert Colson, City of West Springfield DPW

Stephen J. Crane, Town of Longmeadow

Chris Crean, Peter Pan Bus Lines

Jason Fiddler, Basketball Hall of Fame

Nicholas Fyntrilakas, MassMutual Financial Group

Dave Gaby, Open Housing of Western Massachusetts

Jeanne Galloway, West Springfield Board of Health

Daren Gray, Baystate Health

Nico Helems, Office of Senator Don Humason

Rich Masse, MassDOT District 2

Douglas Mattoon, City of West Springfield

Mike Moran, Baystate Health

Paul Nicolai, Nicolai Law Group, P.C.

Hardy Patel, MassDOT Highway Design

Catherine Ratte, Live Well Springfield/Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

Margaret M. Round, Massachusetts Department of Public Health

Gary M. Roux, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

Chris Russell, Springfield Business Improvement District

Cara Sardone, Massachusetts Department of Public Health

Paula Simmons, MassDOT Rail & Transit Division

Albert Stegemann, MassDOT District 2

Dave Stein

Ben Wood, Massachusetts Department of Public Health

Stephen Wyszynski, Springfield Police Department

Thomas Yarsley

MassDOT Project Manager Ethan Britland opened the meeting and welcomed the participants. Mr. Britland asked members of the Working Group and consultant team to introduce themselves and reviewed the agenda for the meeting.

Mr. Britland outlined the study process. The first Working Group meeting covered Task 1, the draft Study Area, Goals & Objectives, Evaluation Criteria, and Public Involvement Plan. At this meeting, the team sought to finalize Task 1 materials and discuss existing conditions, issues, constraints and opportunities as part of Task 2. Mr. Britland noted the project is a conceptual planning study that will winnow down a set of alternatives. No engineering or design details will result from this study.

MMI Project Manager Mark Arigoni explained that the alternatives to be developed during Task 3 will be evaluated based on the Goals & Objectives, Evaluation Criteria and data collected during Task 2. He reviewed the Goals & Objectives and Evaluation Criteria and noted he will do so at the beginning of each meeting to refresh the group's memory.

Question: Why does one of the goals simply say “Environmental Justice”? Mr. Britland agreed the goal needs to be revised to indicate the intent to minimize impacts to Environmental Justice (low-income, minority and non-English speaking) populations.

Mr. Arigoni explained that the Working Group provided feedback at the first meeting about expanding the draft Study Area further south. Since that meeting, MassDOT embraced the suggestion and approved an amendment to extend the Regional Study Area south to the state border with Connecticut. The Primary Study Area was also extended south to include the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) Study Area and over the South End Bridge to include the Rotary. Mr. Arigoni cited the interconnected relationship the South End Bridge and I-91 roadways have with regards to traffic patterns.

Question: Does the Primary Study Area constrain alternatives? Mr. Britland responded that this is the area that will be studied now, and if any alternatives shift outside of the Study Area it can be expanded.

Question: Why does the Primary Study Area not include the Memorial Bridge and Rotary in West Springfield? Mr. Arigoni explained that the South End Rotary has a great linkage to I-91 traffic but the Memorial Bridge and Rotary will be covered as part of the Regional Study Area.

Question: How will the Memorial Avenue Rotary Replacement Project impact this study? Rich Masse explained the project will replace the bridge structures supporting part of the rotary and will result in new lane markings. The traffic patterns will not change as a result of the construction.

Comment: The Morgan Sullivan Bridge Project may impact traffic on the Memorial Avenue Rotary. Mr. Arigoni noted this.

Mr. Arigoni explained that the remainder of the presentation was intended to provide an overview of the existing conditions baseline for traffic, multi-modal, land use and economic development, and environmental and public health. This baseline will be compared to the “no build” and ultimately to alternatives set in the year 2040.

