MEMORANDUM

To:	Michael O'Dowd Project Manager	Date:	November 23, 2019
From:	Nate Cabral-Curtis Howard Stein Hudson	HSH Project No.:	2013061.14
Subject:	MassDOT Highway Division Allston Multimodal Project Task Force Workshop Meeting Notes of November 13, 2019		

Overview

On November 13, 2019 members of the Allston Multimodal Project team and MassDOT staff associated with the job held a four-hour workshop for members of the Allston Multimodal Project task force. The task force is composed of local residents, business owners, transportation, and green space advocates, as well as representatives of local, state, and federal governments. The purpose of the group is, through the application of its members' in-depth knowledge, to assist and advise the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) in refining the preferred alternative selected by the Secretary of Transportation for documentation in a state Final Environmental Impact Report and in two federal documents: a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). Once the process associated with these environmental documents is completed, the project will be bid using a 25% design/build package that MassDOT will make available to interested general contractors.

Similar to previous task force workshops, the November 13, 2019 task force meeting featured breakout tables allowing for more detailed interactions between task force members and the consultant team. The four breakout tables included *MEPA/NEPA Process, Construction Staging, Riverbank Restoration,* and *Rail Operations*. Task force members were given the opportunity to rotate between tables or remain seated at any given table if they had a particular interest in the topic presented.

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Breakout Groups

MEPA/NEPA Process

Process Overview:

- The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires federal agencies to conduct an environmental review of federal actions and approvals for a project, analyzing and disclosing anticipated environmental impacts.
- NEPA applies to this project because it will involve Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) approval and potential federal funding.
- Given the scale and complexity of this project, FHWA has determined that it will be reviewed through an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).
- NEPA includes a specific process for environmental review and must be completed before any federal permits can be issued.
- The NEPA process will occur separate from, but in coordination with, the state-level Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) process.
- FHWA is responsible for managing the environmental review process and preparing the NEPA documents (e.g., EIS, decision document), while MassDOT will plan and design the project, facilitate the environmental review process, and facilitate opportunities for public and agency involvement.
- FHWA has released the Allston Multimodal Project Scoping Report which signifies the beginning of the NEPA process which will last about 2 years.

Opportunities:

- The NEPA process includes designated milestones with opportunities for public comment including the Scoping Report, Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), and Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS)

- FHWA welcomes members of the public to comment on the NEPA Scoping Report. Comments are due December 12, 2019.
- FHWA will release a Scoping Summary Report, incorporating responses to substantive public comments in spring or early summer of 2020.
- The Scoping Summary Report will respond to and help further refine the project purpose and need.

Challenges:

- MEPA and NEPA processes cannot be combined as they are separate process, one state and one federal. Due to federally mandated permitting deadlines, the processes must be kept separate.
- The hybrid options identified by the independent review team (IRT) were not included in the MEPA filing. MassDOT will file a MEPA Notice of Project Change to better align the concurrent environmental processes.

Top Features:

- The NEPA Scoping Summary Report will identify a preferred alternative and provide MassDOT with approval to move forward with that preferred alternative.
- After the NEPA Scoping Summary Report is completed and a preferred alternative is identified, additional analysis will be conducted including a traffic study and noise study.

Suggestions & Comments:

- Some terms included in the NEPA Scoping Report need additional clarification such as "operational flexibility" and "unreasonably high cost".
- Regional impacts need to be considered, not just those to abutters and the communities immediately surrounding the project site.
- More analysis is needed overall.
- The Scoping Report needs more analysis and information about construction staging and related impacts such as the temporary trestle over the Charles River.
- Provide clearer evaluation criteria and more detailed justification of design decisions.
- FHWA should consider and address in its Scoping Report:
    - Expanding the park land in "the Throat" area beyond what MassDOT is proposing.
    - Moving Soldiers Field Road onto permanent fill in the Charles River
    - Opening the Grand Junction Rail Line to passenger service as part of the West Station opening

- Providing additional design alternatives for the Franklin Street Pedestrian Bridge landing that do not impact parking
- Building the Soldiers Field Road temporary trestle closer to the bank of the Charles River to minimize impacts to navigation channel
- Requiring the design-build construction bid selection and solicitation process encourage best value and minimize impacts to boaters and cyclists

Construction Staging

Key characteristics:

