

# Frequently Asked Questions

This document provides responses to frequently asked questions regarding the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) Boston- Allston, Lincoln Street Noise Barrier project. The questions were primarily submitted by project stakeholders, interested parties, abutters and community members, and were collected during and following the Open House hosted by MassDOT in Allston on February 5, 2026. MassDOT's responses below are intended to proactively address community issues and questions.

## PROJECT PURPOSE AND ELIGIBILITY:

### **What are the qualifications for building a noise barrier and selecting its location?**

Noise barrier locations are determined through analysis of noise impacts in accordance with federal regulations under 23 CFR 772 and guidance provided by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and MassDOT Policies and Procedures that guide the evaluation and mitigation of traffic noise impacts. These criteria evaluate factors such as predicted noise levels, the number of benefitted receptors, cost-effectiveness, and engineering constraints. Only locations that satisfy these standards are eligible for Construction. The two noise barriers are included on MassDOT's priority list of Type II noise barrier projects and were evaluated as early action items for the I-90 Allston Multimodal Transportation Project.

### **Can the noise barrier be extended (e.g., to Mansfield Street or Birmingham Parkway)?**

The noise barrier limits were established after analyzing the traffic noise impacts following FHWA and MassDOT regulations, guidance, and policies that guide the evaluation of noise impact, as well as the design and placement of noise barriers. Based on those analyses, extensions to either noise barrier beyond the currently identified limits, including toward Mansfield Street or Birmingham Parkway, do not meet the required criteria and therefore are not eligible for construction.

### **In places where noise wall construction does not meet the warranted/feasibility/reasonableness criteria, can another wall or fence be constructed between I-90 and Lincoln Street?**

Where a noise barrier is not warranted under Federal and State criteria, MassDOT may install chain link fencing extending from each end of the noise barrier to provide continuous separation between the I-90 Right-of-Way and the Lincoln Street Right-of-Way.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## SHARED USE PATH COORDINATION:

### **How does the design maximize the space available for construction of a future Shared Use Path (SUP) along Lincoln Street?**

MassDOT and the City of Boston have closely coordinated design issues to ensure that both projects can provide their intended public benefits and are well aligned with one another. For example, MassDOT's design places the noise barrier wall as close to I-90 as practicable, maximizing the space available on the Lincoln Street side of the barrier for potential use by the City of Boston.

### **How wide will the Shared Use Path be?**

It is too early in the planning and design process to know a precise width, though MassDOT and the City are working closely to ensure the maximum space is available within existing constraints. Based on the noise barrier layout, there would be between 13.5 and 19 ft available between the existing Lincoln Street curb line and the nearest face of the noise barrier or retaining wall.

### **What are the constraints that prevent a wider Shared Use Path (SUP)?**

The area between the edge of Lincoln Street and I-90 is narrow, as is Lincoln Street itself. There is also a significant elevation difference between I-90 and Lincoln Street at each end. To enable a future Shared Use Path, the elevation difference requires MassDOT to construct retaining walls, which need to be offset behind the I-90 guard rail to satisfy highway safety, drainage and maintenance needs. Other constraints include existing utilities, both above and below ground.

### **How will the Lincoln Street Right-of-Way be allocated among proposed uses?**

MassDOT's noise barrier construction project will not encroach on the Lincoln Street Right-of-Way (ROW). MassDOT and the City are cooperatively discussing assumptions to be used to reasonably allocate available space that will be created within the MassDOT ROW as well as planning ahead for potential future City easement rights within the state highway layout.

### **Where does the path continue, and what are the connections?**

The City's Shared Use Path is currently in the planning stages and is not yet funded. To the west, the Shared Use Path is conceptually planned to connect to the shared use path network being constructed by the Department of Recreation and Conservation (DCR) along Birmingham Parkway. At the west end of the project, MassDOT plans grading improvements between the proposed noise barrier wall and Market Street to enable a future connection to the DCR path, beyond limits of the proposed noise barrier.

To the east, near the intersection of Franklin Street and Lincoln Street, the path would transition to the existing pedestrian bridge over I-90, providing access to Cambridge Street.

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## How will the pinch point at the toll gantry be addressed?

The noise barrier will not alter the electronic toll infrastructure. In collaboration with MassDOT, the City of Boston is considering how a future path and Lincoln Street elements could be designed through this area to maximize multimodal access.

## Why is the shared use path not being constructed as part of the MassDOT project?

The Lincoln Street noise barrier is being advanced as an “early action” project as a component of the I-90 Allston Multimodal Transportation Project. These noise barriers were included in the I-90 project because the location had qualified under the former Massachusetts Turnpike Authority’s Type II noise barrier program. The Type II noise barrier program only accounts for noise barrier construction and site restoration and no other betterments. Accordingly, the Shared Use Path would be advanced separately by the City of Boston, subject to funding availability.

