



# I-90 ALLSTON INTERCHANGE MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION PROJECT

MASSDOT/FMCB JOINT MEETING

JANUARY 11, 2021



# Today's Agenda

- **Overview: Framework for Moving the Project Forward**
- **NEPA/MEPA review process**
- **Viaduct Repair Option**
- **Multimodal Transportation Mitigation Plan**
- **Finance Plan**

# Overview: Framework for moving the Project forward

- **In November, Secretary Pollack announced that MassDOT had decided to postpone the identification of a preferred alternative**
- **Currently, MassDOT is focusing on four discrete project issues:**
  - **Putting the project back into a more standard MEPA/NEPA review process and schedule**
  - **Developing a Significant Repair Option for the viaduct**
  - **Accelerating the development of a Transportation Mitigation Plan**
  - **Developing a Finance Plan that recognizes the need for other beneficiaries to help fund the cost of the project**



# Restarting the MEPA Review Process



- **MassDOT began the formal MEPA review process in 2014 with the submission of an Environmental Notification Form (ENF) to the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA), which resulted in the scoping of a Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR)**
- **In November 2017 MassDOT submitted the DEIR, identifying a preferred concept for the new interchange design, and in February 2018 EEA issued MassDOT a scope for a Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR)**
- **The MEPA process was “paused” in 2018 to allow for the convening of an Independent Review Team (IRT) to analyze options for the section of the project containing the Allston Viaduct, known as “the throat,” and for subsequent project development and additional public engagement**
- **In 2019 MassDOT initiated the federal NEPA review process but did not restart the MEPA process or tie the two processes together, although joint MEPA/NEPA submissions are allowed**
- **While this additional process and public engagement has added real value to project development, the project is at a point where the standard MEPA and NEPA processes can proceed to ensure both that needed analyses are conducted and that public engagement occurs at appropriate times**
- **MassDOT is therefore “unpausing” the MEPA process so that the state MEPA environmental review process and federal NEPA environmental review process can run in parallel for the remainder of the project’s development**

## MEPA/NEPA timetable

- **In March, MassDOT expects to file a Notice of Project Change (NPC) requesting to be scoped for a Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Report (SDEIR)**
  - **A Task Force meeting will be held sometime in late February to review and discuss the Draft NPC**
  - **The NPC will describe the material changes since the filing of the DEIR in 2017; define the current three alternatives and No Build; and respond to public comments provided on the previous DEIR**
- **Once a Scoping Certificate is received on the Supplemental DEIR, MassDOT will develop a single document which will serve as a combined DEIS/SDEIR**
- **The current schedule calls for the DEIS/SDEIR to be released for public review and comment in September 2021**



# Developing a Repair Option for the viaduct

- **The No Build option in the MEPA/NEPA process is the major reconstruction of the existing viaduct**
  - This option is estimated to cost \$400+ million and would extend the useful life of the viaduct for a period of 25 years or more
- **MassDOT has also initiated development of a less expensive repair option that could be built in a shorter time frame and provide 10-15 years of service life for the viaduct**
  - This Viaduct Repair option could allow planning/design/debate to proceed on the permanent version of the multimodal project to continue for 5-10 more years without concern about viaduct condition and could be funded out of Metropolitan Highway System reserves without the need to increase tolls or bond against toll revenues
- **MassDOT has also initiated additional inspection and structural analysis, which will be conducted over the next 4-6 weeks, to ensure that decisionmaking is based on an up-to-date assessment of the viaduct's current condition and remaining useful life**

# Accelerating the development of a transportation mitigation plan



- Many commenters raised the issue of how MassPike commuters, Worcester commuter rail riders and others will commute and travel to and from communities west of Boston during the project's 6-7 year construction period
- MassDOT agrees that we need to have a plan in place that addresses all forms and types of travel during the construction period in advance of the project in order to identify and implement needed early actions and investments
- The plan needs to include (but is not limited to):
  - Maintenance of maximum number of travel lanes on I-90 and Soldiers Field Road
  - Maintenance and, if feasible, expansion of commuter rail service on the Framingham/Worcester line
  - Development and implementation of additional strategies to encourage telework/remote work and provide additional transit options
  - Bicycle and pedestrian access through the project site during construction
- MassDOT also agrees with commenters who suggested the need for a separate group focusing on the travel needs of Metrowest and Central Massachusetts travelers during construction



