



To:	Michael O'Dowd MassDOT Project Manager	Date:	September 12, 2019
From:	Taylor Miller Howard Stein Hudson	HSH Project No.:	2013061.14
Subject:	Massachusetts Department of Transportation Allston Multimodal Project Charles River Users' Meeting Meeting Notes of July 18, 2019		

Overview

On July 18th, 2019, the MassDOT team for the Allston I-90 Interchange Improvement Project held a targeted briefing for users of the Charles River. The briefing stemmed from a discussion between the project team and Kane Larin, the special projects officer for Community Rowing who attended the June 20th meeting of the Allston Task Force. As a result of that conversation, the project team agreed to appear before an audience assembled by Community Rowing to discuss potential impacts to the Charles River associated with construction of the I-90 Allston project, particularly in the section of the job opposite the existing I-90 Allston Viaduct known colloquially as “the throat.” The meeting was attended by representatives of Community Rowing, the Watertown Yacht Club, the Charles River Watershed Association (CRWA), and the Charles River Alliance of Boaters (CRAB). Members of the project team present represented MassDOT, Tetra Tech, and Howard Stein Hudson.

At the meeting, Michael O'Dowd explained that the Charles River would be temporarily impacted by the installation of a temporary bridge that would divert traffic away from the construction zone. Meeting attendees were concerned about how the temporary bridge would impact boat traffic; they asked how long the bridge would be in the river, and O'Dowd answered eight years. Interagency coordination was brought up by representatives from CRWA. O'Dowd shared that the project team is working on an agency coordination plan and is looking to make connections with additional stakeholders following the news of this alternative construction staging arrangement.

An important outcome of the meeting will be a second, larger meeting arranged by river users and advocates with MassDOT to be held on the 18th of September at the Watertown Yacht Club.

Community Rowing will take the lead in ensuring good attendance at that session, particularly from the rowing programs associated with high schools and colleges as well as the Charles Riverboat tour company.

Agenda

- I. Welcome & Opening Remarks 2
- II. Discussion Error! Bookmark not defined.

Detailed Meeting Minutes¹

Welcome & Opening Remarks

C: Mike O'Dowd, *MassDOT*: Thank you very much for meeting with us today. I know there has been a lot of talk about what MassDOT is proposing to do. Concepts for design and construction were shared in January 2019 wherein the constraints related to “the throat” area were carefully considered. A lot of work is planned to take place there, including de-elevating I-90, putting Soldiers Field Road on top of I-90, expanding the park along the river, and adding separate pathways for cyclists and pedestrians.

With that said, we’re struggling to find ways to construct this without encroaching into the river. Our goal has always been to stay out of the river because we recognize the importance and the value in that. However, as construction staging advances, we’re considering going into the Charles River. As a result, there is a whole new range of stakeholders who we need to talk to understand what the functions of the Charles River are for those who use it and whether users can coexist with what we’re proposing for eight years of construction. We want to hear from the recreational organizations what we should know. We recently met with state and federal agencies to understand the regulations that will be involved with construction in proximity to the Charles. Permanent impacts were not considered, but temporary impacts were so long as we could demonstrate that an alternative analysis has been conducted that shows why we’re proposing to go temporarily into the waterway.

¹ Herein “C” stands for comment, “Q” for question and “A” for answer. For a list of attendees, please see Appendix 1. For copies of meeting flipcharts, please see Appendix 2.

Q: Pallavi Mande: Can you show us the alternative analysis?

A: Mike O'Dowd: Yes.

Now, we would like to hear from you. We would also like to know who is not at the table today who should be involved in future discussions.

Discussion

C: Kane Larin: My name's Kane, and I'm with Community Rowing. I'm a rower, and I see a lot of recreational boating happen in the area from canoes and kayaks to power boats, although canoes and kayaks are less prevalent in that stretch than other users. Being able to get through that stretch is important, especially to rowers. We're all concerned about being able to go back and forth through that stretch. I went to the Task Force meeting the other day and it was unclear to me how long it will take to build the trestle and how much space will be taken up during that period of construction. Also, the meeting talked a lot about restoring the riverbank, but I would suggest that the river itself should also be restored. There is a lot of sedimentation that I think should be remediated, and this project will create more.

C: Alex Zosuls: A canoe and kayak launch was opened today at Magazine Beach, so we'll start seeing a lot more traffic there. In regard to power boaters, they are depth restricted and the beach area is quite shallow. The Boaters Alliance has a depth map that they can share with you. But we should be conscious about where power boats can travel and if construction in the river will restrict their movement.

We're also concerned about the debris that comes off the cars that will fall into the river.

A: Mike O'Dowd: Conditions after construction will be a lot better than they are today. Regulatory agencies are usually pretty restrictive about what we can and can't do and how we leave it when we finish.

C: Alex Zosuls: What's the lifespan of the temporary bridge?

A: Mike O'Dowd: About eight years.

C: Alex Zosuls: If this project can't be completed for some reason, is this going to stay for 50 years?

