



VIRTUAL DESIGN PUBLIC HEARING

**Thursday, July 21, 2022
at 7:00 PM**

FOR THE PROPOSED

**Lawrence Manchester Rail Corridor (LMRC) Rail Trail
Project No. 608930**

LAWRENCE, MASSACHUSETTS

Project Management Section

**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. 608930

A Live Virtual 25% Design Public Hearing will be hosted on the MassDOT website below to present the design for the proposed Manchester Rail Trail project in **Lawrence, MA**.

WHEN: 7:00 PM, Thursday, July 21, 2022

PURPOSE: The purpose of this hearing is to provide the public with the opportunity to become fully acquainted with the proposed 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 redeveloping the inactive Lawrence Manchester Rail Corridor into a shared-use path / alternate transportation corridor (ATC) for pedestrian and bicycle accommodations. The 1.40-mile project begins at Merrimack Street in Lawrence and extends to the Methuen/Lawrence City Line. The ATC will connect Merrimack Street to the south and Manchester Street Park, the Spicket River Greenway, and the Methuen Rail Trail to the north. The project also includes improving three intersections for at-grade crossings and developing additional access points to the Rail Trail from existing developments and parks. There are four bridges along the Right-of-Way that will be improved as part of the project including deck replacements at bridges over the South Canal and the Merrimack River, complete replacement of the Lowell Street Bridge that spans the Right-of-Way, and a superstructure replacement at the Manchester Street Bridge Crossing.

A secure right-of-way is necessary for this project. Acquisitions in fee and permanent or temporary easements may be required. **The City and the Commonwealth of MA is responsible for acquiring all needed rights in private or public lands.** Right of Way 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 or via US Mail to Suite 7550, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, MA 02116, Attention: **Project Management, Project File No. 608930**. Statements and exhibits intended for inclusion in the public hearing transcript must be emailed or postmarked no later than ten (10) business days (14 calendar days) after the hearing is hosted on the MassDOT website listed below.

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 Live Virtual Design Public Hearing or a cancellation announcement will be hosted on the internet at www.mass.gov/massdot-highway-design-public-hearings.

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 ISSUES

A secure Right of Way is required for this project. If your property, or a portion of it, must be acquired by the State or Municipality for highway purposes in the interest of all people of the Commonwealth, your rights are fully protected under the law. Procedures are different depending on whether the State or Municipality is making the acquisitions. Briefly, here are some of the answers to questions you might ask.

State Acquisitions

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.

MassDOT also provides for dispute resolution through the administrative settlement process. You can initiate this by providing documentation and information relative to the value of your property, including but not limited to, an appraisal for our review. If resolution cannot be reached through the administrative settlement process, you can still bring a claim in court for additional monies at any time during the three-year period.

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.

Municipal Acquisitions

1. REASON FOR PROJECT?

The construction of this project will serve the needs of local users as well as those of the greater surrounding communities. The proposed enhancement has been designed to service and provide for the public good.

2. WHO CONTACTS ME?

Representatives of the municipality have already contacted or will contact you. They will explain the process and procedures used in acquiring any necessary rights required for the proposed project.

3. APPRAISALS, DONATIONS, RIGHTS OF ENTRY?

Impacted Property owners are entitled to an appraisal and Just Compensation; however, municipalities will often seek donations of parcels as this procedure will minimize the acquisition cost for your community.

A Right of Entry is a document that is signed by the owner. It allows the Contractor to perform certain types of temporary work on the owner's land. The work is usually minor in nature and frequently consists of loaming/seeding behind sidewalks, new driveway apron work, grading/sloping, etc.

4. WHAT IS A FAIR PRICE FOR THE ACQUIRED PARCELS?

When donations or Rights of Entry are not considered, or completed, every effort will be made to ensure that an equitable value is awarded. Municipal and/or outside appraisers will complete an appraisal and review appraisal. Consideration is given to the type of rights needed, whether in fee, permanent or temporary easements. The appraisal will be the basis for arriving at a fair price (Just compensation), for the rights to be acquired.

5. MUST I ACCEPT THE MUNICIPALITY OFFER?

No, if the owner feels that the offer is not fair the owner may petition the courts. This action does not stop or delay the acquisition. The action must occur within 3 years from the date of the recording of the acquired parcel(s). The owner(s) may be paid pro tanto (for the time being). The pro tanto payment will not prejudice the court's final decision.



