



Meeting Summary—MassDOT I-90 Allston Multimodal Project, Task Force Meeting

Virtual Meeting

DATE: April 20, 2023

SH PROJECT NO.: 2021055.08

Introduction

- MassDOT held a virtual meeting of the I-90 Allston Multimodal Project Task Force on Thursday, April 20th, 2023. This was the first task force meeting held in 8 months and meetings will soon increase in frequency.
- Jonathan Gulliver, MassDOT's State Highway Administrator, introduced Susan Harrington as the project manager who would give the meeting's presentation. Mike O'Dowd, who continues to be involved in the project, was also on the call to help answer any questions. Harrington will be involved in the development of the base technical concept (BTC), the request for proposals (RFP), and the environmental permitting process.
- Gulliver reported that a significant amount of work has been completed with stakeholders to develop alternative staging plans for the base technical concept. MassDOT has a new approach that will allow for one side of the existing viaduct to remain intact while the other side is demolished. Gulliver anticipates the MassDOT Board of Directors will receive additional information on this in the next coming weeks. The City of Boston, Harvard University, and Boston University have restarted the work on the project's financial plan. The grant application for the project will likely be due in late Spring or early Summer. MassDOT has held a debrief with US DOT and believes that this will be a much stronger grant application.

Presentation

- The meeting's agenda included a NEPA/MEPA update, alternative construction staging, the viaduct preservation project, and a Mega Grant debrief.
- Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) update:



MEETING NOTES

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- Sandy Hoover of Tetra Tech gave an update on the Notice of Project Change (NPC). The project team received approximately 230 comment letters on the NPC during its comment period in August, many of which were about the Paul Dudley White path and the riverbank restoration proposed under the Modified At-Grade Alternative. Many comments expressed support for an at-grade design of the throat area. Hoover continued to say that the project team is working with numerous state, federal, and local agencies and organizations on development of the joint supplemental draft environmental impact report (EIR) and draft environmental impact statement (EIS).
- The certificate on the NPC was released by the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs on September 23, 2022. The certificate for the NPC included the scope for the MEPA supplemental EIR. The scope requires that MassDOT provide updates for the modeled future transportation conditions. Updates to the road network that will be incorporated into new modeling include the Soldiers' Field Road westbound off-ramp, Hotel Way, and the Malvern Street transitway among others. The scope also called for additional information on the egress and accessibility of West Station, and environmental issues including mitigation for climate resiliency.
- Mark Fobert of Tetra Tech gave an update on the shoreline treatment design. Some of the NPC comments on the river focused on concerns about the project's ecological impacts on the Charles River. Fobert acknowledged that many of the comments urged that the project minimize the fill in the river while maximizing ecological benefits, which is in line with the federal and state permitting processes.
- One of the proposed designs in the NPC included the planting of trees adjacent to Soldiers' Field Road (SFR) to reenforce the historic parkway nature of the parkway. The project team has had ongoing conversations with the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) on other projects that have been constructed along the banks of the Charles River along with discussions on DCR's vegetation management plan for the Charles River in an effort to incorporate lessons learned into the Allston Project. The project team also has plans to work with Charles River Alliance of Boaters (CRAB) to place a line of channel markers in the river so river users can see the extent the walkway will extend into the river when constructed.
- The draft EIS is anticipated to be filed in 2024, and the final EIS is anticipated to be filed in early 2025.
- The transportation model takes into account the traffic analysis, which will influence air and noise pollution analyses. Other factors in the modeling include pedestrian access and other amenities.



- Alternative construction staging:
 - The draft alternative construction staging was developed with stakeholders Harvard University, A Better City, and the City of Boston and MassDOT. Part of this draft alternative was to remove the need for a 1500-foot temporary bridge that had previously been proposed. The alternative will also include the analysis for schedule reduction in light of needing to construct the temporary bridge. The stakeholder group recommended that MassDOT further develop the alternative concepts. MassDOT's role will be to develop a conceptual staging plan for the environmental permitting process. However, the project team did note that the future Design-Build contractor will file construction plans that may or may not include the alternative staging approach.
 - The graphics used in the presentation were noted to be works in progress. The primary purpose of the graphics was to present the project sequencing needed to avoid having to construct the temporary bridge. The initial and later stages of the project would remain similar. With the partial viaduct demolition, permanent reconstruction can start on the westbound barrel. The current revised plan took into account the stakeholders' desire to remove the temporary viaduct. The revised plan also allows for the I-90 westbound off-ramp to be activated at-grade earlier. There will be temporary, minor widening to maintain I-90 and eastbound entrance ramp. Once the viaduct is removed, the Worcester mainline and Grand Junction lines can be constructed.
- The viaduct preservation project:
 - The preservation plan will preserve the existing bridge structures and maintain safety for turnpike and commuter rail users while allowing for MassDOT to complete the conceptual design and environmental permitting processes for the multimodal project. The construction contract was approved with a request by the Board for the Highway Division to perform a feasibility analysis and recommendations for scope modification, if any, to not preclude potential alternative construction staging concepts for the I-90 Allston Multimodal Project. The transportation secretary signed the awarded contract notice and it is expected to proceed sometime this spring.
- Mega Grant debrief:
 - MassDOT as co-applicants with the City of Boston pursued a 2022 Mega Grant for approximately \$1.1 billion in Federal Funding. The grant debriefing with the USDOT has offered the project team the opportunity to improve the application. This grant falls under the “mega grant” category, a category in which approximately 6.5% of



