



VIRTUAL DESIGN PUBLIC HEARING

FEBRUARY 1, 2024

FOR THE PROPOSED

**Bridge Replacement, H-12-040=M-17-030, I-495 (NB & SB), over Merrimack River and
M-17-031, I-495 (NB & SB) over Route 110 and
H-12-056, Industrial Avenue (EB & WB) over I-495
Project No. 609466**

Major Projects

IN THE CITIES OF HAVERHILL AND METHUEN, 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. 609466

A Live Virtual Design Public Hearing will be hosted on the MassDOT website below to present the design for the proposed BRIDGE REPLACEMENT, H-12-040=M-17-030, I-495 (NB & SB) OVER MERRIMACK RIVER AND M-17-031, I-495 (NB & SB) OVER ROUTE 110 AND H-12-056, INDUSTRIAL AVENUE (EB & WB) OVER I-495 project in HAVERHILL- METHUEN , MA.

WHEN: 6:00PM, Thursday, February 1, 2024

PURPOSE: The purpose of this hearing is to provide the public with the opportunity to become fully acquainted with the proposed BRIDGE REPLACEMENT, H-12-040=M-17-030, I-495 (NB & SB) OVER MERRIMACK RIVER AND M-17-031, I-495 (NB & SB) OVER ROUTE 110 AND H-12-056, INDUSTRIAL AVENUE (EB & WB) OVER I-495 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 Northbound and Southbound bridges on I-495 over Merrimack Street and the Merrimack River, and the Eastbound and Westbound bridges on Industrial Avenue over I-495 and approach roadways. It also includes milling and paving on a portion of Merrimack Street. The proposed Project will provide bridge and roadway safety improvements and MassDOT will use staged construction to maintain existing three lanes of I-495 during construction and two lanes of Industrial Avenue. No bicycle or pedestrian accommodations are proposed on Interstate I-495, but for Industrial Ave, bicycle accommodations consisting of a useable shoulder are provided.

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. 609466. 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,

