



I-91 Viaduct Study Working Group Meeting #11

July 31, 2018 – 4:00 PM

One Financial Plaza, 1350 Main Street, Springfield, MA

Summary

Purpose: The eleventh and final meeting of the I-91 Viaduct Study Working Group presented an overview of the draft recommendations and a preview of the Draft Final Report. The study team solicited feedback from the Working Group.

Present: Ethan Britland and Michael Clark of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT); Mark Arigoni 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)

Donna Feng, MassDOT District 2

M. K. Kwatowski, City of Springfield Police

Rich Masse, MassDOT District 2

Paul Nicolai, Nicolai Law Group, P.C.

Hardy Patel, MassDOT Highway Design

Catherine Ratté, Live Well Springfield/PVPC

Gary M. Roux, PVPC

Rick Sullivan, Western Massachusetts Economic Development Council

Thomas Yarsley

MassDOT Project Manager Michael Clark opened the meeting, introduced the project study team, and reviewed the agenda. He thanked the Working Group members for their patience as it had been awhile since the previous meeting. He provided a brief update on the schedule, including the final public meeting to be scheduled during the comment period on the Draft Final Report, likely within the next four to six weeks. Mr. Clark introduced Mark Arigoni, MMI Project Manager.

Mr. Arigoni briefly reviewed the study goals, objectives, and evaluation criteria. He summarized the process of the alternatives development and reviewed the concept plans of the three alternatives that were advanced for analysis:

1. Sunken, Tunnel, or Combination(s) following current I-91 Alignment
2. Sunken, Tunnel, or Combination(s) following modified I-91 Alignment (section of combined rail and highway corridor)
3. Reconstructed Elevated Structure (Modern Viaduct)

Mr. Arigoni described the process to reach these three alternatives, including an expanded study area scope to the Connecticut state line and a re-analysis of the west side alternatives (which were determined to be infeasible). He added that a lot of changes on the ground within the study area have occurred since the beginning of the study, including the new MGM Casino. Mr. Arigoni explained that each of the alternatives included improvements to the Longmeadow Curve, the I-291/I-91 Interchange, and the Route 57/South End Bridge area in addition to the viaduct.

Mr. Arigoni recapped the previous Working Group meeting in June 2017 in which the Working Group reviewed a workbook of the evaluation criteria and shared feedback. The study team adjusted the evaluation criteria based on comments from the Working Group and issued a [letter](#) responding to those comments (distributed to attendees).

Mr. Arigoni presented a table comparison of the three alternatives, which were compared to the Rehab Option (rehabilitation of the I-91 Viaduct in its current alignment and existing elevation). He shared a breakdown of the cost estimates for each alternative (in 2040 dollars) and described the short/medium-term improvements that can be constructed regardless of the alternative. Mr. Arigoni confirmed the \$695 million estimate for the Rehab Option only includes the viaduct and does not include improvements to the Longmeadow Curve, Route 5/South End Bridge, etc. He explained that the cost estimate for the Connecticut Riverwalk/Bikeway Improvements of \$20 million assumes it is part of the Longmeadow Curve reconstruction, and he does not know the cost if it were to be constructed prior to the Longmeadow Curve reconstruction.

There was a discussion about the use of 2040 dollars in the cost estimates. Mr. Clark confirmed that each alternative that was constructed in the model included the components in 2040 dollars, but could be constructed prior to 2040.

Question from Thomas Yarsley: What does 2040 dollars equate to in modern dollars? Gary Roux, PVPC, said the Federal Highway Administration suggests 4% inflation per year, but Mr. Kacoyannakis said an inflation rate of 3% was used.

Paul Nicolai, Nicolai Law Group P.C., expressed frustration and disappointment with the presentation and study recommendations.

Question from Hardy Patel, MassDOT: Did the traffic analyses account for the future traffic volumes after 2040? Ethan Britland, MassDOT, said the traffic analysis used the year 2040— the study began in 2014 and it is standard to project 25 years into the future. Mr. Clark said when the project development process begins in the future, there will be additional modeling done to ensure the viaduct can carry projected traffic volumes.