A: Mike O'Dowd: I don't even want to consider the possibility of the temporary bridge being there more than eight years from now. The project will be heavily laden with disincentives on the

general contraction for failure to complete things on the timetable MassDOT sets. Up until this point, if someone asked me how long it would take to complete the project, I would have said five years. But then the Secretary of Transportation identified this new alternative in January, she asked me what setbacks and risks we should expect. What I told her was, this project now has an increased amount of construction and utility impacts, so it will take longer than we originally anticipated. We now say that the project will take eight to ten years to complete.

Q: Alex Zosuls: This alternative obviously isn't going to save time or money, so what's the benefit to it?

A: Mike O'Dowd: It's a complicated and detailed process. We're building a boat section and we're depressing I-90 down close to the water table. It's hard to state categorically before constructability reviews are complete, but I can tell you that having the temporary bridge will shorten the job as compared to not having it. There will be lessened impacts on road and rail users and we'll no longer need to cross all cyclists and pedestrians to the Memorial Drive side.

Q: Alex Zosuls: Do you have a scale drawing of where the bridge will be going?

A: Mike O'Dowd: Yes. We expect it to go in 50 feet off the riverbank; that's done to maximize the amount of tangent or straight section. The straight section can be prefabricated; the curved sections at the end have to be stick built on site, so that's done to save time and money.

Over the course of a month and a half, we did a complete environmental survey of this area to understand where the mud floor is. If there are any impacts as a result of pile driving or extraction, we will restore the mud floor back to its original condition.

Q: Fred Schoch: Will the temporary bridge impact the arches of the Boston University Bridge?

A: Mike O'Dowd: No, the work will not impact them. The temporary bridge runs from west of the Boston University Bridge to around the spot on the bank where the river bends north towards River Street. There's no encroachment under the Boston University Bridge.

C: Rose Determan: As someone who's gone through the Boston University Bridge and sailed off the sailing pavilion, I can say that it feels dangerous to go through the arch that's closest to the shore downstream. Rowers are already restricted by the railroad abutment.

A: Mike O'Dowd: We would not be encroaching into that first archway.

C: Kane Larin: The pile drivers and barges for this are going to protrude into the river during the construction phase.

Q: Rose Determan: Will the basin be affected?

A: Mike O'Dowd: No, but outfalls will be restored.

Q: Laura Jasinski: How long is it going to take to build the trestle?

A: Mike O'Dowd: We're currently thinking about 12-16 months. Bridge construction is challenging. We're going to need to have a really good safety protocol on this. We will need to coordinate with the United States Coast Guard who have jurisdiction here. All equipment will need to be marked and the barges laid out in compliance with a safety plan that we'd have to file with them.

C: Nathaniel Curtis, *Howard Stein Hudson*: A good example of that would be the work that was done on Lake Quinsigamond. We were out there with the rowers for multiple years and never had any problems. We removed an entire bridge and built a new one, and that was all done and coordinated the same way.

C: Pallavi Mande: We have some ideas about facilitating conversations with DCR about parklands and flooding.

C: Emily Norton: This is a big change from the approach MassDOT had taken with this before where there was to be absolutely no encroachment into the river. We'd like to understand how you got to this point and see the documentation. There are ways that this can be constructed that are more harmful to the river than others. We also need to think of the river and the park together, not separate, and what we're going to get at the end of the job. We need to think about what the public's experience will be and whether it will be a win for everybody.

C: Mike O'Dowd: That discussion will happen through the MEPA/NEPA process over the next year and graphics will be produced to better show what's being proposed for the project. Regulatory agencies have been very clear that they will not tolerate any permanent impacts or fill in the Charles River. Any impacts can only be temporary in nature, and we will restore any impacts on the existing line of the river. We'll restore it with plantings and improvements to how storm water is handled.

C: Emily Norton: I'm concerned that DCR is not here, at the table.

A: Mike O'Dowd: The commissioner was with us Tuesday and what I've said is consistent with what the commissioner of DCR has said.

Q: Kane Larin: What is the proposed start date?

A: Mike O'Dowd: Over the course of the next two to two and a half years, the final environmental impact report for state regulatory requirements and the environmental impact statement for federal regulatory requirements will be developed. That will be early 2021. Ideally, we will be in procurement for a design-build contract in the fall of 2021. By the fall of 2022, we will hopefully have a contractor selected to move forward. You won't see any physical presence of staging until early 2023.

We see the temporary bridge coming in very early on. We are doing this in part because of the masses of utilities under the I-90 viaduct. They need to be relocated before we move I-90. There's water, gas, sewer, all 6-10' below the viaduct right now. They will be relocated to the Paul Dudley White Path.

C: Laura Jasinki: We were very pleased with the design that was chosen. This detail was not explicit in the beginning, and I think you understand that we're going to be on this every step of the way. We appreciate keeping lines of communication open.

Q: Pallavi Mande: What can be expected over the next few months in regards to the environmental process?