- For the permitting process, permits are being submitted with a worst-case scenario approach.
- The impacts of the project will be formally discussed during the NEPA and MEPA processes; a notice of project change will be issued in spring 2020 discussing the proposed Soldiers' Field Road viaduct.
- The amount of fill and piles in the river associated with the temporary Soldiers' Field Road trestle remains variable at this time as the design advances. A sheet piling wall with fill will connect the trestle to the existing road. As of the time of this writing, the trestle's outer edge is anticipated to be 130 feet out from the riverbank.
- The DEIS will explain and justify why the trestle is the best option for the project, given the need to maintain Soldiers' Field Road as a viable transportation route with 11-foot travel lanes.
- The current Soldiers' Field Road viaduct option is wider than the one laid out by the Independent Review Team (IRT) as columns have been increased from two feet in width to three and shoulders have gone from two feet to four.

- **Stages:**
  1. Construction of the trestle and demolition of Grand Junction
     - Existing I-90 and Soldier's Field Road remain operational
  2. Construction of Soldier's Field Road
     - Major utility work takes place
     - Temporary I-90 is built at grade
  3. Open the westbound off-ramp
     - The existing off-ramp overlaps with Soldier's Field Road at grade, so 22 feet of the existing off-ramp (4th lane of the existing westbound lane) will be removed for Soldier's Field Road just after the Commonwealth Avenue Bridge

- Once the new off-ramp is operational, the existing off-ramp will be demolished

4. I-90 is open with three lanes of westbound and eastbound traffic operational
    - Half of the viaduct is demolished
    - Construction of the temporary eastbound I-90 is undertaken at grade
    - Construction of the temporary commuter rail is undertaken at grade
5. Eastbound traffic is on a temporary alignment. Westbound traffic is operational in its permanent position through the throat.
    - The remainder of the viaduct is demolished
6. No traffic changes
    - An opened corridor allows for the construction of permanent commuter rail tracks
7. Construction of full eastbound I-90 and Soldier's Field Road
    - An opened corridor allows for I-90 depression and Soldier's Field Road to be built above
8. Open I-90 eastbound
    - I-90 westbound is still temporary
    - New Soldiers Field Road viaduct structure is built, but not connected
    - Space is cleared to construct I-90 Westbound
9. I-90 Westbound is completed
    - All work on the parkland side is complete

Opportunities:

- Filing for a permit that extends the trestle 130 feet into the river allows for flexibility in the design-build.
- The trestle and everything utilized to create it will be removed once the project is complete.
- Staging will be conducted so that each facility is temporarily relocated in sequence while permanent structures are built.
- The most common type of temporary trestle is a straight segment; it allows for less use of fill and is easiest from a constructability standpoint. This in part drives the trestle alignment.
- The temporary trestle allows space for contractors to build the permanent roads.

Challenges:

- Soldier's Field Road must remain operational, with two lanes in each direction, throughout the entire project.

- No changes can be made to Buick Street which limits the amount to which the project can move south.
- Depressing I-90 and raising Soldiers' Field Road incurs major utility challenges.
- There will be multiple profile changes of I-90 and Soldier's Field Road to complete the project
- The more the trestle is bent to hug the shoreline, the more difficult construction and permitting become.

Suggestions & Comments:

- Session members expressed interest in viewing the nonviable alternatives for the plan
- Replace the trestle with a roadway on fill retained by sheet piles
- Reduce the impact of the trestle on the river
- Have the trestle hug the shoreline instead of being a straight line over the river
- Conduct an analysis of the additional impacts having the trestle hug the shoreline will create
- Have MassDEP representatives attend a future meeting
- The permit submission should not provide the 'worst-case scenario' option
- The commuter rail must be maintained at two lines in each direction for the duration of the project
- Consider the ecological health of the river when in the restoration phase; don't just restore it to what it was, but work to improve the conditions of the river
- Present a more detailed timeline of the plan's staging
- Present the details of stormwater management plans during construction
- Leave the trestle or part of the trestle instead of removing it after the project is complete

Riverbank Restoration

Key characteristics:

- Bicycle lanes and pedestrian walkways
- Outfalls, filtrations, water treatment
- New green space
- Runs parallel to at-grade I-90 in the throat and Soldiers' Field Road for the length of the project.

