MEMO

TO: Eamon Kernan, MassDOT Project Manager

FROM: Nathaniel Cabral-Curtis, WSP Senior Consultant

RE: PFC Ralph. T Basiliere Bridge Replacement Project Targeted Meeting - Crescent Yacht Club

DATE: July 18, 2023

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OVERVIEW

On Thursday, July 18th, 2023, members of MassDOT and consultant staff associated with the PFC Ralph T. Basiliere Bridge Replacement, attended a targeted briefing organized by the Crescent Yacht Club. Attendees included members of the Crescent Yacht Club, Plum Island Kayak, City Councilor Melinda Barrett, Andrew Herlihy, the Division Director of Haverhill's Community Development Department, and Ralph J. Basiliere, descendent of Private First Class Ralph T. Basiliere for whom the bridge is named[1]. The meeting was held at the Crescent Yacht Club, located at 30 Ferry Street in Haverhill, as part of their regularly scheduled meeting time. Built in 1925, the Basiliere Bridge is routinely inspected by MassDOT and remains safe for all users but is approaching the end of its useful lifespan and must be replaced. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce members of the Crescent Yacht Club and other boating communities in Haverhill of the need to replace the structure. The meeting aimed to provide a status update on the concept design process, facilitate discussion of ideas, observations, and concerns for boaters on the Merrimack River, and foster connections between the project and the local boating community. The presentation given noted the importance of the Basiliere Bridge to City[2] and showcased some of the concepts developed to date to replace the bridge both in terms of cross-section and general appearance.

Attendees were strongly engaged and vocal during the meeting, sharing valuable feedback. Attendees acknowledged the necessity of replacing the Basiliere Bridge and raised concerns about the existing traffic congestion, and wondered how traffic would operate during bridge construction expressing a marked preference for the new bridge having a four-lane cross-section as opposed to three; two possibilities currently under review by MassDOT. Attendees remarked on the current low frequency of pedestrians crossing the bridge suggesting that the extra sidewalk width allowed by three-lane cross-section would provide minimal benefit given the required trade-off of

[1] As all meeting attendees did not introduce themselves when speaking, all content is presented anonymously. The presentation and responses to questions and comments should be assumed to have come from a member of the project team unless otherwise noted.

[2] The Basiliere Bridge appears on the City of Haverhill's website, the badges of municipal firefighters, and on the websites of several, local community organizations.

vehicle capacity. The meeting involved discussion around the navigation channel currently being located on the north side of the river. Attendees asked about the feasibility of widening the channel to allow barges to pass more comfortably below the bridge. Questions arose around the existing bridge's movable span's original purpose and whether the replacement structure could potentially also contain a moveable section. The project team explained to the audience that the existing drawbridge never operated and that maintaining a movable section on the new bridge would substantially increase cost and complexity without a readily discernable benefit.

PRESENTATION

C: Good evening everyone thank you so much for coming. Some of you may have seen me at the Market Basket earlier when I dropped off flyers. This is about the replacement of the Basiliere Bridge which is right around the corner. Our goal of being here tonight is to make ourselves known to you and hear from this particular boating community as well as the tour boat that runs underneath the bridge and the people who move their kayaks through here. We want to know what your year looks like, when your boats go into the water, when your boats come out of the water, when the dock goes into the water, and when the dock comes out; all of that sort of stuff so that we can work that into our plan going forward. Tonight, we are going to give you a brief overview of where we are in the design process, which is still pretty early. I do want to underscore the partnership with the City of Haverhill. They have been wonderful in helping us. Here is Eamon Kernan, our DOT project manager.

C: Thank you Nate. This is a brief overview. We have had 3 public meetings. We do ask that you sign in and give us your email address because if we have your email address, we will be able to forward you updates as the design moves forward and you will be able to send in questions via email that we can answer. Also, following this any design ideas or input that you have you can also send us through email.

Thank you to everyone who has come here to discuss the bridge. We have a small agenda. I will talk about the project purpose, proposed construction approach, the feedback that we have received from the city to date, and at the end if you have any questions, we can answer some questions and have a discussion.