1" = 800'

Lawrence Manchester Rail Corridor (LMRC) Rail Trail Development - Lawrence, MA
Design Public Hearing

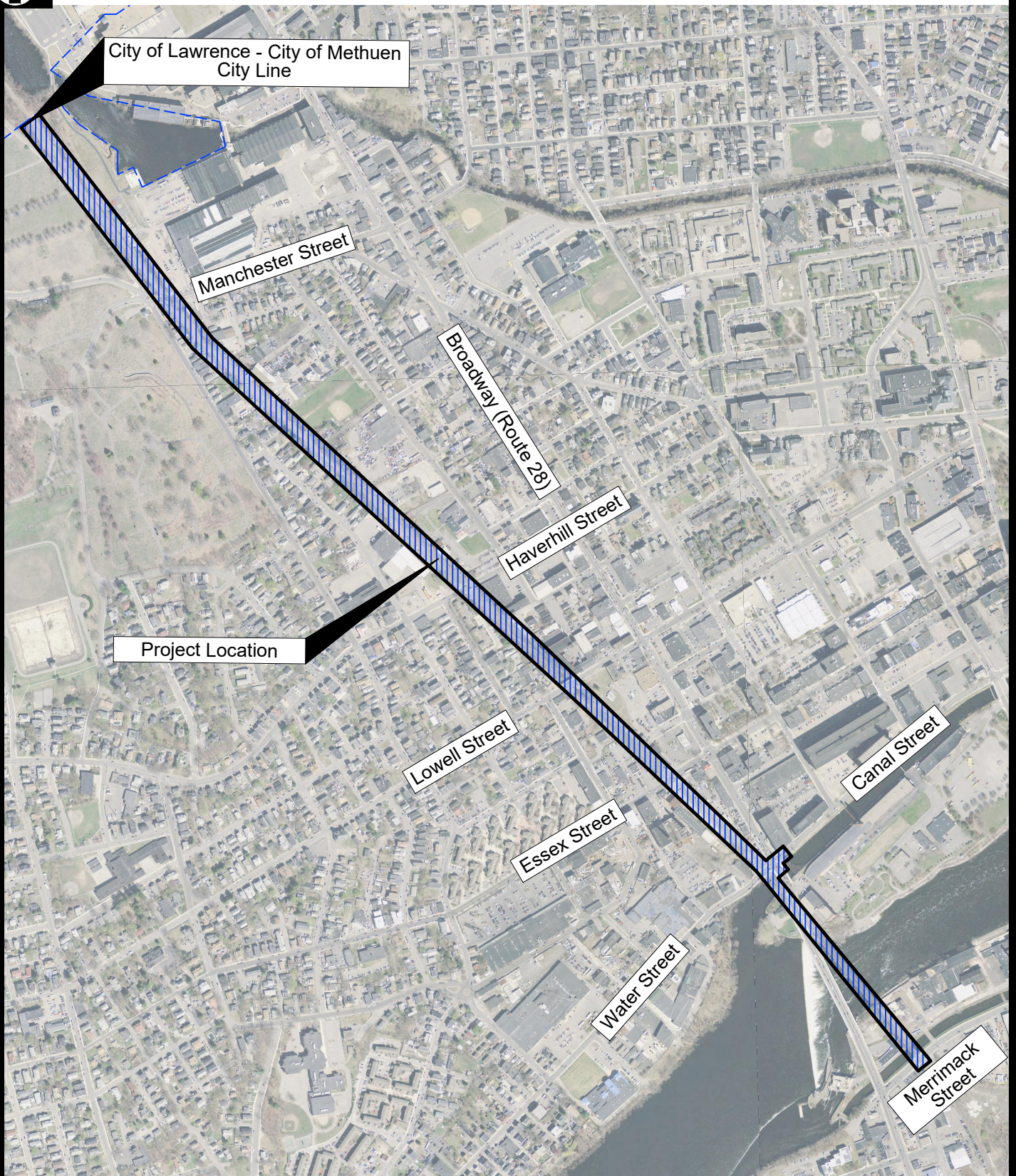


Figure 1

Project Location Map



Lawrence Manchester Rail Corridor (LMRC) Rail Trail

Lawrence, MA

PROJECT LOCATION

The project extends approximately 7,400 feet (1.4 miles) along the existing, abandoned B&M Railroad corridor, from the corridor's intersection with Merrimack Street to the south extending north to the Methuen/Lawrence City line. The project includes safety and operational improvements at the corridor's intersection with Essex Street and Haverhill Street in addition to the intersection of Water Street, Canal Street and Route 28/Broadway.

