

6 Agency Coordination and Public Involvement

6.1 Introduction

This section discusses agency coordination and public involvement conducted by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) in the development of this Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS). **Appendix 6.1, Agency Coordination and Public Involvement Technical Report**, provides further details.

6.2 Agency Coordination

6.2.1 Lead Agencies

The FHWA, as Lead Federal Agency, and MassDOT, as Joint Lead Agency, are responsible for providing an opportunity for agency and public involvement in the Cape Cod Bridges Program's (Program) environmental review process.¹ The FHWA and MassDOT prepared an Agency Coordination Plan to solicit and consider input from other agencies and the public in the environmental review process for the Program in accordance with 23 United States Code (USC) 139. The Program's Agency Coordination Plan is in effect throughout the environmental review process and is regularly updated to reflect ongoing agency involvement, completion of key milestones, and changes to agency contacts and roles, as necessary.

6.2.2 Cooperating Agencies

In April 2023, the FHWA invited federal and state agencies with jurisdiction by law (via permitting or other regulatory authority) to serve as Cooperating Agencies in the environmental review process for the Program. Cooperating Agencies are responsible for identifying, as early as practicable, any issues that could substantially delay or prevent the granting of a permit or other approval needed for the Program and participating in resolving issues as needed. **Table 6-1** lists the federal and state agencies that are currently serving as Cooperating Agencies, including their applicable area(s) of jurisdiction.

¹ Per 23 United States Code (USC) § 139(a)(5), the term "environmental review process" means (1) the process for preparing for a project an environmental impact statement, environmental assessment, categorical exclusion, or other document prepared under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and (2) the process and schedule, including a timetable for and completion of any environmental permit, approval, review, or study required for a project under any federal law other than the NEPA.

Table 6-1. Cape Cod Bridges Program Cooperating Agencies and Areas of Jurisdiction

Cooperating Agency	Areas of Jurisdiction
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – New England District	• Issues permits under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (33 United States Code [USC] 1344), including Section 404(b)(1), and Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act (33 USC 403) for discharges of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States, and for structures in navigable waters of the United States. • Issues Section 408 permission under Section 14 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899 (33 USC 408) for occupation and alteration of a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers federally authorized Civil Works Project. • Issues a federal permit under the Archaeological Resources Protection Act for archaeological investigation on land within the boundaries of the Cape Cod Canal Federal Navigation Project, pursuant to 43 Code of Federal Regulations 7.
U.S. Coast Guard – First District	• Issues bridge permits under The General Bridge Act of 1946 (33 USC 525) for construction of new bridges across navigable waters of the United States.
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency – New England Regional Office	• Issues a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Construction General Permit for discharge of stormwater from construction sites that disturb 1 acre or more of land under Section 402 of the Clean Water Act (33 USC 1342). • Reviews the Section 404 permit under Section 401 (a)(2) of the Clean Water Act (33 USC 1341(2)(2)). • Reviews the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements under Section 309 of the Clean Air Act (42 USC 7609).
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries)/Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office	• Consultation for effects to marine species under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (16 USC 1536), the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 (16 USC 1371), and the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (16 USC 661). • Consultation for effects to Essential Fish Habitat under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 USC 1801-1891d).
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	• Consultation for effects to terrestrial species under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (16 USC 1536) and the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (16 USC 661).
Massachusetts Historical Commission (State Historic Preservation Office)	• Consultation under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (54 USC 306108), including development and execution of a Programmatic Agreement.

Cooperating Agency	Areas of Jurisdiction
Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs	Issues Secretary Certificates on the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Reports under Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (301 Code of Massachusetts Regulations [CMR] 11.00).
Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game	Issues a Conservation and Management Permit under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (321 CMR 10.00), if needed.
Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection	Issues 401 Water Quality Certification under 314 CMR 9.00.
Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management	Issues Federal Consistency Determination under the Coastal Zone Management Act (16 USC 1451-1464)

In addition to their permit and approval responsibilities identified in [Table 6-1](#), the Cooperating Agencies played a key role in Program planning and environmental review. As illustrated in [Table 6-2](#), FHWA and MassDOT hosted a series of meetings with Cooperating Agencies between June 2023 and March 2025 to discuss the status of the Program and ensure timely participation and concurrence from the Cooperating Agencies at important checkpoints in the environmental review process, including the Program purpose and need, alternatives to be carried forward in the DEIS, permitting schedule, impact assessment methodologies, preferred alternative, and preliminary mitigation measures.