The bridge out there now is the third bridge at this site. It was built in 1925. It was named after PFC Basiliere in 1972. In 2018, MassDOT began a study to replace the bridge deck, but following investigation, it was concluded that the bridge needed to be replaced. In 2022, MassDOT initiated the concept design phase, and right now we are having meetings with the city, and we are having meetings with you, to get some feedback as to what the new bridge is eventually going to look like.

This is a locus plan. You are right here; you can see the bridge outside. The bridge travels north and south across the Merrimack. The Yacht Club is to the east. Everyone who is here is aware of where the bridge is. The project limits will go beyond what the bridge is itself. They have incorporated two intersections on both sides, where the traffic patterns will be adjusted, and the signal timing will be changed. It will extend further north to the Main Street/Water Street/Merrimack Street intersection. That section of road will be redone. Traffic signals will be redone and lane configurations potentially changed to work with what we put on the bridge. Looking at the slide, everything that is shown in blue is our project limits.

Here are terms that you may or may not understand for the bridge. One of the main reasons that the entire bridge needs to be replaced is due to what we call scour. Scour is where when the current goes around the piers, and washes the riverbed away from the foundations, thereby weakening them. The foundations on this bridge need to be replaced. You will hear us say the piers. The piers are the main foundations for the bridge. The deck is where the vehicles and the pedestrians are when crossing the structure.

Why was this project initiated? The existing bridge was built in 1925. It is actually two bridges because we have a bridge that goes over the water and a second bridge that goes over the rail section which is now the bicycle path. The total length is about 800 feet. The existing bridge is about 68 feet wide. It carries 20,000 vehicles a day, 4% of those are buses and heavy trucks. We say that it is at the end of its useful lifespan, that does not mean that it cannot be used, it is safe and MassDOT ensures that it is safe. The work that was done on it recently was because there was a beam that was deemed unsafe, so we will eventually be supporting that beam with cribbing, but in the interim we cannot have traffic going over that portion of the structure, which is why you have the temporary traffic set-up that you can see today. It is constantly being inspected but the bridge remains safe for all users in its current state. Especially because you are boaters, you get to see the deterioration on the underside of the bridge that most people walking across do not get to see.

Why does this bridge need to be replaced? Well, a picture tells a thousand words. This bridge is in tough condition, and it does need to be replaced. I mentioned scour earlier, this is just a diagram. I use the analogy that if you are standing on the beach and the tide is coming in, when water goes around your feet, it actually creates holes around and behind your feet. That is what scour does. It does the same to the foundation of the bridge. Besides actually building new piers for our replacement bridge, we have to address the riverbed in that area. It has to be reinforced so we don't wind up in the same place again with scour.

What is going on currently? We have had various meetings to listen to the City of Haverhill. We are here listening to you. We need to work out what bridge type we are going to use. What the cross-section is going to look like in regard to how many travel lanes and accommodating cyclists and people on the sidewalk. Then, obviously general appearance. One thing we did with this bridge, from the beginning, was ensure that the engineering firm brought on a bridge architect. The intent is not to build a basic highway bridge, like when you are out on Route 128; they look exactly the same everywhere you go. We got a bridge architect on board so that we could get something pleasing. This is a gateway bridge to the City of Haverhill, so we want to do something nice out here.

Some of the milestones: we are working towards what we call the pre-25% design. That is where we get a conceptual design, and again, the reason we are talking to the city is to get that input so that the designers can start putting an idea together. They will feed that to MassDOT and we will sit together and come up with what this bridge is going to look like, how is it going to be designed, what type of structure, the architecture, what it is going to look like, and how many lanes for the cross-section. All of those elements will be decided in the pre-25% design. Once the designer has that information, they are off and running to design this bridge.

Here is one concept for a cross-section. This is a three-lane concept. As you can see, the existing bridge is 68 feet wide, but due to the way we will be building the new structure, it is potentially going to be about 75 feet wide. If we went with a three-lane configuration, it would accommodate 6-foot bicycle tracks on both sides, 8-foot sidewalks or larger and the three travel lanes.

