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Cc:
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Subject: **Article 97 Alternative Analysis**
Pleasant Street Bridge Replacement Project (Dighton)

ARTICLE 97 – ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS

In accordance with the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) and the Guidance on Public Lands Preservation Act (PLPA) Implementation issued February 2023, the Town of Dighton issues the following alternatives analysis for alterations related to the proposed replacement of the bridge that carries Pleasant Street over Muddy Cove Brook in Dighton, Massachusetts (the Project). The purpose of the alternatives analysis is to demonstrate that no feasible or substantially equivalent alternative exists that avoids or further minimizes impacts to the publicly owned open space land adjacent to the Project that is subject to Article 97. The subject property, Tricentennial Park (Dighton Assessors parcels 20-0013 and 20-0012), is owned by the Town of Dighton and located along Pleasant Street, northeast of the Pleasant Street bridge. The Town of Dighton is the project proponent.

PROPOSED ACTION AND PUBLIC PURPOSE

The Project proposes the replacement of the existing bridge structure, portions of which are located on the parcels associated with Tricentennial Park. The proposed action will include installation of guardrails, installation of a utility pole and guy wire, placement of modified rock fill and installation of tree protections. The Project will also require temporary easements during construction for minor grading and placement of erosion controls along the Pleasant Street roadway and bridge.

Total impacts associated with the proposed work will encompass approximately 1,231 square feet (sf). These impacts include a Fee Taking of 105 sf, permanent easements totaling 725 sf and temporary easements totaling 401 sf. The proposed bridge layout has been designed to remain within the State Highway Layout (SHLO) to the maximum extent practicable, however, line-of-sight requirements and the addition of ADA-compliant sidewalks require portions of the work to be located in adjacent areas. Erosion controls will be installed around all work areas to prevent indirect impacts to adjacent waterways during construction.

The purpose of the Project is to replace the existing aging structure to provide safe and efficient vehicular travel along Pleasant Street as well as providing pedestrian and bicycle accommodations where none currently exist.

PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

Three alternatives were considered and evaluated:

1. No Action.

2. Bridge Replacement with no Easement
3. Bridge Replacement with Easements

DISCUSSION OF ALTERNATIVES

The alternatives listed above were considered not feasible for the following reasons.

1. NO ACTION

Under this alternative, the proposed bridge replacement would not be completed and the Article 97 property would remain unchanged. The bridge will continue to degrade and eventually need to be decommissioned, restricting travel along Pleasant Street. This alternative does not meet the Project's goals of providing safe and efficient transportation for motorists, pedestrians and bicyclists along Pleasant Street and therefore was not considered.

2. BRIDGE REPLACEMENT WITH NO EASEMENTS

This alternative involves replacement of the Pleasant Street bridge in-kind, with no layout alterations. Due to right-of-way constraints, the existing bridge layout does not offer pedestrian or bicycle accommodations. The position of the bridge also limits line of sight for motorists turning on Muddy Cove Drive which presents a safety concern. By maintaining the existing bridge layout, existing utilities such as telephone poles can remain in their existing locations and will not require easements on the adjacent property. Replacement of the eastern retaining wall and guard rail would not be possible under this alternative, as portions of the guard rail are located within the adjacent property boundaries. The existing guard rails do not meet modern safety standards and need to be replaced. Additionally, this alternative does not allow for placement of modified rock fill along the northeastern abutment which reduces the effectiveness of scour protection.

Temporary easements would still be necessary to install erosion controls around the work area in order to prevent indirect impacts to adjacent waterways. While this alternative does meet the Project goal of replacing the existing structure to allow vehicular travel along Pleasant Street, it does not allow for improvements related to vehicular safety and pedestrian and bicycle accommodations; therefore, this was not selected as the preferred alternative.

3. BRIDGE REPLACEMENT WITH EASEMENTS – PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

This alternative would involve the replacement of the Pleasant Street bridge, with minor alterations to the proposed bridge layout to accommodate safety improvements, pedestrian and bicycle accommodations, and additional scour protections. Safety improvements, including a widened bridge deck and modernized guard rails will be partially constructed on adjacent properties, including Tricentennial Park. The widened bridge deck will allow for construction of a concrete sidewalk along the eastern side of the roadway as well as allowing for the addition of road shoulders that can accommodate bicycle traffic. The addition of a concrete sidewalk along the eastern side of the roadway will require one telephone pole to be relocated east along the edge of the roadway, within the Tricentennial Park property layout. Finally, additional scour protection in the form of modified rock fill will be installed along the seawall and bridge abutment at the northeast corner of the bridge. Due to the location of the bridge and seawall, rock fill will be installed partially within the layout of Tricentennial Park.

This alternative meets all of the Project's goals of replacing the aging bridge and providing safe and efficient travel for motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians. Additionally, this alternative allows for additional scour protection to protect water quality within Muddy Cove Brook and the Taunton River. This was selected as the preferred alternative.

REPLACEMENT LAND REQUIREMENTS

The Town of Dighton respectfully requests that the Secretary consider a waiver for the replacement land and the "Funding in Lieu" requirements of the PLPA. The areas within the parcel being permanently altered, approximately 830 sf, are less than 2,500 sf and not of significant natural resource or recreational value.

The portion of the property where work is proposed consists of a narrow strip of grassed lawn located between Pleasant Street and the Taunton River. As such, it does not have provide appreciable recreational opportunities and does not provide significant natural resource function. Permanent takings are associated with installation of a utility pole and guy wire, and construction of portions of the proposed bridge structure such as the modernized guardrails that are necessary for public safety. One tree, a red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) is present in this area, however adequate tree protections will be installed to preserve it during construction.

SUMMARY

The Pleasant Street Bridge Replacement Project proposes to replace the existing structure that carries Pleasant Street over Muddy Cove Brook requiring work within publicly-owned open space property subject to Article 97 jurisdiction. As described above, there are no feasible alternatives to this action due to right-of-way constraints and the proposed work will result in minimal impact to the property.

AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE TOWN OF DIGHTON TO USE A PORTION OF CONSERVATION LAND FOR PUBLIC WAY PURPOSES

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

SECTION 1. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, the town of Dighton may transfer the care, custody, management and control of a portion of certain parcels of land located at 0 Pleasant Street having an area of 830 square feet and shown as “Proposed Permanent Easement” on a plan of land entitled “Dighton Pleasant Street Construction Plan” from the conservation commission for conservation purposes to the select board for general municipal purposes, including for the replacement of a roadway bridge serving the adjacent public way. The land is identified on the town’s assessor’s maps as parcels 076/020.0-0012 and 076/020.0-0013, and is part of the lands taken by the town to enhance the Taunton River Watershed and for other municipal purposes pursuant to an order of taking recorded in the Middlesex southern district registry of deeds in book 19498, page 268 and book 1010, page 101.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon its passage.