Van Kacoyannakis, MMI, provided an overview of the traffic data collection methods and existing conditions. He described several maps, including:

- Traffic count locations throughout the Study Area to collect turning movement data for morning and afternoon peak periods
- Regional traffic volumes that were compiled with Auto Traffic Recorders (ATRs)
- Traffic Operations that were evaluated for intersections' Level of Service on a scale of A (green, best, less than 10 second delays) to F (red, worst, more than 80 second delays)
- Crash clusters identifying car crash trends between 2010 and 2012, which are concentrated on I-91 and off-ramps, particularly between exits 1 and 3
- Fatality locations, some of which involved bicyclists or pedestrians

Mr. Kacoyannakis shared some selected crash statistics, noting that many crashes involved pedestrians. He showed maps of bicycle and pedestrian routes currently available in downtown Springfield. Between East and West Columbus Avenues there are only five pedestrian crossings. There are only three locations where pedestrians or bicyclists can access the Connecticut Riverwalk from downtown Springfield.

Mr. Kacoyannakis displayed a table of Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA) bus headways, or time between each bus trip, which average between 10 and 60 minutes, depending on the route. The black, blue, green, purple and red routes run through downtown Springfield and additional routes provide regional access. PVTA serves approximately 1.3 million riders per month. Other transit services include Amtrak's Northeast Regional, Vermonter, and Lake Shore Limited services, as well as several bus services, including Peter Pan and Megabus.

Question: Are you aware that the bus terminal will move to the renovated Union Station? Mr. Kacoyannakis responded that MMI is aware of that change, and for now is focused on collecting data about existing conditions.

Mr. Arigoni introduced Rod Motamedi, UMass Donahue Institute, who is leading the economic data collection effort. Mr. Motamedi explained that downtown Springfield has more jobs than residents, so there is significant inward commuting. He read demographic data for two census tracts (8008 and 8011.01) from approximately State Street to Route 20 and the Connecticut River to Chestnut Street. There are high levels of unemployment (25% compared to the state average of 7%) and median home values have gone down slightly between 2009 and 2013. Mr. Montamedi agreed to confirm the median rent data following the meeting.¹

Mr. Motamedi explained that Springfield is part of a larger, regional economic structure (the Knowledge Corridor), as demonstrated in the surrounding community agreements with MGM for the casino project. The housing has a low owner-occupied ratio of 181 owner-occupied units to 1,876 rented units. Mr. Motamedi defined absorption as the amount of square feet of commercial real estate vacated as compared to square feet occupied. The absorption rate as well as lease rates have essentially been flat since the recession.

¹ Per the suggestion of a Working Group member, Mr. Motamedi recalculated the median rent and household income after the meeting. The actual median rent is \$673/month and the actual median household income is \$13,602 per year, the equivalent of \$1,133.50 per month.

Question: Why are housing characteristics important to a transportation study? Mr. Motamedi explained that the consultant team is trying to understand the economics and demographics of the region to develop transportation alternatives that will best serve the population.

Mr. Montamedi showed a map of approximately 135 commercial properties in downtown Springfield, including office, retail, multifamily and industrial buildings.

Comment: I thought there were closer to 7,000 jobs, not 13,000. Look at the Springfield Parking Association Study. Mr. Motamedi will continue to fact check as he completes his research.

Comment: Look at the ambulance times to local hospitals, which will be of concern when I-91 is under construction.

Comment: There are over 6,500 jobs at Baystate Medical Center, so that should be factored in as well. Mr. Britland thanked the Working Group for these suggestions and requested that additional comments be submitted after the meeting. He noted the team will coordinate with PVPC on demographic data.

Mr. Arigoni introduced Allie Church, the lead for MMI's land use and economics team. Ms. Church described an existing land use map, which shows that the right-of-way consumes a lot of land mass. Slide 42 shows the same map but with the weight of the building being representative of the total assessed value (value of land and building).

Ms. Church explained a tapestry analysis, which she displayed for three concentric circles of varying scale. ESRI provides data by geographic locations, typically for retail sales. Within half a mile, the most notable life mode is "social security set," which the report describes as an older market who tend to live alone, close to public transportation, commercial centers and hospitals. Ms. Church does not believe the half-mile residential tapestry is very accurate. She suspects this population may include low-income individuals and not just seniors.

Ms. Church presented the results of the four mile and ten mile residential tapestries, which are more representative of the actual population. "GenXurban" is a major life mode in each radius, which describes middle aged families.