projects were selected for that round. The project was rated highly for its technical capacity but low for its cost-effectiveness. MassDOT is working with the City of Boston, Harvard, and BU to address the application's weaknesses.

Questions & Answers

- Meeting attendees were invited to ask the project team questions.
 - City Councilor Liz Breadon asked if the project team has looked into other grant opportunities to address infrastructure needs and connections in Allston-Brighton, especially to allow pedestrians and cyclists to safely access the Franklin Street Bridge in preparation for the I-90 multimodal work.
 - Christopher Osgood, Mayor Wu's Senior Advisor for Transportation Infrastructure, thanked the project team for hosting the meeting and suggested that going forward these meetings discuss design specifics and progress. He also echoed Councilor Breadon's concerns about supporting infrastructure connections in preparation for the project.
 - Tom Nally of A Better City suggested that the viaduct be removed as soon as possible to reduce the overall cost and duration of the project, and open just a permanent stage with as many lanes and tracks open as possible to reduce mitigation needs. Nally thanked the project team for their cooperation with A Better City. The project team urged Nally to direct these suggestions to Chris Calnan or Jim Keller of Tetra Tech.
 - Jessica Robertson echoed Councilor Breadon's concerns and noted that the Franklin Street Bridge is not ADA accessible. Robertson wants MassDOT to consider that in the project staging, as residents have expressed concerns that the bridge needs updating. Chris Calnan said that the project team is looking into it, but they are not yet able to make a decision, in part due to environmental and historic concerns.
 - Robertson said she understands that the project requires a great deal of work, but that this has been a great source of frustration for the community and that this work needs to be done and urged that the project team create a concrete follow-up on this matter.
- Bill Deignan of the City of Cambridge raised concerns of how the project will address the noise on I-90 for residents near Cambridge Port. Mark Fobert of Tetra Tech said that a noise analysis will be done with the filing of the joint draft EIS and supplemental EIR. Deignan asked if Tetra Tech could give a more elaborate answer to the question and expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of specifics on options such as noise walls. Deignan continued to



say that this issue has gone on for years and that minimum federal thresholds are not adequate for Cambridge residents.

- Chris Calnan of Tetra Tech said that the project team will have a better response once the analysis is complete.
- An attendee asked how MassDOT is renegotiating construction contracts. Owen Kane of MassDOT said that the Preservation contract has been signed, but they do not yet have the notice to proceed. He was not certain about where the project was exactly in the negotiation stage, but that they are working on it.
- Another question was about how much more money the project would need from the state, the City of Boston, BU, and Harvard. Calnan responded saying that they would need another approximate \$800 million.
- Glen Berkowitz from A Better City expressed his gratitude to the project team for their work and asked what the estimated average federal grant amount would be for a Mega Grant project. Harrington said that there was \$5 billion available the previous year. The award range was \$30,000,000 to \$292 million.
- An attendee asked a question on the status of developing the finance plan. Harrington said that the project team is working on developing a solid plan in preparation for the grant application.
- Galen Mook of MassBike, echoed the desire to hold these meetings in person and noted that this project has been an ongoing process through multiple political administrations at both the state and federal levels. The question was about how the conversation may be broadening under the Healey-Driscoll administration and how DCR is involved. The project team responded by saying that they are working with other state agencies, and they are conscious of the fact that this is not solely a MassDOT project.
 - Mook said this response was a bit of an oversimplification, and asked that in the future, more state agencies participate in these discussions with the public and asked that more transparency be given to residents on issues like the footbridge and funding.
- Former Transportation Secretary Fred Salvucci expressed appreciation for the content of the meeting but also echoed the desire to hold these meetings in person. Salvucci also expressed the feeling that the issues and factors mentioned in the meeting be expanded upon by having their own dedicated meetings in the future. This would allow for more options to be considered for issues like noise concerns, the shoreline, walkways, bridges, and the MBTA. Salvucci raised concerns about how the project will amass the funds needed for the project. The project team said that they were open to any suggestions and collaboration with the state legislature.