Table 6-2. Cooperating Agency Meeting Summary

Date	Meeting Agenda
June 14, 2023	Provide information on the Program background, general Study Areas, existing environmental constraints, bridge and roadway design development, and applicable regulatory approvals.
October 17, 2023	Provide a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) update, review roles and responsibilities for Cooperating Agencies in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process, review the Program's Purpose and Need Statement, present the alternatives analysis, and outline next steps in the NEPA process, including obtaining Cooperating Agencies' concurrence on the Program's Purpose and Need Statement, which was completed on October 17, 2023.
March 29, 2024	Overview of Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Program and NOI Supplemental Document published in the Federal Register on February 29, 2024; review of the alternatives analysis process; review of Draft Permitting Timetable; and outline of next steps in the NEPA process. Concurrence from Cooperating Agencies on alternatives to be carried forward for evaluation in the Draft EIS, which was completed on May 16, 2024.

Date	Meeting Agenda
June 27, 2024	Provide Program updates and an overview of the Agency Coordination Plan and EIS Assessment Methodologies Report, which were distributed to Cooperating Agencies before the meeting. On July 27, 2024, the Cooperating Agencies concurred with the Program's EIS Assessment Methodologies Report. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) provided the Cooperating Agencies an updated EIS Assessment Methodologies report on December 2, 2024.
December 4, 2024	Provide Program updates on funding and NEPA; present an assessment of highway interchange options relative to Program needs, including goals and related objectives; and identify recommended highway interchange approach options at each crossing to be retained for detailed study in the DEIS.
March 7, 2025	Provide Program updates, identify sections of the DEIS applicable to each Cooperating Agency for review, and outline next steps in the NEPA process, including submitting jurisdictional-specific sections of the Preliminary DEIS to Cooperating Agencies on March 14, 2025, for a 30-day review. Concurrence from Cooperating Agencies on the Preferred Alternative and Preliminary Mitigation was completed on April 14, 2025.

FHWA and MassDOT conducted agency consultation concurrently with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process under the following regulations:

- **Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966** requires federal agencies to consult with the State Historic Preservation Officer, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, federally recognized Native American Tribes, and other consulting parties when undertaking projects that may affect historic properties. **Section 4.16, Cultural Resources**, and **Appendix 4.16, Cultural Resources Technical Report**, provide details on the Program's Section 106 consultation process.
- **Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act of 1966** requires coordination with the public and officials with jurisdiction for the potential transportation use of properties protected under this Act, including publicly owned public parks, recreation areas, and wildlife or waterfowl refuges, or any publicly or privately owned historic site listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. **Chapter 5, Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation**, provides information on coordination with applicable officials with jurisdiction over historic properties, parklands, and recreation areas subject to transportation use by the Build Alternative.
- **Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act** requires that for actions authorized, funded, or carried out by a federal agency, that the agency shall, in consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and/or National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries), ensure that the action is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any endangered or threatened species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of the critical habitat of the endangered or threatened species. **Appendix 4.11, Threatened, Endangered, and Protected Species and Habitats Material**, documents completion of Program consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA Fisheries in compliance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act.

- **Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act** requires federal agencies to consult with NOAA Fisheries when activities they authorize, fund, or undertake, or propose to authorize, fund, or undertake, may adversely affect designated Essential Fish Habitat. **Appendix 4.11, Threatened, Endangered, and Protected Species and Habitats Material**, documents completion of Program consultation with NOAA Fisheries in compliance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.
- **Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act** requires federal agencies to consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, NOAA Fisheries, and the appropriate state wildlife agency before undertaking or permitting any activities that modify or control waters in the United States. **Appendix 4.11, Threatened, Endangered, and Protected Species and Habitats Material**, documents completion of Program consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA Fisheries in compliance with the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act.
- **Marine Mammal Protection Act** prohibits the take or attempted take of any marine mammal species in U.S. waters. MassDOT has developed a Marine Mammal and Sea Turtle Monitoring and Mitigation Plan, which incorporates monitoring protocols, operational procedures, and best management practices to avoid and minimize potential effects on marine mammals. Based upon the proposed avoidance and conservation measures and in response to consultation with NOAA Fisheries Office of Protected Resources, MassDOT has determined that it would not be necessary to pursue a take authorization under the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

6.3 Public Involvement

6.3.1 Public Involvement Plan

MassDOT developed a comprehensive Public Involvement Plan (PIP) to guide the outreach and engagement process for the Program. This robust document details the process of engaging and informing the public and the comprehensive, inclusive, and effective strategies used to solicit feedback from key stakeholders and the local communities to successfully implement the Program.

