



**VIRTUAL DESIGN PUBLIC HEARING**

**OCTOBER 11, 2023**

**FOR THE PROPOSED**

**INSTALLATION OF A SHARED-USE PATH ALONG MOUNT TOM ROAD**

**Project No.610657**

**IN THE EASTHAMPTON AND NORTHAMPTON, MASSACHUSETTS**

**COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS  
MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
HIGHWAY DIVISION**

**JONATHAN GULLIVER  
HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATOR**

**CARRIE E. LAVALLEE, P.E.  
CHIEF ENGINEER**

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS  
MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION – HIGHWAY DIVISION  
NOTICE OF A PUBLIC HEARING  
Project File No. 610657

A Live Virtual Design Public Hearing will be hosted on the MassDOT website below to present the design for the proposed Installation of a Shared-Use Path along Mount Tom Road project in **Easthampton and Northampton, MA**.

**WHEN: 6:30PM, Wednesday, October 11, 2023**

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this hearing is to provide the public with the opportunity to become fully acquainted with the proposed Installation of a Shared-Use Path along Mount Tom Road project. All views and comments submitted in response to the hearing will be reviewed and considered to the maximum extent possible.

**PROPOSAL:** The proposed project consists of construction of a proposed shared use path on the west side of Mount Tom Road from the Manhan Rail Trailhead in Easthampton and extend northerly to the Exit 18, I-91 NB on and off ramps. The proposed design will accommodate two shared use bicycle/pedestrian travel lanes and will include a new parking area at the Manhan Rail Trailhead. At the Manhan River Bridge, the existing concrete sidewalk will be widened to 10 feet for the entire length of the bridge. At the northerly project limit the I-91 at Route 5 south off ramp will include new signage and updated traffic signals providing a safer crossing for bicycles and pedestrians before connecting to the proposed bike lanes on Route 5 north of the project limit.

A secure right-of-way is necessary for this project. Acquisitions in fee and permanent or temporary easements may be required. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts is responsible for acquiring all needed rights in private or public lands. MassDOT's policy concerning land acquisitions will be presented in the hearing.

Project inquiries, written statements and other exhibits regarding the proposed undertaking may be submitted to Carrie E. Lavallee, P.E., Chief Engineer, via e-mail to [MassDOTProjectManagement@dot.state.ma.us](mailto:MassDOTProjectManagement@dot.state.ma.us) or via US Mail to Suite 7550, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, MA 02116, Attention: Project Management, Project File No. 610657. Statements and exhibits intended for inclusion in the hearing transcript must be emailed or postmarked no later than ten (10) business days (14 calendar days) after the hearing is hosted.

This hearing is accessible to people with disabilities. MassDOT provides reasonable accommodations and/or language assistance free of charge upon request (e.g interpreters in American Sign Language and languages other than English, live captioning, videos, assistive listening devices and alternate material formats), as available. For accommodation or language assistance, please contact MassDOT's Chief Diversity and Civil Rights Officer by phone (857-368-8580), TTD/TTY at (857) 266-0603, fax (857) 368-0602 or by email ([MassDOT.CivilRights@dot.state.ma.us](mailto:MassDOT.CivilRights@dot.state.ma.us)). Requests should be made as soon as possible and prior to the hearing, and for more difficult to arrange services including sign-language, CART or language translation or interpretation, requests should be made at least ten business days before the hearing.

This hearing will be hosted, or a cancellation announcement posted, on the internet at <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/highway-division/events>.

JONATHAN GULLIVER  
HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATOR

CARRIE E. LAVALLEE, P.E.  
CHIEF ENGINEER



Dear Concerned Citizen:

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) is committed to building and maintaining a transportation infrastructure that is both safe and efficient for all who use our roadways, bridges, bicycle facilities and pedestrian paths, while maintaining the integrity of the environment.

As part of the design process for this project, we are conducting this public hearing to explain the proposed improvements, listen to your comments and answer any questions you may have. At the conclusion of the hearing, MassDOT will review all of your comments and, where feasible, incorporate them into the design of the project.