A cross-section of four-lanes within the same 75 feet would reduce the size of the sidewalk to a regular 5-foot sidewalk, a 5-foot bicycle track on both sides and four lanes of traffic. There has been a lot of talk, everyone says that the four-lanes are better than three lanes. By the number that is in fact true however, when you look into the science of it, the difference in regard to traffic patterns, are not that different. When they run the numbers, they do simulations. There are traffic design experts involved. Four is 25% more than three but it is not necessarily that the three lanes cannot handle the flow of traffic. Again, our traffic experts will be working on that.

An update on the cross-section. Most recently, we got information from WSP, and it is going through the review process with MassDOT. All cross-sections will be evaluated in that review and all of the input we took at the various meetings we had will be factored into that. MassDOT will have to make a decision based off of that information as to

what we think the best cross-section is to go with. The four-lane cross-section is preferred, in part for local preference, for additional space for emergency response vehicles during congested conditions, and reserved capacity for anticipated future traffic volumes. The three-lane cross-section remains under review by MassDOT, so right now the information seems to say that four lanes might be the way we are going, but it is not final. The four-lane configuration restricts the cross-section of what we can do in regard to sidewalks and bicycle accommodations, so that is something we need to keep in mind.

Behind us we have the three different alternatives on the display boards. Some people may say "I like this concept and I really do not like this". The final bridge will be a mix and match of different pieces of the concepts. What you see here is based on input we got at the meetings held to date. We would like it if you would look at these concepts later and if you have any comments, please email, or talk to us at the end and we can discuss. Although it is a brand-new bridge and it is going to be a modern bridge, we would like it to be a homage to the bridge that is already there. There has been a lot of discussion regarding the towers that are on the existing bridge. Could they be kept? The answer to that is no, they are not in good repair. They are very heavy. We would be building something huge just to hold them up. To move them, it is almost impossible. This bridge originally had a moveable section. It has never moved but towers were there to provide the control room for the bridge tender. This bridge will be fixed so there's no need to replicate something that would have no real purpose.

You will see in the different views and different angles some of the architectural features. This bridge could be steel or concrete. The deck will be concrete. In regard to the side profile, the support structure for the deck will be steel or concrete, that has not been decided yet.

Another view. This term, Haunched Girders, this would be a cross-section that you may be more used to seeing on a highway bridge. Again, seeking your input, if you like this over the previous arch structure, please let us know. We are trying to build the best bridge that we can, and base that in part on what the City of Haverhill wants. One thing we are trying for is to allow for a modern structure that evokes today's bridge with arches. There are a few concepts regarding how we might provide overlooks. In this image, in the center section, we are going to widen out the bridge. This one has overlooks on each of the piers. Another idea was on the center span, was to widen it out and have a large overlook in that area. Here is a wind screen, this was suggested at various meetings, asking if we could put something on the bridge to help reduce the winds that come up and down the Merrimack. That idea was added to one of the architectural renderings. Another idea was to have a cover for if you wanted to stay out there and it is raining so if you look at this option, you can see where we have added a small roof to it.

We do have some additional goals. We want to open views to the river and improve the connection between the bridge and the Bradford Rail Trail. We want to improve the connection to the boardwalk on the opposite side. The bridge is the entrance to downtown, so it is a gateway feature; we want to add some nice lighting and some vertical elements. Right now, on the opposite side, where the Dempsey Boardwalk meets the path, there is an elevation difference and connecting those two will not be a part of this project. However, we do not want to build a bridge that would prevent that from happening in the future. The project team remains open to public input. It is not that we are going to stop listening, but the bridge does need to be replaced so there is a finite amount of time for us to gather input on the basics because we have to move into design.

We are here today at the Yacht Club because it is important for us to hear what you have to say as river users. We are highway guys, so there are probably many elements related to the river that we do not understand. Your input could be very valuable to us in the design of this bridge. If there are any ideas that you have, please talk to us today or email us later on.