MassDOT developed the PIP at the onset of the Program in January 2021, initially sharing it with stakeholders (including the USACE) for comments and input to align expectations on public involvement. The PIP is a living document that is continuously updated to provide the most current information on the public outreach program. The PIP is posted online on the Program website to promote transparency and provide the public with information on outreach activities and strategies.

6.3.2 Communication Tools and Resources

MassDOT uses the communication tools and resources listed in the following sections to inform the public about the Program and to gather feedback.

6.3.2.1 Program Website

MassDOT developed the [Program website](#)² to provide a centralized, easily navigable location for the public to access online resources and up-to-date information on the Program. The website has been heavily used and has seen a high number of visitors. As of May 1, 2025, the website has been visited over 75,000 times by over 50,000 different users.

6.3.2.2 Stakeholder Database

MassDOT developed a comprehensive stakeholder database to disseminate Program information, including notifications of meetings. The stakeholder database has grown throughout the Program's development, as stakeholders who subscribe to updates, submit comments, and attend virtual or in-person meetings have their contact information entered into the Program database. MassDOT manages and updates the database through the Public Involvement Management Application (PIMA), described in [Section 6.3.2.3](#). As of May 1, 2025, the database included over 5,600 stakeholders.

6.3.2.3 Public Involvement Management Application

Throughout the Program, MassDOT has used its PIMA as a central database of stakeholders and comments to ensure continuous engagement with the public. PIMA contains tools and benefits that help the public more easily comment and provide feedback, and it allows the Program to manage and track engagement.

PIMA provides an online comment form ([Exhibit 6-1](#)) that is linked to the Program website and is included on other materials such as emails, flyers, and social media posts. This comment form is customizable and allows the public to provide input and feedback on key topics and priorities, identify areas of concern on a map, rate their opinions of the Program, and subscribe for Program updates.

PIMA provides a subscription link, which allows the public to sign up for updates without submitting a comment. PIMA also serves as a central database of stakeholders and helps ensure continuous engagement of individuals and entities. This database has grown as individuals are added by MassDOT, submit a comment or question, or sign up for updates through the subscription link.

Exhibit 6-1. PIMA Comment Form

The screenshot shows the 'Cape Cod Bridges Program' comment form. It features a title bar with the program name and a brief description. The form is divided into four numbered sections: 1) A text area for a comment with a 'Required' label and a warning not to include personal information. 2) A selection of topics (Roadway or bridge maintenance, Construction, Personal property, Daily Commute, Environmental, Other, Program Purpose and Need) with a '(Select up to 3)' instruction. 3) Contact information fields for Zip Code, Last Name, and Email, each marked as 'Required'. 4) A dropdown menu for 'Do you have a specific question or concern that you would like a response to?' with the option 'Do not send me a response'. A 'CONTINUE' button is at the bottom right.

² <https://www.mass.gov/cape-cod-bridges-program>

6.3.2.4 Email Blasts

MassDOT regularly sends email blasts through PIMA to stakeholders and interested parties on a variety of topics and events. These email communications serve to distribute Program updates, public meeting notifications, details on upcoming outreach activities, and other information and content regarding the Program.

6.3.2.5 Frequently Asked Questions

MassDOT has developed Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) documents to help convey details and technical information to the public. These documents have included a wide variety of commonly asked questions and concerns, such as questions regarding Program status, schedule, cost, current activities, scope, and benefits. Commonly asked questions were sourced from numerous avenues, including meetings, briefings, and the online comment form. These FAQ documents have been distributed via email to the stakeholder database and printed and distributed at in-person events.

6.3.2.6 Social Media

MassDOT uses its social media accounts to disseminate messaging relating to the Program milestones, public involvement opportunities, upcoming public meetings, and schedule updates. As of May 1, 2025, MassDOT has posted at least 65 separate times on its social media platforms, including Facebook, X (formerly known as Twitter), and Instagram. These social media posts have received nearly 1,700 separate interactions and have been reshared nearly 150 times, helping to further amplify the Program's messages and spread awareness.