We recognize that road and bridge construction can create inconveniences for the public. MassDOT places a great deal of emphasis on minimizing the temporary disruptive effects of construction.

MassDOT encourages input from local communities and values your opinions. Please be assured that we will undertake no project without addressing the concerns of the community.

Sincerely,

Carrie E. Lavallee, P.E.  
Chief Engineer

## **WHAT IS A PUBLIC HEARING?**

### **WHY A PUBLIC HEARING?**

To provide an assured method whereby the Commonwealth of Massachusetts can furnish to the public information concerning the State's highway construction proposals, and to afford every interested resident of the area an opportunity to be heard on any proposed project. At the same time, the hearings afford the Commonwealth an additional opportunity to receive information from local sources which would be of value to the State in making its final decisions to what design should be advanced for development.

### **WHY NOT A VOTE ON HIGHWAY PLANS?**

The hearings are not intended to be a popular referendum for the purpose of determining the nature of a proposed improvement by a majority of those present. They do not relieve the duly constituted officials of a State highway department of the necessity for making decisions in State highway matters for which they are charged with full responsibility.

### **WHAT DOES A PUBLIC HEARING ACCOMPLISH?**

It is designed to ensure the opportunity for, or the availability of, a forum to provide factual information which is pertinent to the determination of the final alternative considered by the state to best serve the public interest, and on which improvement projects are proposed to be undertaken.

It is important that the people of the area express their views in regard to the proposal being presented, so that views can be properly recorded in the minutes of the meeting. These minutes will be carefully studied and taken into consideration in the determination of the final design.

## **RIGHT OF WAY CONCERNS**

The State is responsible for securing the Right of Way for this project. If your property, or a portion of it, must be acquired by the State for highway purposes in the interest of all people of the Commonwealth, your rights are fully protected under the law. Briefly, here are some of the answers to questions you might ask.

### **1. WHO CONTACTS ME?**

Representatives of the Right of Way Bureau of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation's Highway Division. They will explain the impacts and your rights as protected under Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 79.

### **2. WHAT IS A FAIR PRICE FOR MY PROPERTY?**

Every offer is made to ensure that an equitable value is awarded to you for the property, or to appraise the "damage" to the property as a result of the acquisition. MassDOT appraisers, independent appraisers, MassDOT "Review Appraisers" and a Real Estate Appraisal Review Board may all contribute in arriving at an award of damages. The State also pays a proportionate part of the real estate tax for the current year for fee takings, and interest from the date the property is acquired to the payment date, on all impacts.

### **3. MUST I ACCEPT THE DEPARTMENT'S OFFER?**

No. If, after the figure established as market value has been offered to the owner, the owner feels he or she is not being offered a fair price, he or she has the right, within three years, to appeal to the courts. Pending a court decision, he or she can be paid on a "pro-tanto" basis (or "for the time being") that in no way prejudices the court appeal.