Carrie E. Lavalley, 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

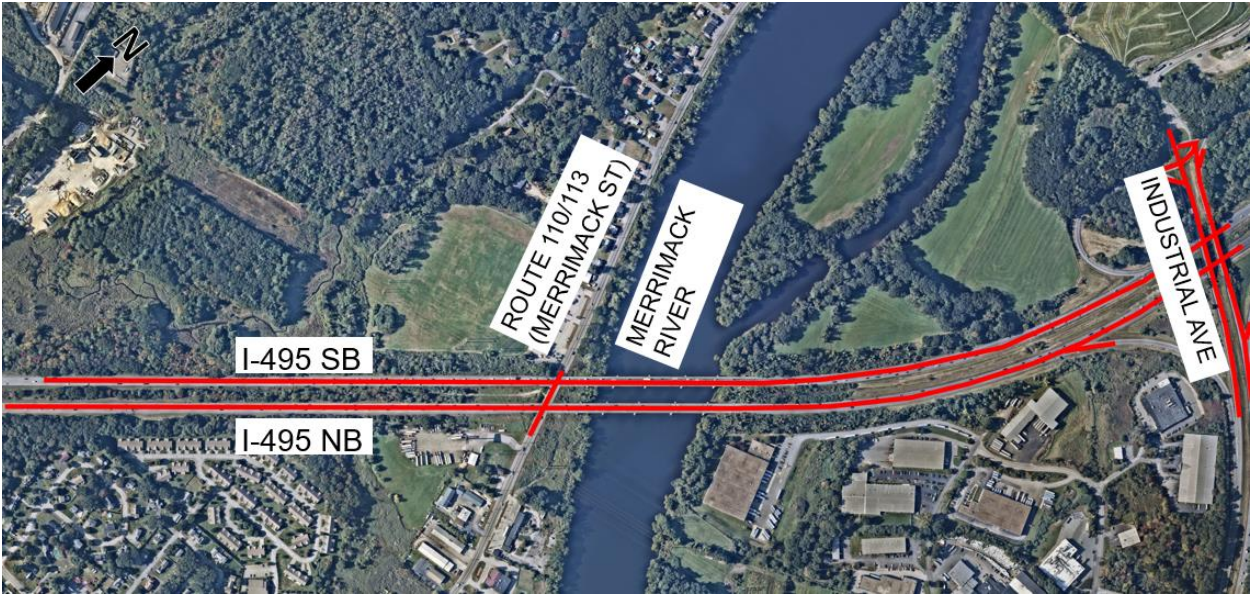


Figure 2: Proposed Improvements to I-495 Mainline – Southbound Shown

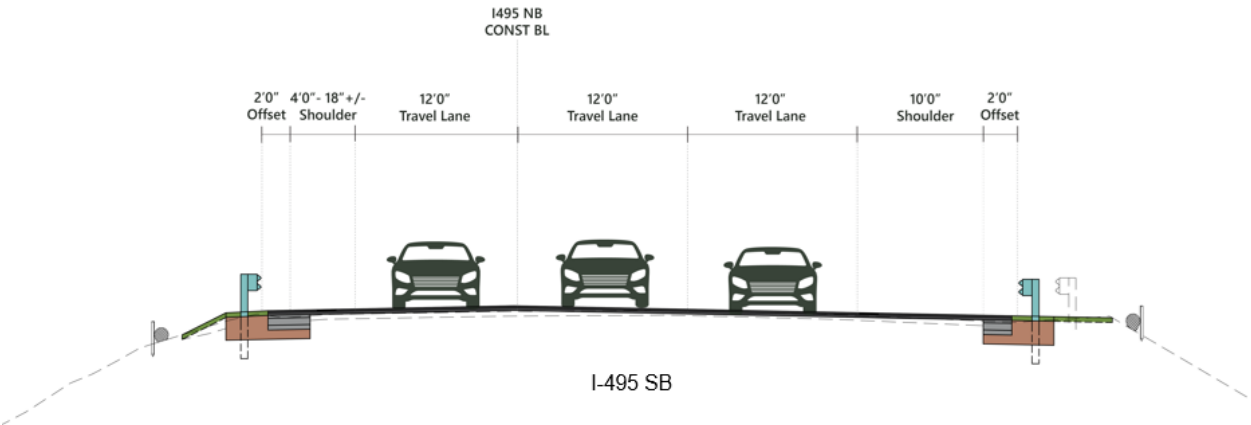


Figure 3: Proposed Cross-Section of I-495 Bridges

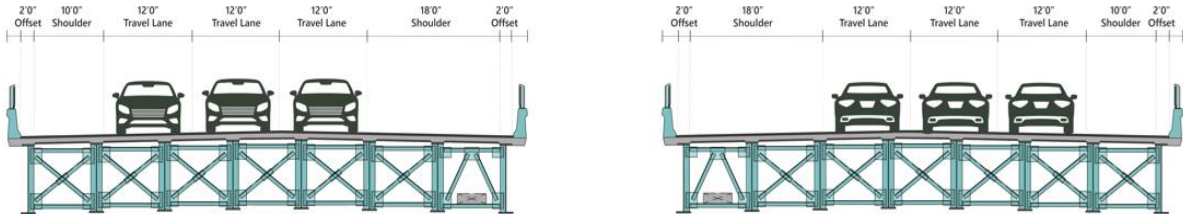


Figure 4: Proposed Cross-Section of Industrial Avenue Bridge

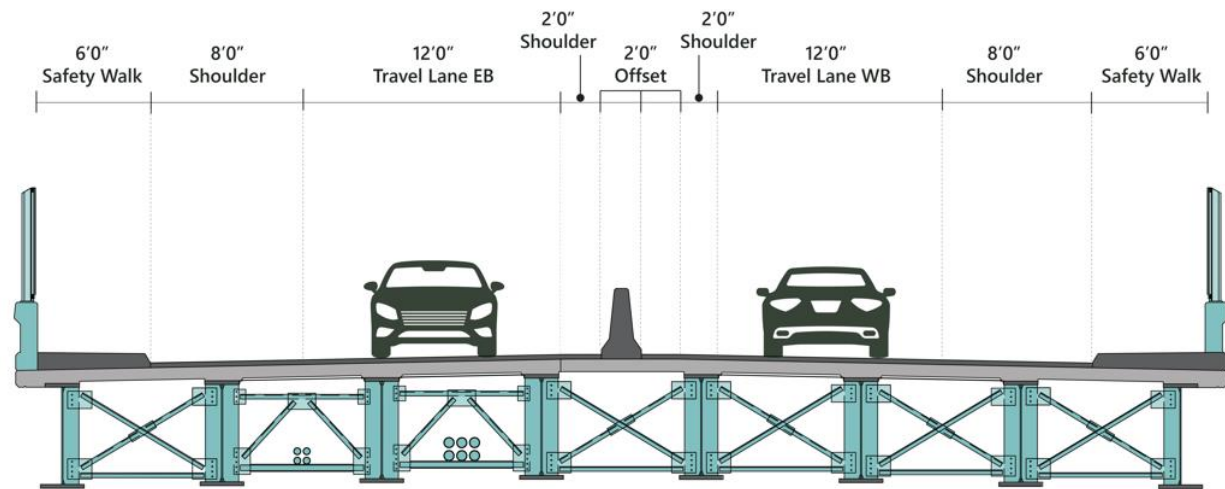


Figure 5: Proposed Noise Wall Limits



Figure 1: Barrier Evaluation
Interstate 495 Bridges over Merrimack River
Methuen and Haverhill, Massachusetts
Source: MassGIS, NearMap, and VHB 2023

Project Location:

The project is located along an approximately 1.5-mile-long portion of I-495 in Methuen and Haverhill. I-495 northbound carries traffic in the direction of Haverhill, while I-495 southbound carries traffic towards Lowell. The from south to north, the project consists of two pairs of bridges: I-495 north and southbound over Route 110/113 (locally Merrimack Street) in Methuen, and the Merrimack River, and Industrial Avenue east and westbound over both directions of I-495. Industrial Avenue provides a connection between I-495 and Route 125 in the Bradford section of Haverhill.

The project also includes reconstruction of the approaches of I-495 and Industrial Avenue to the bridges carrying each roadway and a noise barrier along approximately 2,400 feet of the southern edge of I-495 northbound in Methuen. The proposed barrier would be between the Interstate and the local roadways of Fenwick Circle, Russell Farm Drive, and Village Lane.

Project Purpose:

All four bridges addressed by this project will be replaced. These structures, though safe for all users, date from the 1960's, are at the end of their useful lifespan and must be replaced.

Replacing the bridges will allow MassDOT to make safety improvements for motorists on I-495 and Industrial Avenue. The new bridges will be constructed to modern standards and require less frequent inspections and maintenance activities with associated impacts to the traveling public. The new bridges over the Merrimack will have fewer supports, reducing the impact of bridge piers on the river's ecosystem. The proposed noise barrier will provide 1 to 13 decibels of noise reduction from I-495 for homes along portions of Fenwick Circle, Palermo Street, Pleasant Valley Street, Russell Farm Drive, and Village Lane. The adjacent portions of Route 110/113 (Merrimack Street) will also be repaved as part of this project.