This project is going to be what they call design-build. A regular project is what they call a design-bid-build which means we would spend about two years designing it, a couple of months later, a contractor gets it, and then, let us say it takes three years for them to build the bridge meaning around five years all in. Design-build is where we spend a year or two on the preliminary design and then the contractor teamed up with a designer would get it at that point allowing some construction to begin while the final design gets done. That helps us compress the schedule. It will happen on this bridge. So rather than the five years maybe it gets down to three or four. That is just an example of what design-build is and why we're using it here. If we go design-build we get the best value procurement. In picking qualified teams it promotes innovation because when a contractor works directly with the designer, they come up with the best ideas for getting something out there and getting it out there fast. Frequently, that brings in options for accelerated bridge construction techniques. I have another project and they are building the replacement bridge right beside the old one. Once it is complete, over two weekends they are going to demolish the old bridge and slide the new one into place. That is considered accelerated bridge construction. We will not be doing that out here, this is a more complex structure, but that is just one technique. At the bottom of the slide, it says incentives/disincentives may be used to ensure compliance with contracts. That happens a lot in design-build contracts. Let's say the contractors promises to build something in three years. They start getting fined when they go beyond the three years or there are incentives for them to build it in less time. That is another part of the design-build process that helps to get the bridge replaced quicker.

That was very brief. Our previous meetings went into a lot of detail. It would be kind of tough today to answer questions in regard to finite details about the bridge. It has not been designed yet. We are open to the questions that you may have and are absolutely open to suggestions for elements that are relevant to the river users because that is something that we would not be familiar with.

DISCUSSION

Q: As you were just talking about, the design-build process and all of that, what are you going to do with the build process? What is the design process? What is going to happen with the traffic?

A: Half of the bridge will be demolished. Two lanes will remain open, and one sidewalk will remain open. In the space opened up by demolishing half the old bridge, they will build half of the new one. The existing bridge is 68 feet wide. In the 34 feet that opens, they will actually overbuild slightly making the first new half wider to fit in everything we need. Once that is done, traffic is switched onto the new structure giving us again one lane each way and a sidewalk. After that, we demolish what remains of the old bridge and build the second half of the new one. Then they will have a 75-foot-wide bridge and then they will open it to the final traffic condition.

Q: Do you have any numbers for traffic?

A: Yes. I do not have the numbers right now, but WSP has their traffic experts analyzing all the numbers and all the traffic counts that they have, and they put it through simulations to see what we can expect under different conditions.

Q: You are going to cut traffic in half, when you cut the bridge in half?

A: That would not be the intent. If 20 thousand people cross that bridge every day, they would wish to cross that bridge every day. It is not a case that 20 thousand vehicles cannot cross that bridge in a day, there is going to be some backup involved. If you look at the bridge right now, in the center of the bridge, it acts as two lanes, one lane in each direction, when it gets to the traffic signals it turns back into two lanes.

Q: I just wanted to know the numbers, that is all.

A: Yes. The numbers alone would not tell us anything. They would be fed into a computer, and they would come up with the best for the situation.

A: I think the only other thing that we might want to mention is that one of the things that we are analyzing is changes to the signal times and phasing on either end of the bridge to help the traffic continue to process through when there is a more constricted cross-section.

Q: Why would you go to three lanes? Right now, there are four. I want to tell you what happened. I live over in Bradford. They put the temporary traffic set up in put it down to one lane. I come down Salem Street, it took me over half an hour to get from there to the bridge, so you want to tell me you want to make it one permanently? That is going to be a big problem. Why don't you make it four and then one more lane instead of two? Over in Newburyport, they ran the bridge into a traffic circle, one of these roundabouts; you cannot even get a truck around it. I do not know what these engineers are doing.

A: When we talk about the cross-sections, we said right now the design is showing a four-lane configuration.

C: They should keep it when traffic is approaching over there.

Q: Are talking about since they did the work on the bridge?

A: Yes, since they put that one piece in, it took me a half an hour to get from Salem Street to that bridge.

Q: The new bridge is going to be higher than the old bridge, is that correct? Because the old bridge, didn't it have the capability of opening? So, the new bridge will not do that?

A: The old bridge was built originally to lift but it has never lifted.

Q: Oh, it never has?

A: It never has. My understanding was that they put the machinery in and within a few months they had removed some of the machinery. My understanding is that since it was put in, it has never opened. Right now, there is a water line attached to the bottom of it and there is no equipment that could open that bridge. I believe the profile will be very similar to the existing conditions. There is nothing proposed to try to increase any clearances.

Q: Was there any talk about eliminating, for lack of a better word, the road that goes underneath on the north side?

Q: The Rail Trail?

A: Literally it goes under the bridge. Homeless people have camped under there. Back in the day, you could drive from Merrimack Street down some.