Opportunities:

- Wetland restoration

Challenges:

- Calculating number of outfalls
- Developing an appropriate tree canopy at the throat's narrowest point

Suggestions & Comments:

- Boston University students lack adequate foot bridges to the Charles River; there should be an Agannis Way connection.
- Increase focus on wetland restoration
- What is the relationship between outfalls and filtration?
- What happens to I-90 wall a noise barrier wall? To what extant is it a barrier?
- What happens to snow on Soldier's Field Road?

Rail Operations

Key characteristics:

- West Station
    - 2-3 platforms
    - Two Worcester mainline commuter rail express tracks
    - Provision for buses, shuttles, taxis
    - Accommodate future Urban Rail service to North Station via Grand Junction Line
    - Transitway with bicycle/ pedestrian facilities linking to Malvern Street
- Commuter Rail Layover Yard
    - Provides layover capacity for existing and future operations
    - Provides space for light maintenance of commuter rail
    - Addition of a noise barrier adjacent to residential neighborhood along Pratt and Ashford streets
    - Plug-ins provided to prevent locomotives from idling
    - Provides a "pocket track" to pull disabled trains off the mainline.

Opportunities:

- Greater access and improvements to the commuter rail, local bus service, and future Urban Rail service
- Meets ridership demand on Worcester commuter rail
    - Provides opportunity for express trips from Worcester and Framingham

- Less cars on the road, less automobile congestion
- Track work would lead to faster, more reliable service
- West Station will bring more people to the area
- Not all trains would stop at West Station at the outset; as demand grows, service can be scaled up to support it.

Challenges:

- It will be difficult to maintain two tracks during construction, so a single-track operation will be necessary for a short distance through the project area – roughly one mile – with limited impacts to train frequency and speed
- The Grand Junction Line will be impacted for a longer period of time leading to impacts on the MBTA's ability to service their commuter rail fleet

Suggestions & Comments:

- Two tracks must be maintained on the Worcester Mainline throughout construction
- Provide a design that supports more Worcester/Framingham express trips
- Provide a design that supports future electric multiple unit (EMU) trains
- Move the stairs to the platform closer to Malvern Street
- West Station should provide for significant additional bus service
- Change the track configuration near the Franklin Street bridge to allow for the Harvard Flip to work without speed restrictions
- Update the signal system to allow for more frequent train service.

Next Steps

A public comment period of 37 days was initiated on November 6th and will close on December 12th to provide the public with an opportunity to comment on the contents of the Scoping Report. Instructions on how to submit comments to FHWA and MassDOT was be provided at the November 13 task force meeting and can be found on the project website.

A public meeting to introduce the Scoping Document was held in Brighton the week prior to the meeting described herein. A second, similar public meeting will be held on Wednesday, December 4, 6:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m. at Dunning Elementary School in Framingham, to introduce meeting attendees to the contents of the Scoping Report, provide an overview of the ongoing federal environmental

permitting process for the I-90 Allston project, and outline the process for members of the public to comment on the report document.

The I-90 Allston Multimodal Project task force will next meet at 6:00PM on December 11th, 2019, at the Fiorentino Center. The Center is located at 123 Antwerp Street off Western Avenue in Brighton.

Appendix 1: Meeting Attendees

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation
Douglas	Arcard	Resident
Rita	Arcard	Resident
Glen	Berkowitz	A Better City
Jorge	Briones	Massachusetts Bay Transportation Agency
Nate	Cabral-Curtis	Howard Stein Hudson
Chris	Calnan	TetraTech
Jean	Charles	Howard Stein Hudson
Mark	Ciommo	Boston City Council
Anthony	D'Isidoro	Allston Civic Association
Guus	Driessen	Brookline Transportation Board
Mark	Fobert	TetraTech
Karl	Haglund	Department of Conservation and Recreation
Robert	La Tremoque	Friends of White Geese
Wendy	Landman	WalkBoston
Kane	Larn	Community Row Inc
Nate	Lash	Howard Stein Hudson
Elizabeth	Leary	Boston University
David	Loutzenheiser	Metropolitan Area Planning Council
Christine	Marini	Boston Police Department
Harry	Mattison	Community Representative
Jen	Migliore	State Representative Michael Moran
Heather	Miller	Charles River Watershed Association
Taylor	Miller	Howard Stein Hudson
Tom	Nally	A Better City
Joan	Perkins	Resident
Ashley	Pierre-Louis	Howard Stein Hudson
Jessica	Robertson	Community Representative
Steve	Silveira	Boston University

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation
Jonathan	Spencer	Resident
Alex	Strysky	MEPA