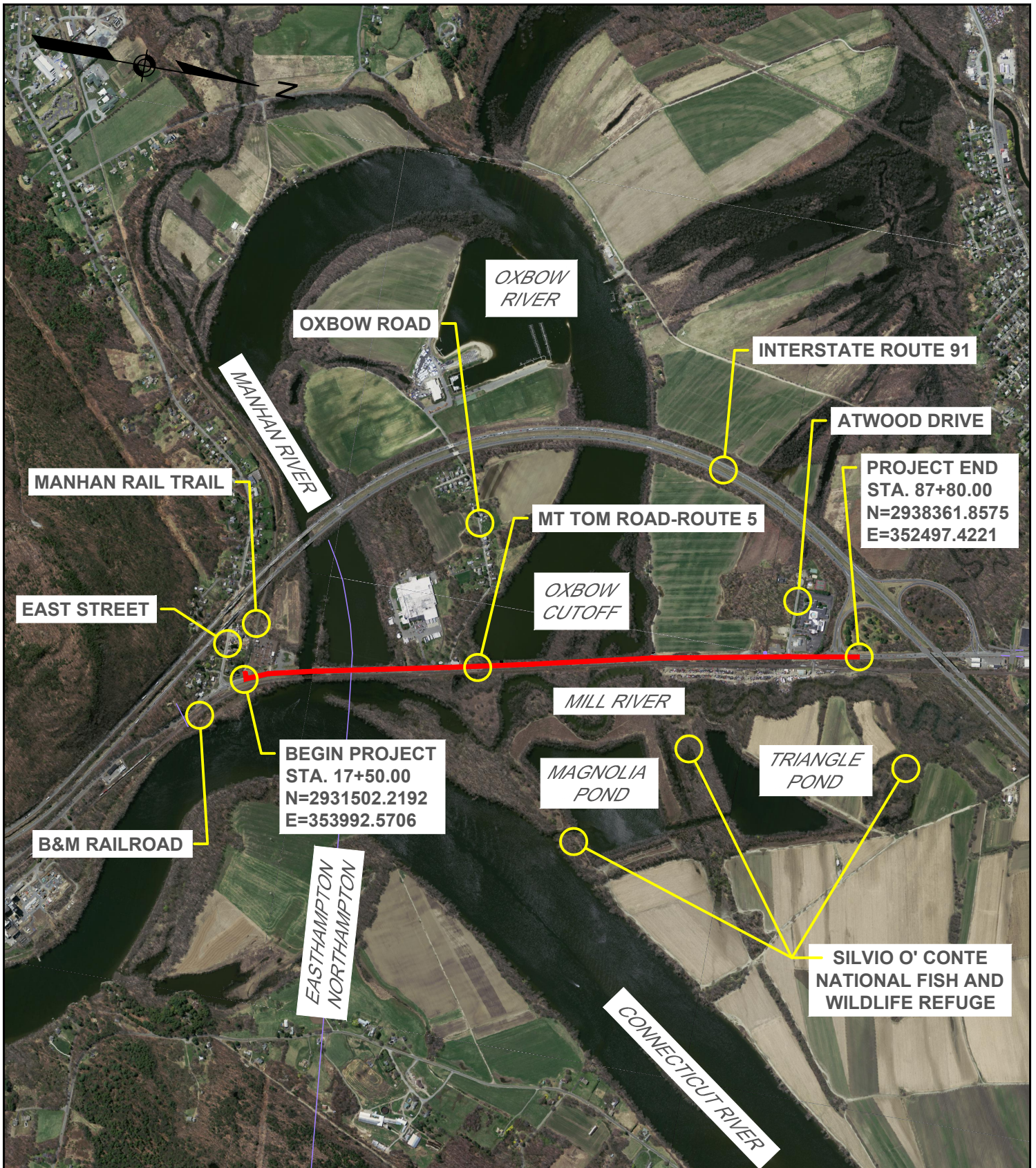
### **4. WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO MY HOUSE?**


The owner will have the opportunity to buy back his or her house, provided he or she has a location to which it can be moved, and the proper permits for its removal. If the owner does not wish to repurchase, the house will be advertised for bids. The highest bidder, who must also have a location and permits for removal, will be awarded the house. Otherwise, the structure will be slated for demolition.

### **5. WHAT HAPPENS IF I MUST RELOCATE?**

In addition to the market value of the property, the Department pays certain relocation benefits for both owners and tenants of acquired residences and businesses who meet eligibility requirements. Assistance in relocation is also provided. Department brochures are available for details on these benefits.