Ms. Church described an Economic Development Opportunities map that shows recently completed projects (purple), ongoing projects (yellow), and potential redevelopments (tan). She shared the tapestry data in a chart to better understand local and regional business patterns, which will determine the focus of development in Springfield. Development tends to be largely focused in professional, scientific, finance/insurance, and real estate industries.

Mr. Arigoni described several environmental maps that were created using available MassGIS and City of Springfield data:

- Wetlands & Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) National Flood Hazard
- Surficial Geology
- Area Topography
- Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) Activity & Use Limitations (AUL) Sites & Watershed Delineations, which show any remediation sites that may limit development

- Protected Open Space & Cultural Resources, including historic buildings and riverfront properties

Question: Does the study include a variable for the City's planning for the future? Mr. Arigoni referred back to the Economic Development Opportunities map, which was prepared based on discussions regarding future projects. "Springfield 2017", the City's framework for future development, may change existing conditions.

Question: How far south does the Railroad go and is it owned by the State? Richard Masse, MassDOT District 2, said the Commonwealth does not own the railroad under I-291 at this time, which is not the same as the railroad at the Union Street curve.

Mr. Britland introduced Margaret Round from the Bureau of Environmental Health at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH). The Healthy Transportation Compact (M.G.L. Chapter 6C) requires that MassDOT plan holistically with other agencies, including DPH, to assess the public health impacts of potential transportation investments. Mr. Britland and Ms. Round partnered on a study of McGrath Highway in Somerville to produce a pilot Health Impact Assessment (HIA). HIAs attempt to determine the effects of transportation project alternatives on the health of populations to assist the agencies and communities in making healthy choices.

Ms. Round introduced Ben Wood from the Bureau of Community Health and Prevention. Mr. Wood provided an overview of an HIA and described potential "health determinants," including access to open space and healthy food. The study is currently in the scoping phase, as the team proposes a work plan and determines which health impacts to evaluate and methods for analysis. Mr. Wood explained DPH will mold steps of the HIA into this transportation study.

Ms. Round added that the stakeholder process is the most important component of an HIA, and it begins at scoping. The Working Group will contribute to the HIA stakeholder process simultaneously. During the assessment phase, the health data categories developed for the Grounding McGrath study can be reused and edited based on feedback from the Working Group.

Ms. Round proposed the creation of a Public Health Subcommittee that would provide data and help with the review of HIA materials. The subcommittee would likely meet before or after Working Group meetings and potentially hold conference calls. Interested members should contact Cara Sardone at cara.sardone@massmail.state.ma.us.

Mr. Arigoni introduced a draft list of issues and constraints with regards to transportation. He highlighted the lack of pedestrian and bicycle accommodations and awareness, dangerous driving conditions due to on- and off-ramps, locations of the North-South Rail Line, and more. Mr. Arigoni described economic and land use challenges, such as changing development plans for the City, and environmental and public health constraints, such as the Connecticut Riverwalk that ends at the City of Springfield's southern border.

Mr. Arigoni provided an overview of the study schedule. The next Working Group meetings are scheduled in June and August, prior to a public meeting, which will be held in early fall. He anticipates the format of the next Working Group meetings will be more interactive and may involve break-out groups.

Question: When does the Working Group have an opportunity to weigh in on alternatives? Mr. Britland responded that while the Gantt Chart shows that task 3 has already begun, this is more to indicate that various alternatives naturally become considered as the data collection process occurs. The professional engineers will develop a set of alternatives for the Working Group to respond to, which was originally planned in fall 2015. However, there is an opportunity to engage the Working Group sooner than that.

Comment: There are lots of goals and objectives but none have been identified as priorities. It can be difficult to balance so many different goals in these studies, so prioritization might help. Mr. Britland was thankful for this suggestion.

Question: Will the Final Report identify funding options for the alternatives? Mr. Britland said while the funding options will not be specifically identified, the Final Report will present a set of recommendations that lay out implementation possibilities with potential federal and/or state funding options to inform decision-makers after the study is over.