Mr. Clark said the study team presented the alternatives analysis to the Secretary of Transportation and to the Highway Administrator, and it was determined that the Rehab Option is the most sensible option at this time. The analysis has been completed on the three alternatives and can be reviewed again for any future decisions. He listed the short and mid-term improvements that will be carried forward by MassDOT:

- Longmeadow Curve improvements
- I-291 Southbound to I-91 Southbound ramp relocation
- Route 20 improvements to Springfield
- South End Bridge/Agawam Rotary improvements

- Short-term alternatives in and around viaduct

He said all of these projects will begin the project development process, but this does not guarantee they will be funded as they will compete with other state projects for capital funding.

Question from Gary Roux, PVPC: How does the lifespan of the viaduct compare to the lifespan of the three alternatives? Mr. Arigoni said the analysis for each included a 35-year lifespan (to the year 2075).

Comment from Thomas Yarsley: I suggest you change the word “sensible” on slide 17, as the residents of Springfield may disagree with that term. Mr. Clark agreed and thanked him for his comment.

Comment/Question from Catherine Ratté, Live Well Springfield/PVPC: I don’t see how the associated projects on slide 16 add up to \$1.57 billion, how was that estimate calculated? Mr. Arigoni said the \$695 million Rehab Option was erroneously included in that total and he will remove it. (The totals have been corrected on the presentation posted to the [study website](#)).

Short and Medium-Term Alternatives

Mr. Arigoni said PVPC will work with MassDOT on locally-owned infrastructure to initiate the project development process for the short and medium-term alternatives. He presented concept plans for the following medium-term alternatives:

- Longmeadow Curve Improvements – includes the “peanut” interchange and a new bikeway to connect to the South End Bridge. Mr. Arigoni explained the bikeway connection coincides with the Longmeadow Curve alternative because there is a significant grade change to the lower frontage roads. It would be efficient to build structures to support a pedestrian/bikeway bridge along with the Longmeadow Curve construction as opposed to constructing the bridge separately.
- I-291 Southbound to I-91 Southbound On-Ramp Relocation – includes the shifting of the on-ramp to eliminate weaving movements to access Exit 7.
- Route 20 Improvements in Springfield – includes bike and pedestrian improvements, new bridges, and intersection reconstruction.

Mr. Arigoni listed the short-term, low-cost improvements that can be done to improve bicycle accommodations and pedestrian bridges, sidewalks, and crossings. He mentioned the possibility of removing one of the I-91 parking garages which had been discussed at a previous Working Group meeting.

Mr. Arigoni reviewed the study schedule noting that the study will conclude by the end of September. He said the Working Group worked really well and was collaborative throughout the process. Next steps include the final public meeting (tentatively end of August), the comment period on the Draft Final Report, and the release of the Final Report in mid-September.

Comment from Gary Roux: The goal of PVPC and this study is to move forward with these projects as a region. It would be helpful for MassDOT to provide us with language explaining which of the short and mid-term alternatives should be prioritized to help us build support. Mr. Clark said he can provide language to Mr. Roux.

Comment from M. K. Kwatowski, City of Springfield Police: We are already experiencing the limitations of our roadways, and the opening of the casino on August 24 will bring even more vehicle traffic. This may be a good opportunity to gain public support for the medium-term alternatives such as the

Longmeadow Curve Improvements, and it would be helpful to have real numbers to provide the public on how long it may take for these projects to be completed. Van Kacoyannakis, MMI, said it can take at least 5-10 years for design; he has worked on smaller projects that have lasted 5 years. There was a brief discussion about the cost estimates for the alternatives. Mr. Arigoni agreed it would be helpful to define what “medium-term” means and provide more specific time estimates. Mr. Britland said it is often not until the permitting phase of a project that the final scope is determined so it is difficult to estimate a timeline before that occurs. He added that this can be looked at further in the Final Report.

Question from Rana Al-Jammal, PVPC: Can PVPC obtain the large maps that were used in the previous Working Group meetings for its archives? Mr. Clark said yes, he is happy to share the materials (which are also available on the [study website](#)).

Comment from Thomas Yarsley: I am impressed with the study team and what has been accomplished through the study.

Mr. Clark thanked everyone for attending so many of the Working Group meetings throughout the study and closed the meeting.