A: O.K. you are talking about the other side. So, you have the gravel patch that comes up to the bridge. It goes under the bridge but then it hits a wall. The boardwalk is on the opposite side, but the boardwalk is elevated. One of the parts of the design is that on this side where the Rail Trail is, if you are going through there it is kind of like a tunnel effect in that you can't really see the river and it's only open at either end. The new design will be much more open. If you are on the trail, under the bridge, and you look, you will be able to see water. We would look to replicate that on the opposite side. From a homelessness standpoint, it is a very tough question for all citizens to deal with, but our intent is that it will be opened up. I was saying earlier, currently we do not propose a connection between the gravel trail and the boardwalk, but we will be building the bridge in such a way that should the city be able to get a project together to connect those two, they will be able to do it in the future. We will build a bridge so that will not be prevented. From a security standpoint, that would go to the city, but it would be more open and not necessarily be as inviting to people if they want to camp out.

A: The other part of that, the current bridge extends a fair distance beyond Wall Street and that is going to be eliminated. The extra sort of spans that are north of Wall Street that are now fenced off, I know were previously an issue, that part of the bridge will be eliminated. The new end abutment will be closer to the river compared to what it is today.

Q: How are you supposed to replace the piers with traffic going over the bridge?

A: The piers will be in a completely different location. Let us say the bridge is 7 spans. It could potentially be five when we are done.

Q: So, you are going to have a larger span in between?

A: Yes.

C: Because the channel is all the way on the north side of the river right now and if you put that arch in the middle or the center of the river in that shallow water…

Q: So, theoretically the navigation channel is on the other side. Those are the sort of comments that we need. Are there navigation lights currently? Are there navigation lights over the section you are talking about?

A: The Coast Guard stops their channel at that buoy [pointing out the windows] just downstream of the bridge. The navigation channel is pushed to the north side of the river.

Q: Is the channel under the section that used to be moveable?

A: Yes.

Q: While you are evaluating traffic patterns for three or four lanes, have you taken into account that high-rise condos that are going up right over there? That is going to triple traffic and we only have two bridges.

A: It is being taken into account. When this project is done, the signal timing will be changed. When they run the analysis, if the three-lane configuration changes the numbers dramatically from a four-lane configuration, then we are going with a four-lane configuration. If we were to put a four-lane configuration in, let's say today, and redo the traffic patterns now, it would probably alleviate some of the situations that exist at the moment but when the additional traffic comes in, yes you can run the numbers. If this bridge is backed up when all the cars are in there, it will not be because we put four lanes in, the hope is that our traffic situation when we leave is better than the current situation, but we cannot stop the additional traffic that is going to be there.

Q: I hope they do not even seriously consider the three lanes because of the foot traffic. I mean, I do not know the studies, but I cannot imagine that it would be a problem with a 5-foot width on both sides and a bicycle lane on both sides. The only benefit of the three-lane is a larger sidewalk for pedestrians. Correct?

A: That's certainly one of the benefits, yes.

Q: Do we have a number on how many pedestrians walk across? I do not think it would be a problem for people to go two separate directions.

A: I understand what you are saying. A lot of where roadway projects are going, is to try to get us to walk more. A lot of us here are car-centric, and there is a shift away from being car-centric, but we have been coming to all of these meetings and all of the input that we are getting is, "build us a highway across this river and make the traffic lights work better, because we want to get across the bridge as quick as we can." The memo that WSP gave us, that is in with the state right now, is pointed in that general direction.

C: So, if I am considering walking over the bridge, I am not going to say that I will not walk over the bridge, I am going to take my car, because the sidewalk is only 5 feet wide.

C: I agree. When I started on this project there was one concept where there was a wider directional bicycle path on one side that connected the loop between the boardwalk, the bridge, the Rail Trail, and the other bridge which made a nice loop. With that idea, you could make that section of bridge nice and wide and it would become an inviting location to go out and walk and do the loop and stay on the bridge the idea being to sort of make a linear park out of this 800-foot long bridge. When I started, there was an organization that had come to the city with some concept ideas on what you could do, put some planters on the bridge and make it a very inviting space. Ever since we've been coming up here, however, and listening to you, we've heard your concerns about the traffic and the idea that a more

minimal sidewalk is O.K. provided it helps stop congestion. MassDOT won't simply ignore your comments and build just what we want. The reason we're having these meetings is to get your input.