- The meeting concluded with the project team expressing thanks to the participants with an acknowledgment that it had been a long time since the last public meeting. The team could not promise that the meetings be held quarterly but said they would keep everyone updated about the next meeting's timeline.

Attendance

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation
Paula	Alexander	Public
Dave	Andrews	Public
Chris	Bajdek	VHB
Jo-Ann	Barbour	Public
George	Batchelor	MassDOT
Glen	Berkowitz	A Better City
Joe	Blankenship	Public
Gregory	Boles	VHB
Ruth	Bonsignore	Public
Liz	Breadon	Boston City Council/ Task Force Member
Casey	Bruno	MASCO/ Task Force Member
Chris	Calnan	Tetra Tech
Alex	Camarena	Office of Representative Honan
Tricia	Carney	Public
James	Cerbone	MassDOT
Mary	Connaughton	Public
Alex	Cornacchini	Allston Village Main Streets/ Task Force Member
Jack	Corrigan	Public
Paul	Creighton	Public
Ken	Davidson	Patrick Engineering
Jacob	deBlecourt	Public
Bill	Deignan	City of Cambridge/ Task Force Member
Kate	Delval Gonzalez	Public
Anthony	D'Isidoro	Allston Civic Association/ Task Force Member



First Name	Last Name	Affiliation
Ashley	Domogala	VHB
Stacey	Donahoe	MassDOT
Jennifer	Engel	Public
John	Fallon	MassDOT
Justin	Fay	Public
Dan	Fielding	MassDOT
Mark	Fobert	Tetra Tech
Brett	Gallagher	Public
Maryfrances	Galligan	Public
Jacque	Goddard	MassDOT
Julie	Goldberg	VHB
Michael	Gordon	VHB
Jonathan	Gulliver	MassDOT
Michael	Hall	Tetra Tech
Susan	Harrington	MassDOT
Mark	Harrington	Public
Morgan	Harris	Public
Lynsey	Heffernan	MBTA/ Task Force Member
Kevin	Honan	MA House of Representatives/ Task Force Member
Sandy	Hoover	Tetra Tech
Bruce	Houghton	Houghton Chemical/ Task Force Member
Ed	Hutchinson	Tetra Tech
Kimberley	Hutter	Senator Brownsberger's Office
Ed	Ionata	Tetra Tech
Abby	Jamiel	Public
Laura	Jasinski	Charles River Conservancy/ Task Force Member
Dira	Johanif	Charles River Watershed Association/ Task Force Member
Owen	Kane	MassDOT
Brendan	Kearney	WalkBoston/ Task Force Member
Kathleen	Keen	VHB



First Name	Last Name	Affiliation
Jim	Keller	Tetra Tech
Joann	Lai	Public
Kane	Larin	Charles River Alliance of Boaters/ Task Force Member
Elizabeth	Leary	Boston University/ Task Force Member
Richard	Lenox	WSP
Pallavi	Mande	Public
Moira	McCrave	Public
Edward	McMahon	Public
Tom	McShane	Public
Frank	Mendoza	City of Boston Office of Neighborhood Services
Taylor	Miller	Howard Stein Hudson
Christian	MilNeil	Public
Bruce	Mohl	Public
Galen	Mook	MassBike/ Task Force Member
Paul	Mulroney	Patrick Engineering
Thomas	Nally	A Better City/ Task Force Member
Michael	O'Dowd	MassDOT
Adetoyin	Olaoye	MassDOT
Emerson	Oligschlaeger	Public
Christopher	Osgood	Mayor Wu's Senior Advisor for Transportation Infrastructure/ Task Force Member
Jeff	Parenti	Department of Conservation and Recreation/ Task Force Member
Barbara	Parmenter	Public
Kristen	Pennucci	MassDOT
Jennifer	Pieszak	Public
Richard	Plenge	VHB
John	Pourbaix	CIM
John A.	Quatrala	Public
Erin	Reed	Howard Stein Hudson
Marika	Reuling	Public



First Name	Last Name	Affiliation
Jessica	Robertson	Task Force Member
Fred	Salvucci	Task Force Member
Lara	Seltzer	VHB
Mark	Shamon	VHB
Derek	Shooster	MassDOT
Steve	Silveira	Public
Zoey	Sloate	Public
Alex	Strycky	MEPA/ Task Force Member
John	Sugrue	Public
Benjamin	Tocchi	Public
Jack	Trapanick	Public
Austin	White	VHB
Jack	Wofford	Public
Ben	Zunkeler	Public