Existing Conditions

In the project area, I-495 consists of three northbound lanes and three southbound lanes with shoulders on both sides of the road. The Interstate is separated by a landscaped median where it rests directly on the ground. Where the highway is carried by bridges, each direction of travel rests on an independent structure. Where it crosses over I-495, Industrial Avenue consists of two separate bridges (eastbound and westbound) each carrying two lanes of traffic. Each direction of travel rests on an independent structure. The homes adjacent to I-495 where the noise barrier is proposed are currently separated from the highway by a band of trees and shrubs.

Maintenance of Traffic During Replacement

MassDOT intends to use staged construction which will provide three lanes of travel on each direction of I-495 and one lane of travel in each direction on Industrial Avenue during peak travel hours. Lane shifts, lane drops, rolling roadblocks, or detours during off-peak hours may be used to expedite completion of this project.

Anticipated Project Milestones

Environmental Permitting, 25% Design, and Right-of-Way Procurement: June 2024

Advertisement/Request for Proposals (RFP): June 2024

Contract Awarded to Design-Build Proposer: December 2024

Roadway and Bridge Full Beneficial Use (FBU): early 2031

Project Cost

The project's total anticipated cost is approximately \$351.8 million. Funding for construction will be by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the Federal Highway Administration.

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THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
HIGHWAY DIVISION

FEDERAL AID PROJECT

Boston, MA
River Street Bridge Replacement Project
Project File No. 609466

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

Carrie E. Lavalley, P.E., Chief Engineer
MassDOT – Highway Division
10 Park Plaza, Boston, MA 02116-3973
Attn: Major Projects

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.

Name: _____ Title: _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

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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
Bridge Replacement, H-12-040=M-17-030, I-495 (NB & SB), over Merrimack River
and M-17-031, I-495 (NB & SB) over Route 110
and H-12-056, Industrial Avenue (EB & WB) over I-495
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