C: Probably what you people should do, instead of all these meetings, is sit in the traffic. Get in the traffic and see what is going on. You people do this stuff. For instance, sitting on the Merrimack, you are putting an overlook in there, right? You have to drive over the thing. The Groveland Bridge, they just built a bridge down there. I have been up three times with my boat, and they opened it, and they could not shut it. Brand new bridge. What are you people doing?

Q: All of you members know, our bylaws state that our meeting starts at 7:00 o'clock, but this is very interesting, and the team are so generous to put in their time to come here and consider us and our Yacht Club, Plum Island Kayak, and the Tour Boat and everything. I would like to make a motion to suspend the bylaws of the meeting and go for another 15 minutes, or whatever you need to answer all of your questions.

A: Second.

C: So noted.

Q: So, you said that you have the numbers for pedestrians. Where did you get that number from?

A: They go out there and count.

Q: How many people cross the bridge?

A: Yes.

C: I grew up in Bradford and I live near here, so I have been here all of my life. I would be shocked if it warrants three lanes to have that wider sidewalk. I drive this every day, at multiple times of the day, and there are never more than five people on the bridge at one time on either side that we would need a wider sidewalk versus having four lanes. The traffic is crazy. If the light happens with the streetlights, if it is not right, forget it. I am going to tell you something, I live over by Winnekenni and my mother lives in Bradford. It takes me, when I leave my house to get there, which is probably 3 miles, it takes me 20 minutes because of all these lights through this town to get there. So, what do I do? I jump onto 495 and get on the highway and get off at Ward Hill. It is crazy.

A: I thought you were going to tell me you walked because it is quicker. The general consensus of what you are saying is what we have heard. It does not matter what I think. I do not think we are in a situation where build it they will come. We are here to listen to these comments.

Q: Three lanes versus four lanes, bicycle paths, wider sidewalks. There seems to be restricted dimensions on what you can do, what did you say 64 feet, 68 feet?

A: The current bridge is 68 feet, but it will be 75 feet when we are done. The additional seven feet come from the way we build the new bridge in two halves. It could be a little wider, or a little narrower, but really we're constrained by the buildings at either end of the structure.

C: So, folks, before you keep going, just two things that I wanted to reference. You are in suspended bylaws; we thank you for doing that. I think we have a sense of the room for the traffic component. Our lead traffic engineer is Erik Maki. He has been here and conducted observations. One of his staff members actually lives in the area, over in Methuen. He has been down here conducting live observations. So, we're taking the observation of the traffic seriously.

I just put up a couple questions on the screen behind these guys. I know at some point you want to have your Yacht Club business tonight and if you want to go on about the traffic, everyone else in the commonwealth does, everywhere I go, and I have been doing this for about fifteen years at this point, that is fine, knock yourselves out, but I just want to note this gentleman over here who mentioned the piece about the navigation channel, things like that are very good for us to hear. So, if there are things like that that are completely apropos to the boat piece, we

definitely want to hear those things tonight as your commadore said. Just those two things being stated, please continue.

Q: I would like to go back to the issue of opening the bridge. As you guys are well aware, there is really not very much beyond that bridge. There is a marina or two here and there. Here is my question, I have been researching this bridge. I cannot get a definitive answer as to whether or not that bridge actually ever worked. Nobody seems to know.

A: They built it to be moved. They put the machinery in there. They did not put enough machinery to open it and then they removed the machinery. It has never opened since it was built.

Q: Let me carry that thought a little further. Why would they design a bridge that would open? There must have been a purpose. They used to build big sailing ships over there. That is probably why.

C: The most recent explanation I have been given, is that there is really no point in having that bridge open because boats of a certain size would not be able to navigate further up. But what happens, ten, or twenty years down the road, if the Feds come and say, "We will be glad to dredge out that part of the river for you guys because your downtown is right there and that might turn into a major attraction if you could get boats out this far." The problem is, at this point, once you guys build that bridge, that is never going to happen. If that bridge is built so that it is not capable of raising, that idea of being able to use that stretch of river further down vanishes.