A: Mike O'Dowd: We need to file our notice of intent (NOI). That starts the clock on the two-year timeframe associated with One Federal Decision for our NEPA permitting process. We expect to file the NOI in October. There's a lot of agency coordination to do for an EIS and plenty of red tape. Right now, we're trying to understand all the impacts.

Q: Pallavi Mande: Is it useful for us to facilitate the interagency coordination? We can help if you like. Also, we need to understand the impacts and the mitigation that will go with them: improving the sedimentation issue, improved access, dredging, and so on.

Q: Mark Fobert, *TetraTech*: Have you followed the restoration of the shoreline along Memorial Drive? We envision something very similar.

C: Pallavi Mande: We're trying to figure out a time to discuss permanent vs. temporary impact mitigations.

C: Mike O'Dowd: We've had discussions recently with the Department of Marine Fisheries to understand the aquatic life within the river. If you want to talk about the agency coordination plan, we're still trying to work our way through that. A lot of agencies will be engaged, state and federal.

Q: Kane Larin: How is the scope of restoration determined?

A: Mike O'Dowd: It will be a couple hundred feet east of the Boston University Bridge and up to the River Street intersection.

C: Mark Fobert: What we're doing here also opens up eight new acres of parkland.

Q: Fred Schoch: Is there any opportunity for a floating bridge for access to the parkland?

A: Mike O'Dowd: There's not enough depth at this location to use one.

Q: Pallavi Mande: What's your flood storage capacity? We've never seen it.

A: Mike O'Dowd: We need to start moving on that for the NEPA filings. We need to address the impacts and write the documents. We can expect the design-build entities to get creative with the temporary bridge. That's one of the benefits of design-build.

C: Ralph Levy: Looking at where you have the temporary bridge, we don't go over there much, but I do worry about rowers being moved into the middle of the rivers and conflicting with the power boaters and creating traffic problems.

Q: Fred Schoch: What are the rules about keeping the portions of the river navigable? The design-build contractor might opt to put more stuff in the river.

A: Mark Fobert: We have to develop a full navigation plan as part of the USCG bridge permit; the contractor won't be able to deviate from that without getting USCG approval. There might be some seasonal tweaks to that plan.

C: Pallavi Mande: We're trying to understand the potential for flooding. Harvard is placing a large culvert into the river to drain the Enterprise Research Campus.

A: Mike O'Dowd: We also need to go before the local conservation commissions; they need a lot of the same data that you're asking for: how and where are we collecting stormwater, how and where are we treating it, what will the conditions be like in the Charles River as a result, what

are we doing with phosphorous etc.? We already had a sit down with Boston Water and Sewer's John Sullivan and he has some pretty stringent expectations. We need to do some design work to get this information.

Q: Pallavi Mande: When will you go in front of Boston's conservation commissions?

A: Mike O'Dowd: Spring or summer of next year. We have two public documents to get out in the next 6-9 months: the federal Notice of Intent which starts the NEPA process for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and the state Notice of Project Change that we're filing because the alternative design is different and we want to give the public the opportunity to look at and comment on it. **O'D – since this goes to process, just ensure this is what you want.**

Q: Pallavi Mande: In terms of engaging our concerns, you're addressing the interagency piece, when should we start to talk with you, DCR, and Harvard University on water treatment and storage? Is spring 2020 the right time for that?

A: Mike O'Dowd: Yes, we're trying to get some traction right now on storm water and flooding. We're going to have to advance that further than the rest of the design-build package.

Q: Mike O'Dowd: Who else is missing from this discussion?

A: Aleks Zosuls: It would be good to bring in the Magazine Beach group and MWRA on sewage treatment.

C: Ralph Levy: There's a lot of sediment getting into the river.

A: Mike O'Dowd: You currently have direct discharge from Soldiers Field Road; we'll clean all that up.

Q: Mike O'Dowd: Are there currently any navigation markers out there?

A: Ralph Levy: The rules are that rowers keep right, and power goes down the middle. The issue is at turnaround points and this is one of them.

C: Kane Larin: If you put markers out there, it's one more thing to hit.

C: Mike O'Dowd: It's worth getting in touch with the college rowing clubs and having them in this discussion.

C: Ralph Levy: Honestly, I'd rather collide with a sedimentation boom than a navigational marker. I think provided this is well-announced and well-lit, we'll be O.K. with it.

C: Mike O'Dowd: MassDOT would be agreeable to doing a bigger boaters' meeting.

Q: Aleks Zosul: Are you expecting roadway disruptions?

A: Mike O'Dowd: For Soldiers Field Road, not much more than extra traffic may leak off I-90 when it's reduced to three lanes in each direction. We're trying to keep the commuter rail open on two tracks as much as we can. As to the Grand Junction Line, replace it over Soldiers Field Road. The MBTA is responsible for anything over the river.

C: Ralph Levy: For what it's worth, I think MassDOT did an excellent job with the outreach at the Anderson Bridge. If you do that again, we should be O.K.

Next Steps

There will be a second, larger meeting of river users, advocates, and representatives from the project team held on September 18th at the Watertown Yacht Club.

Appendix 1: Meeting Attendees

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation
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