Question: How will you evaluate existing conditions when there are so many projects in flux, such as the I-91 viaduct project and the MGM Casino? Mr. Arigoni explained that the team collected traffic data last summer before the viaduct and MGM Casino projects began construction. This comment was taken into consideration.

Comment: Have you considered technology for traffic planning, engineering and construction (for example, infrastructure for autonomous vehicles to help reduce congestion)? Mr. Britland said his team will have to consider effects of such vehicles and appreciated the suggestion.

Comment from Town Manager Stephen Crane, Longmeadow: The MGM Casino study used data that has been called into question by several communities, which he wanted MassDOT to be aware of if this study is planning to incorporate that data. He appreciates the study area expansion; the change confirms the study will be an iterative process. He suggested narrowing the project's scope since keeping people engaged will be a challenge, particularly since large projects like these have lengthy schedules. Mr. Britland was thankful for these comments and noted the traffic demand model will use metropolitan planning organization data.

Comment from a representative of the Armoury Quadrangle Civic Association who expressed concerns about traffic on Main Street and environmental issues. Have you reached out to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP)? Mr. Britland explained that he has reached out the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Department of Conservation and Recreation. MassDEP would not be engaged until the permitting stage.

Comment: The speaker has traffic and parking concerns with regards to the I-91 Deck Replacement project and the MGM Casino construction. Mr. Britland explained the I-91 Deck Replacement project has its own traffic monitoring program. This study is not scoped to address construction issues for either project. Realistically, the construction of an alternative identified in this study would be 10 to 15 years away due to permitting, design and construction funding. Nancy Farrell offered to provide contact information for the I-91 Deck Replacement project team who can provide traffic mitigation details.

Comment: The public meeting in Task 3 is very close to the end of the alternatives development process. Mr. Britland noted the dates of these meetings are subject to change. The role of the Working Group is to provide input throughout the process while the public participates at key junctions.

Mr. Britland thanked the Working Group for attending the meeting. The next meeting will likely include a finalized set of existing conditions and discussion of the “no build” scenario. The presentations will be posted to the website soon.

Working Group Members (as of April 17, 2015, alphabetical by last name):

Michael Albro, Town of Agawam
 Rana Al-Jammal, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
 Tim Allen, Springfield City Council
 Kathleen Anderson, Greater Holyoke Chamber of Commerce
 MA Representative Brian Ashe
 Thomas Ashe, Springfield City Council
 Michael Bachand, US Army Corps of Engineers
 John Barbieri, Springfield Police Department
 Allan W. Blair, Western Massachusetts Economic Development Council
 Dave Blei, MassDOT Rail & Transit Division
 MA Representative Nicholas Boldyga
 Timothy W. Brennan, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
 Ann Burke, Western Mass. Economic Development Council
 MA Senator Gale Candaras
 Jennifer Carrier, Capital Region Council of Governments
 Jenny Catuogno, Young Professional Networking Groups
 Michelle Chase, Agawam
 Chris Cignoli, DPW Springfield
 Jeffrey Ciuffreda, Affiliated Chambers of Commerce of Greater Springfield
 Jose Claudio, New North Citizens Council
 William Cochrane, SPD
 Mayor Richard Cohen, City of Agawam
 Robert Colson, City of West Springfield DPW
 Clodo Concepcion, Springfield City Council
 Carol Costa, Armoury Quadrangle Civic Association
 Stephen J. Crane, Town of Longmeadow
 Chris Crean, Peter Pan Bus Lines
 Dianne F. Doherty, Western Massachusetts Small Business Development Center
 Tim Doherty, MassDOT Rail & Transit Division
 Andrea Donlon, Connecticut River Watershed Council, Inc.
 Melvin Edwards, Maple-High/Six Corners Neighborhood Council & Springfield City Council
 Dianne Fabrocini, East of the River Five Town Chamber of Commerce
 Mike Fenton, Springfield City Council, President
 MA Representative Michael Finn

