



DESIGN PUBLIC HEARING

MAY 29, 2024

FOR THE PROPOSED

Bridge Replacement, H-12-007 & H-12-025, Private First Class Ralph T. Basiliere Bridge Bridge Street (SR 125) over the Merrimack River and the Bradford Rail Trail

Major Projects

IN THE CITY OF HAVERHILL, 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. 605304

An In-Person Design Public Hearing will be hosted by MassDOT to present the design for the proposed PRIVATE FIRST CLASS RALPH T. BASILIERE BRIDGE REPLACEMENT, H-12-007 & H-12-025, Bridge Street (SR 125) over the Merrimack River and the Bradford Rail Trail, in **Haverhill, MA**.

WHEN: 6:00PM, Wednesday, May 29, 2024

**WHERE: UMass Lowell Innovation Center
2 Merrimack Street
Haverhill, MA**

PURPOSE: The purpose of this hearing is to provide the public with the opportunity to become fully acquainted with the proposed BRIDGE REPLACEMENT, H-12-007 & H-12-025, Bridge Street (SR 125) over the Merrimack River and the Bradford Rail Trail 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 replacing the Private First Class Ralph T. Basiliere Bridge over the Merrimack River and Bradford Rail Trail. The proposed bridge will provide two northbound travel lanes and two southbound travel lanes as well as improved bicycle and pedestrian accommodations. The replacement structure will be built in stages to allow one lane of northbound traffic and one lane of southbound traffic to cross the Merrimack at all times during construction. A single sidewalk will also be maintained throughout the construction process.

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 massdotmajorprojects@dot.state.ma.us or via US Mail to Suite 7210, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, MA 02116, Attention: Major Projects, Project File No. 605304. Statements and exhibits intended for inclusion in the hearing transcript must be emailed or postmarked no later than ten (10) business 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). 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, PE
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,

Patricia A Leavenworth, 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.

Figure 1: Locus Map



Figure 2: Proposed Cross-Section

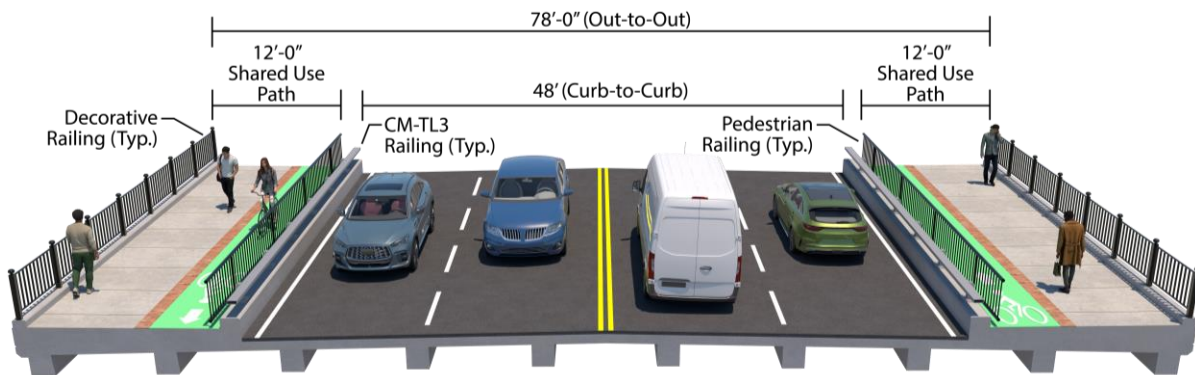


Figure 3: Proposed PFC Ralph T. Basiliere Bridge Side-View



Figure 4: Proposed PFC Ralph T. Basiliere Bridge Deck View



Figure 5: Proposed PFC Ralph T. Basiliere Bridge Night View



Figure 6: Proposed Reuse of Existing Bridge Tower Roofs Along Bradford Rail Trail



Project Location:

The project is located in the center of Haverhill where SR 125, locally Bridge Street, crosses the Merrimack River between downtown and the city's Bradford neighborhood. From north to south, the project consists of a pair of bridges, a small structure which carries Bridge Street over the Bradford Rail Trail, formerly the Boston and Maine Railroad, and the larger, PFC Ralph T. Basiliere Bridge which crosses the Merrimack on seven arches.