# Next Step: Establish a Transportation Mitigation Working Group



**A group of participants tasked with identifying possible multimodal mitigation measures, in advance of any construction, for the review of the Secretary**

**Members will participate in monthly meetings facilitated by MassDOT. There might also be subcommittees focused on topics like Worcester Line Rail, traffic management and increasing telework/remote work**

**Members will be asked to learn about the issues relevant to the project and disseminate this information to the segment(s) or interest groups of the community with which they are more familiar**

**Members will be to give or review suggestions on possible mitigation measures, such as:**

- **Ways to mitigate disruption to Worcester Line Rail service**
- **Possible replacement services to offset the impact of lane reductions and rail service due to construction**
- **Traffic management and ways to best communicate service disruption during construction**
- **Possible telework/remote work strategies to lessen the amount of traveling public altogether**

**The first Transportation Mitigation Working Group meeting will be sometime in February or March**



# Developing a Finance Plan: Purpose

- **To engage the Board of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation in a discussion and possible action regarding the policy fundamentals and gating principles of the Allston I-90 Multimodal Program finance plan**
- **To date we have heard from the Members of the Board that the foundation of the Finance Plan must include the following elements:**
  - **Fairness**
  - **Equity**
  - **Appropriate mitigation**
  - **Value sharing**
- **The following resolution, discussed at last week's Finance and Audit Committee meeting, attempts to capture these elements**

# **I-90 Allston Funding/Finance Policy Resolution**

- **WHEREAS the I-90 Allston Multimodal Program consists of an integrated series of multimodal improvements intended to address transportation deficiencies across modes within the Project Area that affect connections between the Project Area and the greater Boston region, the nearby neighborhoods and the Charles River Reservation; and**
- **WHEREAS in addressing these deficiencies an opportunity exists to improve livability, connectivity, and open space for residents of the Project Area and the City of Boston and improve regional multimodal mobility and roadway safety with the straightening of I-90;**



## I-90 Allston Funding/Finance Policy Resolution (cont.)



- **WHEREAS the straightening of I-90 and new ramp system will create an expansive, unencumbered swath of land ideal for large scale commercial, residential, educational and public realm economic development and enable, over time, the addition of millions of mixed-use square feet of development on the former Beacon Park Yards;**
- **WHEREAS the I-90 Allston Multimodal Program is only one of many potential capital investments that MassDOT can make that achieve such important goals and objectives and capital funding must be prioritized across many different projects and programs;**

## **I-90 Allston Funding/Finance Policy Resolution (cont.)**



**NOW THEREFORE it is the sense of the Board of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation that a finance plan for the I-90 Allston Multimodal Program needs to be developed as soon as possible and, in any event, a final plan needs to be in place by the time environmental review is completed under MEPA and NEPA;**

**AND FURTHER that Finance Plan must examine multiple funding sources and represent a fair, stable and equitable sharing of Program costs by all users and beneficiaries of the Program, including substantial value sharing contributions from municipal, private, educational partners, and public-private partnerships;**



## **I-90 Allston Funding/Finance Policy Resolution (cont.)**



**AND FURTHER it is the sense of the Board that unless such a Finance Plan is created and approved by all relevant parties, the “No Build” or “Build in Place” option will be the preferred option that the Department recommends and proceeds with;**

**AND FURTHER it is the sense of the Board of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation that any alternative of the I-90 Allston Multimodal Program should only proceed if the following conditions are met:**

# **I-90 Allston Funding/Finance Policy Resolution (cont.)**



- **A robust and effective transportation project mitigation plan is designed, vetted and implemented;**
- **Environmental justice and accessibility requirements are met;**
- **Full funding for an MBTA south side commuter rail maintenance facility, should it be necessitated by the I-90 Allston preferred alternative, must be provided to the MBTA as part of the finance plan, soon enough to allow for design, construction and operation before the I-90 Allston Multimodal Program construction plan requires closure of the Grand Junction Bridge; and**
- **Any additional project elements, added to the Program after Board approval of the Finance Plan, will only be considered if said elements are fully funded by parties other than MassDOT, unless required as part of mitigation or anticipated as part of the design-build procurement.**