Andrew Fisk, Connecticut River Watershed Council
 Brian FitzGerald, Holyoke Board of Health
 Leo Florian, South End Citizens Council
 Richard Foster, Longmeadow Select Board
 Bettye Anderson Frederic, Springfield Department of Health/Human Services
 Nicholas Fyntrilakas, MassMutual Financial Group
 Dave Gaby, Open Housing of Western Massachusetts
 Indrani Kowlessar Gallagher, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
 Jeanne Galloway, West Springfield Board of Health
 MA Representative Carlos Gonzalez & W. Mass Latino Chamber of Commerce
 Sean Gouvin, Baystate Health
 Daren Gray, Baystate Health
 Susan Gulluni, South End Business Association
 Beverly S. Hirschhorn, Longmeadow Board of Health
 Bill Hollister, Amtrak
 MA Senator Donald Humason
 Justin Hurst, Springfield City Council
 Chuck Irving, MGM Springfield/Davenport Properties
 Mayor Richard J. Kos, City of Chicopee
 Rhonda Latney
 William C. Loisel, Massachusetts State Police Springfield
 Zaida Luna, Springfield City Council
 Mary L. MacInnes, Pioneer Valley Transit Authority
 US Senator Edward Markey, Massachusetts
 Minerva Marrero, Office of Mayor Domenic Sarno
 Rich Masse, MassDOT District 2
 Mike Mathis, MGM Springfield
 Douglas Mattoon, City of West Springfield
 Marilyn McNicholas, Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame
 Jay Minkarah, Develop Springfield
 Mike Moran, Baystate Health
 Amneris Moreno, City of Holyoke Board of Health
 Mayor Alex Morse, City of Holyoke
 Daniel Morrissey, Forest Park Business Association (of Springfield)
 Chris Moskal, Springfield Redevelopment Authority
 Anna Nadler, MassDOT District 2
 US Congressman Richard E. Neal, Massachusetts
 Paul Nicolai, Nicolai Law Group, P.C.
 Hardy Patel, MassDOT Highway Design
 MA Representative Thomas Petrolati
 Peter A. Picknelly, Peter Pan Bus
 Don Podolski, New Horizons Bikes
 William Powers, Office of Congressman Richard E Neal
 Ron Proulx, Greater Chicopee Chamber of Commerce

MA Representative Angelo Puppolo
 Orlando Ramos, Springfield City Council
 Catherine Ratte, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission / LiveWell Springfield
 Jimmy Rivera, New North Citizens Council
 Timothy J. Rooke, Springfield City Council
 Lenny Rottenberg, Peter Pan Bus
 Margaret M. Round, Massachusetts Department of Public Health
 Gary M. Roux, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
 Chris Russell, Springfield Business Improvement District
 Lisa Sanders, Chicopee Board of Health
 Cara Sardane, Massachusetts Department of Public Health
 Mayor Domenic J. Sarno, City of Springfield
 Don Senecal, Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame
 Kenneth E. Shea, Springfield City Council
 Paula Simmons, MassDOT Rail & Transit Division
 Matthew J. Sokop, Holyoke Department of Public Works
 Albert Stegemann, MassDOT District 2
 David J. Stein, Connecticut River Watershed Council
 Mayor Edward Sullivan, Town of West Springfield
 MA Representative Benjamin Swan
 Jacqueline Talbot, Connecticut River Watershed Council
 Jeremiah Thompson, Office of Senator Elizabeth Warren
 MA Representative Jose Tosado
 E. Henry Twiggs, Springfield City Council
 MA Representative Aaron Vega
 Ken Vincunas, Development Associates
 MA Representative Joseph Wagner
 Laura Walsh, Forest Park Civic Association
 Kateri Walsh, Springfield City Council
 Michael J. Ward, CSX
 US Senator Elizabeth Warren, Massachusetts
 John Weiss, W. Springfield Chamber and West of the River Chamber of Commerce
 MA Senator James Welch
 Randall G. White, Agawam Board of Health
 Bud L. Williams, Springfield City Council
 Stan Wood, MassDOT Highway Design
 Ben Wood, Massachusetts Department of Public Health
 Mary Kay Wydra, Greater Springfield Convention and Visitor's Bureau
 Stephen Wyszynski, Springfield Police Department
 Thomas Yarsley