Project Purpose:

Both bridges addressed by this project will be replaced in their entirety, including foundations. These structures, though safe for all users, date from 1925, are at the end of their useful lifespan, and must be replaced. A portion of the structure over the Bradford Rail Trail is currently protected by barrier to prevent vehicles from traveling over it and placing weight on deteriorated supporting members. Replacement will allow MassDOT to make safety improvements for all modes of travel, especially cyclists who currently have no dedicated facilities on the structure. Sidewalks and travel lanes, though present, are uneven, and in the case of sidewalks may present an impediment to those with mobility challenges such as senior citizens or young children. The bridge currently operates as a single lane in each direction, except at the ends where motorists weave to align themselves to go straight or make turns. The new structure will provide two northbound and two southbound, formally defined.

The new bridge will be constructed to modern standards and require less frequent inspections and maintenance activities with associated impacts to the traveling public. The new bridge over the Merrimack will have fewer supports, reducing the impact of bridge piers on the river's ecosystem which includes the Atlantic Sturgeon. Adjacent sections of SR 125 will be repaved as part of this project. Improvements will be made to the intersections of Bridge Street/Middlesex Street and Bridge Street/Merrimack Street/Water Street.

Existing Conditions

The project area is approximately at the center of the City of Haverhill and the connector between the city's downtown and the Bradford neighborhood. In the area of the project, Bridge Street carries 20,000+ vehicles per day, 4% of which are heavy vehicles including MEVA transit and Haverhill Public School buses. The Basiliere Bridge is a vital connector for the Haverhill community providing access to city services, educational opportunities, employment centers, shopping, dining, recreation, and residential areas on both sides of the river. It is particularly important from the standpoint of first response within the city since nearly all of Haverhill's emergency response capacity, minus one fire company, and its level one trauma center, Holy Family Hospital are on the north bank of the Merrimack.

Maintenance of Traffic During Replacement

MassDOT intends to use staged construction to provide one lane of travel in each direction on Bridge Street and one sidewalk on the bridge throughout construction. MassDOT is aware through coordination with the City of Haverhill that residents of senior housing at the Haverhill end of the bridge frequently walk or use mobility scooters to cross the structure to the Walgreens in Bradford to pick up prescriptions. Access to the Dempsey Boardwalk and Bradford Rail Trail will be maintained throughout construction, but temporary shifts of the trail will be required to ensure public safety. Off-peak detours could be used to expedite completion of this project.

A Unique Appearance

The existing Basiliere Bridge is a well-loved landmark in the City of Haverhill featured on the City's website, the badges of its firefighters, and in the logos of multiple community organizations. MassDOT has worked extensively with Haverhill residents to give the proposed new bridge a look and feel which honors today's structure without directly copying it. The proposed bridge will be made of reinforced concrete, supported on arches, and feature vertical elements, referred to as "beacons." These structures, which will be lit at night, have been designed to echo the existing bridge's towers, the metal roofs of which are proposed to be reused ornamentally along the Bradford Rail Trail. The proposed bridge also features decorative lighting on its arches and an ornamental railing at the outside of the pedestrian sidewalk. A central seating area provides an area for pedestrians to rest and enjoy views of the Merrimack.

Anticipated Project Milestones

Environmental Permitting, 25% Design, and Right-of-Way Procurement: Summer/Fall 2024
Advertisement/Request for Proposals (RFP): November 2024
Contract Awarded to Design-Build Proposer: Spring 2025
Start of Construction: Late 2025/Early 2026
Roadway and Bridge Full Beneficial Use (FBU): 2031

Project Cost

The project's total anticipated cost is approximately \$150 million. Funding for construction will be by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the Federal Highway Administration.

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Carrie E. Lavalley, P.E.
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RE: Design Public Hearing
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