6.3.2.7 Flyers

MassDOT uses flyers to disseminate information and solicit information. Flyers are developed for each public meeting and open house, as well as for general updates and information on the Program. As a matter of course, flyers are translated to Spanish and Portuguese.

6.3.2.8 Press Releases

MassDOT distributes press releases to local, state, and regional outlets to announce details regarding Program updates, milestones, public events, and notable developments.

6.3.2.9 Surveys

MassDOT has developed online surveys to solicit feedback from the public on specific aspects of the Program. For example, the MassDOT shared an online survey during the Round 3 public information meetings (described in [Section 6.3.3.4](#)) to assess the public's preferences for the proposed bridge types. Surveys have also been used during public meetings to determine the usage of interpretation services.

6.3.2.10 Formal Notices

MassDOT issues formal notices to provide official notification to the public of Program events, including all public meetings, open houses, and public hearings. The formal notices are posted online on the MassDOT website in an accessible format and included on the MassDOT event page. Additionally, these formal notices are advertised in English and non-English languages in numerous print and digital publications, including the following:

- Cape Cod Times
- Cape Cod Chronicle
- Bourne Enterprise
- El Planeta
- Portuguese Times
- Barnstable Patriot
- Provincetown Independent

These publications have a reported total circulation of nearly 220,000 readers.

6.3.2.11 Phone Calls

In addition to responding to stakeholder phone call inquiries, MassDOT has utilized phone calls to coordinate various events, stakeholder meetings, and briefings. Coordination calls also have been held with local community organizations and stakeholders as part of the effort to verify demographic data.

6.3.3 Public Participation Program

6.3.3.1 Advisory Group Meetings

MassDOT has established an Advisory Group to allow for increased engagement with key stakeholders and learn of community feedback, needs, and concerns in a focused setting. Advisory Group members represent a variety of stakeholder types, including, but not limited to the following:

- Local and elected officials
- Planning commissions
- Emergency services representatives
- Economic development representatives
- Chambers of commerce

Feedback, concerns, and questions brought up during Advisory Group discussions are used by MassDOT to help make informed decisions throughout Program development.

Advisory Group meetings are open to the public, and meeting materials, including presentations and meeting notes are made available on the Program website. As of May 1, 2025, MassDOT has hosted

five Advisory Group meetings—May 2023, September 2023 ([Exhibit 6-2](#)), April 2024 ([Exhibit 6-3](#)), October 2024, and March 2025.

6.3.3.2 Stakeholder Briefings

MassDOT conducts regular briefings with local and regional stakeholders to anticipate priorities of the broader public, address stakeholder needs and concerns and support a collaborative Program development process. Stakeholder briefings have taken a variety of forms, including virtual online meetings, in-person briefings, and attendance at existing meetings and events. Stakeholders include, but are not limited to the following:

- Town of Bourne
- Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Cape Cod Canal Region Chamber of Commerce
- Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce
- Cape Cod Commission
- Cape Cod Regional Transit Authority
- Federal, State, and Local Elected Officials
- Market Basket
- Military-Civilian Community Council for Joint Base Cape Cod
- Nantucket Planning and Economic Development Commission
- Old Colony Planning Council
- Sandwich Chamber of Commerce
- Southeastern Regional Planning & Economic Development Commission
- Southeastern Regional Transit Authority
- The Steamship Authority

6.3.3.3 Public Meetings

MassDOT regularly holds public meetings—including virtual meetings and open houses—to provide updates and the latest available information, highlight key milestones, and allow the public to provide input and feedback on various aspects of the Program.

MassDOT has an extensive outreach program for each public meeting. Meeting invites and notification materials have been posted and distributed at least two weeks before each meeting and have been translated into Spanish and Portuguese. Notification materials have included formal notices posted

Exhibit 6-2. Advisory Group Meeting (September 26, 2023)



Exhibit 6-3. Advisory Group Meeting (April 9, 2024)



online on the MassDOT website and in newspapers, flyers, email blasts, social media posts, press releases, and other email updates.