0 750 1500 3000

SCALE: 1" = 1500'


### AERIAL VIEW - PROJECT LOCATION MAP

INSTALLATION OF SHARED USE PATH ALONG MOUNT TOM ROAD  
FROM MANHAN TRAIL TO ATWOOD DRIVE  
MOUNT TOM ROAD (ROUTE 5)  
EASTHAMPTON/NORTHAMPTON, MA

**Legend**

- LIMIT OF WORK
- BROOK
- POND

**September, 2023**



**CHAPPELL  
ENGINEERING  
ASSOCIATES, LLC**  
Civil • Structural • Land Surveying  
R.K. Executive Center  
201 Boston Post Road West, Suite 101  
Marlborough, MA 01752



### **Project Description**

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation – Highway Division (MassDOT) is proposing to build a shared-use path (SUP) for bicyclists and pedestrians connecting the trailhead of the existing Manhan Rail Trail in Easthampton to the proposed bike lanes to be constructed north of exit 18, I-91 at Mount Tom Road (Route 5). The separated SUP (10-feet wide) will be built along the western side Mount Tom Road (Route 5) between the existing utility poles and the top of slope. The project length is approximately 6,200 feet long and runs from the Manhan Rail Trail in Easthampton to exit 18, I-91 at Mount Tom Road (Route 5) in Northampton.

### **Proposed Improvements**

The project includes a new parking lot at the Manhan Rail Trailhead and modifications to the existing Route 5 bridge over the Manhan River to widen the sidewalk and allow for the continuation of the shared-use path (SUP) across the bridge. At the railroad tracks crossing Route 5, the SUP is proposed to be realigned to create a more perpendicular crossing of the tracks. The project also proposes signalized pedestrian crossings at the I-91 Ramp interchange, and a signalized bicycle crossing [for northbound users] at the northerly project limit where the shared use path terminates.

### **Existing Conditions**

The existing roadway consists of two lanes carrying traffic in a north and south direction that is shared by vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians. The existing layout of Mount Tom Road is variable in width from 60 feet wide to 172 feet wide. In Easthampton, there is a five-foot wide, bituminous sidewalk on the western side of the roadway (southbound) from the Manhan Rail Trail and crosses the Manhan River with the Route 5 Bridge over the Manhan River and ends just north of the Bridge. North of the Northampton City line (on the west side of Route 5) there is a railroad crossing which serves the Packaging Corporation of America. There is an active railroad track between Route 5 (east side), and the Connecticut River Oxbow that has created several areas of bordering vegetated wetlands and water bodies.

### **Right of Way Impacts**

The current design plan indicates that permanent easements and temporary easements may be required. MassDOT's policy regarding land acquisitions will be discussed at this hearing.

### **Maintenance of Traffic During Construction**

The intent of this project is that all roadways will remain open to through traffic during construction with two lanes of traffic maintained and possible short term lane closures required for work at roadway crossings. No detours are anticipated. Driveway access for abutting properties shall be maintained at all times during construction.

### **Project Status – Project Schedule**

The project has been programmed in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program for Federal Fiscal Year 2026. The Plans presented this evening are at the 25% Design Stage (Preliminary Design Stage). Comments from this evening will be reviewed and considered to the maximum extent possible.

### **Project Construction Cost**

The project construction cost will be funded with a combination of moneys from the Federal Highway Administration and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and is currently estimated at approximately \$6 million.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS  
MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
HIGHWAY DIVISION

FEDERAL AID PROJECT

Easthampton and Northampton, MA.  
Proposed Installation of a Shared-Use Path along Mount Tom Road  
Project File No. 610657

This sheet is provided for your comments. Your input is solicited and appreciated. You may e-mail comments directly to [MassDOTProjectManagement@dot.state.ma.us](mailto:MassDOTProjectManagement@dot.state.ma.us) or you may mail this sheet with any additional comments to:

Carrie E. Lavallee, P.E., Chief Engineer  
MassDOT – Highway Division  
10 Park Plaza, Boston, MA 02116-3973  
Attn: Project Management

Statements and exhibits intended for inclusion in the public hearing transcript must be emailed or postmarked no later than ten (10) business days after the hearing.

**PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT LEGIBLY.**

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Carrie E. Lavallee, P.E.  
Chief Engineer  
MassDOT – Highway Division  
10 Park Plaza  
Boston, MA 02116-3973

RE: Virtual Public Hearing  
Proposed Installation of a Shared-Use Path along Mount Tom Road project  
**Easthampton and Northampton, MA.**  
Project File No. 610657  
Attn: Project Management