A: It becomes a cost situation. Right now, there is no justification for that bridge to be movable so they would never put something in on an idea on that it may happen in twenty years' time or otherwise.

Q: I have one final point, doesn't the Navigable Waterways Act demand that that bridge be replicated so that that one time if it was cable of functioning, doesn't the law demand that the new bridge must be capable of functioning as well?

Q: I do not know the answer to that question, but I know that there were discussions in regard to the navigable channel, where it currently ends from a Corps of Engineers standpoint and a Coast Guard standpoint. Are you aware of anything regarding navigable channel?

A: I just remember us talking about the limits of the federal channel.

A: We know we have to apply for certain permits with the Coast Guard to get sign off on the new bridge. If that becomes an issue, we have to talk further. My understanding is that the fact that the bridge has been fixed, for all intents and purposes since 1925, so the bridge that we are going to replace will be the same kind.

C: Two things about the navigable channel. My name is Ralph Basiliere. I am on the Haverhill Conservation Commission. My understanding from some permitting that I have recently been involved in, is that the navigable channel goes up to where the railroad bridge is, just before the Comeau Bridge. I can tell you that beyond that, that river will never ever be dredged further because beyond that is the spawning ground for the Atlantic Sturgeon and it is the only place on the East Coast where it happens. The idea of, not that it is a bad idea, that the Federal Government might say "You have got a downtown here, you have to dredge that," it is never going to happen. I am as sure of that as that I am never going to be as good looking as Brad Pitt.

C: Now do not sell yourself short.

Q: As far as the railroad bridge, they have been working on that for seven-plus years and they are talking about replacing the railroad bridge because of the same things with the piers. I have seen them go under this bridge before following the navigation channel and they have barges with skegs on them and they barely clear under the bridge. Is there a chance that you could make the channel side a little bit broader so that they could actually bring their barge itself to repair that other bridge?

Q: So, you are saying that the construction firms bring them up?

A: They have been bringing them up for seven years. Every time they go through, they have to wait until the river drops to the lowest level and they have to bring the skegs up to the highest point so that they can go skirt through at the bottom of the tide. They are just barely touching the bridge.

A: Horizontally it is going to be bigger because we are going to have longer spans than what it is now. So, it is about 100 feet now, it is going to be more like 125-150-foot spans. Just imagine that the arch is like this right now [making an arch shape with his hand], but then if you spread it out, and then the arch is here, it means that the height above the water gets wider.

C: You might want to contact them and find out what their plans are, because their bridge, they might have to replace the whole railroad bridge at the same time as yours.

C: Thank you for the information.

C: And what Ralph just said. It is navigable up to the railroad bridge which is beyond this bridge.

C: I can tell you for a fact, that bridge [pointing out the windows to the Basiliere Bridge] carries a high voltage, oil-filled cable. That's in there with other electric utilities, water, and maybe some other things. It was either Boston Edison or National Grid that was on the job when they did that. They built the pipe on land, they carried it all the way across, they pulled a cable through it, and filled it with oil, so to have an opening bridge with that cable there, it is never going to open.

The only thing I want to add is that this is probably the fourth or fifth meeting that I have been to, and about half a dozen of us have been to most of the meetings that you have had. The amazing thing is that some of the suggestions that we gave you at the first two meetings are actually on your posters. I appreciate the fact that you are listening to people. This is your chance. If you sign this paper, and put your email on here, you will actually have a say in what your bridge in the City of Haverhill is going to look like because they are going to contact you every time they have a meeting like this, and they are actually listening. That is an amazing thing. You do not get a chance to have a say about the high-rise buildings or anything else that go up around you, but you actually have a say on what is going on with this bridge, and you can go to the rest of the meetings that they have as they are designing it. I just wanted to throw that out there and commend them for doing that for all of the public here in Haverhill. Thank you.

C: We are at 7:15 so thank you everybody.

NEXT STEPS

The project team's next targeted briefing will be at the Latino Coalition of Haverhill on the 23rd of August. MassDOT continues to evaluate the cross-section memorandum discussed in this meeting with the goal of scheduling the Over-the-Shoulder Review for August of 2023.