Spanish, Portuguese, and American Sign Language interpreters have been available at every public meeting, as well as Communication Access Realtime Translation providers. Meeting notification materials also contain information on additional language interpretation and translation services.

Virtual Public Meetings

As of May 1, 2025, MassDOT has held 11 public meetings, which have been attended by a cumulative total of 4,560 individuals. Each of these meetings has been held virtually via Zoom and has consisted of a formal presentation by MassDOT followed by an opportunity for public questions and comments.

Meeting presentations and summaries are posted on the Program’s website in an accessible format. Additionally, the meeting recordings are posted on the Program website and integrated with PIMA, so that users can seamlessly view the recording and submit comments.

Open Houses

As of May 1, 2025, MassDOT has held three open houses and will continue to use these types of events to engage with the public. A cumulative total of at least 1,266 registered individuals attended the three open houses. Each of these events has been held in Bourne, in-person, and in an accessible location. They have taken place during weekdays, in two sessions, over a period of approximately six hours each. Each event has included numerous components—such as graphical displays and pictures, interactive stations, copies of printed materials such as FAQs and relevant documents, videos, and renderings. Additionally, the presentations and graphics used for each meeting have been posted on the Program’s website in an accessible format. [Section 6.3.3.4](#) provides additional details on the open houses.

6.3.3.4 Rounds of Public Outreach

To promote effective engagement, MassDOT organized public outreach into rounds. As of May 1, 2025, MassDOT has held seven rounds of public outreach. Each round took place over several weeks or even months, and were intended to share specific information and updates, solicit feedback and questions, and incorporate input into the Program. Each round included events such as virtual public meetings and open houses, and MassDOT posted the recording of each virtual public meeting on its website.

Each round of public outreach also included stakeholder briefings and/or Advisory Group meetings, as described in [Section 6.3.3.1](#) and [Section 6.3.3.2](#).

MassDOT plans to continue the rounds of public outreach throughout the duration of the Program.

Each round afforded the public with opportunities to provide feedback, either through written or verbal opportunities at public meetings or open houses, or through written comments submitted online or at events. All verbal comments were answered in real time, as were written comments submitted at virtual public events. MassDOT provided written responses to all other comments, considered this feedback in Program design, and incorporated this input into FAQs.

Round 1 – Spring/Summer 2021

The first round of public outreach for the Program took place in summer 2021. Round 1 consisted of two live, identical virtual public information meetings on June 29 and June 30, 2021. Round 1 introduced the Program to the public and provided general information on current activities and next steps. The information conveyed during this round included the history of the Program, introduced MassDOT, the need for the Program, the status of Program development, including data collection and analysis, and the public involvement process. A combined total of 686 individuals attended these two public meetings. Approximately 300 comments were submitted verbally or in written form. Comments were responded to, considered by MassDOT in Program design, and logged in PIMA.

Round 2 – Fall 2021

The second round of public outreach for the Program took place in fall 2021. Round 2 consisted of two live, identical virtual public information meetings on November 16 and November 18, 2021. Round 2 provided an update on the progress of the Program and solicited input on several components. The information conveyed included details on current activities, existing conditions, Measures of Effectiveness, and input on a Purpose and Need Statement. During the meetings, polls were conducted regarding meeting notifications, travel over the bridges, and priorities for improvements. A combined total of 565 individuals attended these two public meetings. Approximately 184 comments were submitted verbally or in written form. Comments were responded to, considered by MassDOT in Program design, and logged in PIMA.