PROJECT PURPOSE

The purpose of this project is to create an Alternate Transportation Corridor (ATC) along the existing, abandoned B&M Railroad Right of Way serving as the southern anchor to a 30-mile ATC to Manchester, NH. This proposed work will provide important physical and symbolic connections between the north and south sides of the City and links the ATC to other existing and planned City amenities. Specific improvements will be made to provide pedestrian and bicycle accommodations and safety along the corridor, while also rehabilitating the three existing railroad bridges over the South Canal, Merrimack River, and Manchester Street as well as replacing the Lowell Street Bridge spanning the Railroad Right of Way. Proposed improvements include ATC construction, grading, drainage, pavement markings, traffic signal upgrades, and wheelchair ramp construction. Several landscape amenities will also be constructed to support the design of the ATC within the proposed limits of work including connections to West Street and Manchester Street parks.

PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

The Lawrence Manchester Rail Corridor (LMRC) Rail Trail include accessibility, drainage, and structural deficiencies within the project limits which require improvements for safe and efficient operation for all users, mainly bicyclists and pedestrians. The following proposed improvements were developed to address the existing deficiencies and are based on an examination of existing conditions, known deficiencies, future traffic volumes, and discussions with MassDOT and City of Lawrence officials.

- Construction of a 12-foot-wide paved alternate transportation corridor (ATC) path; secondary paths will also be constructed within the limits of work between Haverhill Street and Manchester Street and at the northerly limits of work to provide access to the existing Spicket River Greenway.
- Bridge reconstruction at Lowell Street over the Railroad Right of Way.
- Bridge rehabilitation of the existing railroad bridges over the South Canal and Merrimack River.
- Bridge superstructure replacement of the existing railroad bridge over Manchester Street.
- Provide marked crosswalks across each leg of the Water Street/Canal Street/Route 28/Broadway intersection with pedestrian signal indications and an exclusive pedestrian phase.
- Provide at grade crossings with Rectangular Rapid-Flashing Beacons (RRFBs) at Essex Street and Haverhill Street.
- Provide corridor lighting from Essex Street to West Street Park.
- Pavement rehabilitation by means of a mix of milling and overlay and full-depth reconstruction within the project limits.
- Install new cement concrete pedestrian curb ramps with detectable warning panels, meeting MassDOT and ADA requirements.

- Make improvements to the existing drainage system as necessary to address drainage concerns and improve stormwater quality to the maximum extent practicable.
- Provide new pavement markings and signs throughout the project. All signs will be MUTCD compliant.
- Relocate utility poles in areas of new path construction to maintain sufficient roadway offsets.

MAINTENANCE OF TRAFFIC DURING CONSTRUCTION

All roadways within the project will remain open to traffic throughout construction with the exception to traffic along Manchester Street, where a daily closure will be implemented to allow for its bridge construction. Additionally, Lowell Street will be closed for the duration of the bridge reconstruction spanning the Railroad Right of Way. The temporary detour will occur via Route 28/Broadway, Haverhill Street and Morton Street to the north. Signal and crosswalk operations at the intersections of Water Street, Essex Street and Haverhill Street will allow one lane to be maintained on all approaches during peak hours. Occasional short traffic disruptions may occur, but every effort will be made to minimize inconvenience to the public. Pedestrian and vehicular access to abutting properties will be maintained at all times, except for brief periods of time during which abutters will be notified in advance.

RIGHT OF WAY IMPACTS

The proposed improvements will require permanent easements affecting seven (7) abutting properties. Takings will be required for five (5) properties including property on Merrimack Street to accommodate bridge construction over the South Canal, curb ramp and sidewalk construction on Canal Street and Broadway, and curb ramp and access through two (2) abutting private properties on Railroad Street. Specific to the Lowell Street bridge construction, there are six (6) fee takings (two (2) City, and four (4) State). The two (2) City takings are required for sidewalk and ornamental railing construction at the bridge. The four (4) State takings are required for the new bridge construction. Permanent utility easements are required for utility pole relocation and aerial rights affecting four parcels, included in the seven (7) abutting properties to the corridor. In addition, the project will require temporary construction easements affecting many but not all properties within the project limits.

PROJECT COST

The preliminary construction cost of this project at this design stage is approximately \$25,000,000.

PROJECT SCHEDULE

The design plans presented this evening represent the 25% design plans. The project has been programmed in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan for Federal Fiscal Year 2024. Construction is anticipated to begin in late 2024.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
HIGHWAY DIVISION

FEDERAL AID PROJECT

Lawrence, MA
Lawrence Manchester Rail Corridor (LMRC) Rail Trail
Project File No. 608930

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 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: 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.

Name: _____ Title: _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

Please Fold and Tape



Please Place
Appropriate
Postage Here

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

RE: Virtual Public Hearing
Lawrence Manchester Rail Corridor (LMRC) Rail Trail
LAWRENCE
Project File No. 608930
Attn: Project Management