### BRICK WALL AND FENCING:

## Will MassDOT remove the curved brick wall near Everett Street and why has its removal (not?) been discussed.

There are currently no plans to remove the curved brick wall near Everett Street. The project’s federal and state noise analysis determined that a noise barrier is not warranted at this location, and therefore there is no project-related requirement to remove the existing wall.

Retaining the wall maintains the current visual character of the area and avoids replacing a permanent masonry structure with chain-link fencing.

## Can the brick wall be incorporated into the project?

The brick wall by Everett Street is independent of the noise barrier wall project. While the brick wall does not conflict with the location of the proposed noise barrier location, the City of Boston’s A-B Mobility plan calls for a shared use path to be built in the position of the brick wall.

## What will happen to the existing chain link fence?

The chain link fence along Lincoln Street will remain in place during construction of the noise barrier and the retaining walls. MassDOT will remove the chain link fence when the noise barrier is completed, as the barrier will provide separation between Lincoln Street and I-90. Chain link fencing will remain beyond the limits of the noise barrier to maintain continuous separation.

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## DESIGN AND MATERIALS:

### **What material will the wall be made of?**

Noise barrier walls are typically constructed using vertical steel channels or I-beams with precast concrete planks spanning between them. The concrete panels will be textured to absorb rather than reflect sound and may have architectural features to mitigate the appearance of a concrete surface.

### **Will MassDOT add lighting and urban design elements along Lincoln Street?**

MassDOT's noise barrier project does not include additional elements such as lighting or hard-scape features on the Lincoln Street side of the noise barriers. MassDOT is planning to construct a landscaped strip along the Lincoln Street face of the barrier, currently planned to include vines that are suitable for the environment.

### **How will community priorities and cultural identity be reflected?**

MassDOT welcomes and encourages community engagement regarding aesthetic treatments of the noise barrier. Concepts such as vegetation, public art, and texture finishes are among the ideas being considered and would require coordination between MassDOT and the City of Boston.

Community priorities and cultural identity are being reflected through ongoing public involvement. MassDOT has already conducted significant outreach for the Lincoln Street Noise Barrier Project, including the Open House held on February 5, 2026, in the Allston neighborhood. In addition, MassDOT has held neighborhood meetings in accordance with state policy, which included a formal vote by residents on whether to advance the noise barrier. The project team has also maintained communication with elected officials, City of Boston representatives, neighborhood residents and other interested organizations throughout the planning process.

The city will engage in further outreach with respect to future aesthetic treatments, and multimodal elements associated with a future Shared Use Path to ensure continued alignment with community priorities.

### **How will the noise barrier layout interface with the Franklin Street pedestrian bridge?**

The noise barrier construction would precede reconstruction of the Franklin Street pedestrian bridge. The end of the noise barrier wall will be located to the west of the Franklin Street intersection at Lincoln Street. A future pedestrian bridge layout would account for the noise barrier configuration.

## CONSTRUCTION SCHEDULE AND IMPACTS:

### **When will construction begin and how long will it take?**

MassDOT anticipates that initial construction activities will begin in the fall of 2026. These will primarily involve relocation of privately owned underground utilities to accommodate the noise barrier. Visible construction of the noise barrier and retaining wall construction is expected to occur principally in 2027 following the utility relocation.

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## How will the noise barrier be constructed, and what are the anticipated impacts along Lincoln Street?

MassDOT plans to gain access to the site primarily from the I-90 side to construct the retaining walls and noise barriers and to facilitate utility relocation. The existing chain-link fence along Lincoln Street would remain in place during this phase to provide separation. After the noise barrier is substantially complete, MassDOT will perform the final work elements such as fence removal, grading and landscaping, from the Lincoln Street side.

## What time of day will construction occur?

MassDOT anticipates that the work will be conducted during daytime hours only. No night work is expected.

## What type of construction noise should abutters expect?

Heavy construction equipment will be used, including generators, trucks, excavators, graders, cranes, and drilling equipment for noise barrier foundations. The size of the equipment and nature of the work will make construction visible and audible to nearby residents. MassDOT will remain in contact with residents and the City to minimize disruption associated with the construction of the noise barrier.

## How can I find out more?

Please visit the project website below for more details, to sign up for updated and email alerts, and to view the latest resources on the Lincoln Street Sound Barrier.

**Project website** <https://www.mass.gov/allston-multimodal-transportation-project>

**Project email** [I-90Allston@dot.state.ma.us](mailto:I-90Allston@dot.state.ma.us)