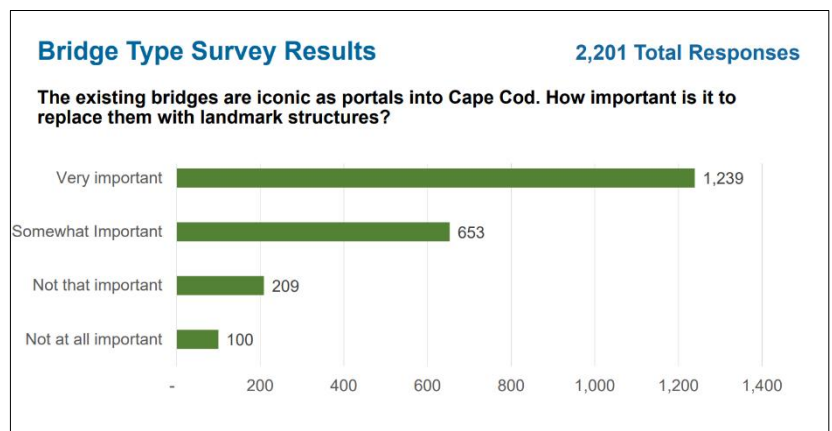
Round 3 – Fall 2022

The third round of public outreach for the Program took place in fall 2022. Round 3 consisted of two live, identical virtual public information meetings on November 15 and November 17, 2022. Round 3 shared information on the status of the Program and attempted to gain public concurrence on key aspects and developments. The information conveyed and shared for public input included the draft Purpose and Need Statement, bridge types, public and stakeholder engagement, funding, and construction staging. Round 3 included an online survey where the public was asked to rate the proposed bridge types and to rate their views of and preferences for the replacement bridges via two questions:

- How important is it that the new Cape Cod Bridges resemble the current Bourne and Sagamore Bridges?
- How important is it to replace the Cape Cod Bridges with landmark structures? (**Figure 6-1**)

A combined total of 1,257 individuals attended these two public meetings. Approximately 367 comments were

Figure 6-1. Round 3 Bridge Type Survey Results



submitted verbally or in written form. Comments were responded to, considered by MassDOT in Program design, and logged in PIMA. Additionally, at the close of the survey, MassDOT recorded 2,201 responses to the survey questions.

Round 4 – Winter 2022/2023

The fourth round of public outreach for the Program took place in winter 2022/2023. Round 4 consisted of two live, identical virtual public information meetings on January 24 and January 26, 2023. Round 4 provided updates on the status of the Program, including the Purpose and Need Statement, and shared results of public surveys and questions. The information conveyed during this round included review the status of funding, the Program’s purpose and need, public feedback on bridge types, proposed lane configurations, and roadway grades and locations. A combined total of 991 individuals attended these two public meetings. Approximately 361 comments were submitted verbally or in written form. Comments were responded to, considered by MassDOT in Program design, and logged in PIMA.

Round 5 – Spring 2023

The fifth round of public outreach for the Program took place in spring 2023. Round 5 reviewed the proposed interchange approach connections. The first live, virtual public meeting (March 22, 2023) provided an update and information on the Bourne Bridge roadway connection alternatives. The second live, virtual public meeting (March 29, 2023) provided an update and information on the Sagamore Bridge roadway connection alternatives. A combined total of 694 individuals attended these two public meetings. Approximately 125 comments were submitted verbally or in written form. Comments were responded to, considered by MassDOT in Program design, and logged in PIMA.

Additionally, Round 5 included an open house (May 17, 2023, at the Bourne Veteran’s Memorial Community Center in Bourne) with 530 individuals attending.

The open house included displays and graphics regarding roadway approaches, bridge alignments, bridge type, rail trail connections, roadway grades, lane configurations, and construction staging. The event also served to announce the filing of the Environmental Notification Form (ENF) with the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs pursuant to the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act. Through the open house, approximately 40 comments were submitted to MassDOT.

Round 6 – Spring 2024

The sixth round of public outreach for the Program took place in spring 2024. Round 6 reviewed MassDOT’s assessment of highway interchange options, reviewed the status of Program funding updates, and presented the Program’s NEPA updates. The live, virtual public information meeting on April 25, 2024, was attended by 367 individuals. Approximately 42 comments were submitted verbally or in written form. Comments were responded to, considered by MassDOT in Program design, and logged in PIMA.

Round 6 also included an open house (May 13, 2024, at the Bourne Veteran’s Memorial Community Center), which 283 individuals attended. The open house included displays and graphics regarding interchange options, construction concepts, lane configurations, roadway grade, pedestrian amenities,

and bridge type. This event also provided opportunities for public review and comment as part of NEPA scoping for the DEIS. Through the open house, approximately 37 comments were submitted to MassDOT. Comments were responded to, considered by MassDOT in Program design, and logged in PIMA.

Round 7 – Fall 2024

The seventh round of public outreach for the Program took place in fall 2024. Round 7 provided an update on Program funding, the detailed assessment of interchange options, recommended interchange options, and subsurface explorations.

Round 7 included an open house event (November 18, 2024, at the Bourne Veteran’s Memorial Community Center), which 453 individuals attended. The open house included graphics and displays showing interchange options, bridge design, construction concepts, subsurface exploration, and lane configurations.

The open house also provided opportunities for public review and comment.

Through this event, approximately 55 comments were submitted to MassDOT. Comments were responded to, considered by MassDOT in Program design, and logged in PIMA.

6.4 Incorporating Feedback

Public input has been considered by MassDOT throughout the Program to promote informed decision making and ensure the scope, design, and other aspects incorporate community and stakeholder feedback.

Specific examples of components of the Program that have been incorporated into the design based on stakeholder and public engagement include:

- Selecting the network tied-arch bridge type and identifying areas of interest for bridge design, such as bridge aesthetics and similarity to the existing structures.
- Confirming MassDOT’s recommended option for each of the four highway interchange quadrants.
- Developing the purpose and need evaluation criteria for separating local and regional traffic.
- Connecting the Claire Saltonstall Bikeway to the Program bicycle facilities on State Road in the Sagamore North Quadrant.
- Updating the design of Frontage Road to accommodate bi-directional traffic.

6.5 Agency and Public Scoping Activities

This section describes the agency and public scoping process for identifying the issues for analysis in the Program’s DEIS.

6.5.1 National Environmental Policy Act: Review and Scoping for Draft Environmental Impact Statement

In coordination with MassDOT, the FHWA published an NOI to prepare an EIS for the Program in the Federal Register on February 29, 2024 (Docket No. FHWA-2024-0014). The published NOI was accompanied by a Supplementary NOI document, which provided additional information on the Program's Purpose and Need Statement; alternatives the DEIS will consider; expected impacts on the human, natural, and built environments; and a proposed high-level schedule for the decision-making process. The purpose of the NOI was to advise the public, agencies, and stakeholders of the Program and to solicit comments on the scope of the Program's EIS. The publication of the NOI in the Federal Register on February 29, 2024, started the NEPA scoping process for the Program.

6.5.1.1 Public Meeting and Open House

The FHWA and MassDOT provided opportunities for public review of the NOI through a virtual public meeting, an open house, and an extended comment period through May 31, 2024.

As presented in [Section 6.3.3.4](#) (Round 6), MassDOT conducted a virtual public meeting on April 25, 2024. In total, 367 members of the public attended the meeting. In addition to providing an update on the Program's funding status, MassDOT provided a NEPA update and reviewed the NOI documents. MassDOT addressed 42 comments from 30 individuals during the meeting.

MassDOT conducted an open house at the Bourne Veteran's Memorial Community Center on May 13, 2024, which was attended by 283 members of the public. In addition to providing comment boxes, MassDOT conducted an interactive survey with open house attendees regarding usage of the bridges, needs, priorities, and goals.

6.5.1.2 Comment Period

The public provided comments on the Program through the virtual public meeting, open house, Program website, and email correspondence to the FHWA and MassDOT. In total, 89 individuals provided comments on the NOI. Refer to **Appendix 6.2, Response to Comments**, which reiterates the comments received during the NEPA review process and provides a response according to common themes or the topic of the comment.

6.6 Agency and Public Review of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement

6.6.1 Issuance of Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Public Comment Period

The FHWA is responsible for filing the DEIS with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for publication of the Notice of Availability in the Federal Register, which establishes a period of not fewer than 45 days nor more than 60 days for comments on the DEIS. The DEIS Notice of Availability also may include announcements of joint public meetings if required by the FHWA and/or other Cooperating Agencies (e.g., USACE, U.S. Coast Guard).

Cooperating Agencies are required to provide comments on the DEIS on issues within their jurisdiction, expertise, or authority. Cooperating Agencies are also required to specify any additional information they need to meet the requirements for federal permits or other approvals. If a Cooperating Agency has remaining concerns, then it must specify mitigation measures that would allow the Program to be approved.

6.6.2 Public Meetings and Hearings

In accordance with 23 Code of Federal Regulations 771.111(h)(2)(iii), MassDOT is responsible for conducting the DEIS public meetings and/or public hearings in coordination with the FHWA. Public meeting(s)/hearing(s) held on the DEIS will meet the requirements of FHWA pursuant to its NEPA implementing regulations. Advanced notice of the date, time, and location of any DEIS public meetings and/or hearings will be provided through the Program website, public notices, and press releases.