



**DESIGN PUBLIC HEARING WEBINAR**

**June 23, 2020**

**FOR THE PROPOSED**

**Pawtucket Falls Overlook  
Pedestrian Walkway and Bicycle Connection  
Lowell, MA | Project File No. 607885**

**Roadway Project Management Section**

**IN THE CITY OF LOWELL, MASSACHUSETTS**

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

**JONATHAN GULLIVER  
HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATOR**

**PATRICIA A. LEAVENWORTH, P.E.  
CHIEF ENGINEER**

**THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS  
MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION – HIGHWAY DIVISION  
NOTICE OF A PUBLIC HEARING WEBINAR**

**Project File No. 607885**

A Design Public Hearing webinar will be published on the MassDOT website to present the design for the proposed Lowell Pedestrian walkway & Bike connection at Pawtucket Falls project in Lowell, MA.

WHEN: Tuesday, June 23rd, 2020

PURPOSE: The purpose of this hearing webinar is to provide the public with the opportunity to become fully acquainted with the proposed Lowell Pedestrian walkway & Bike connection at Pawtucket Falls project. All views and comments made at the webinar will be reviewed and considered to the maximum extent possible.

PROPOSAL: The proposed project consists of pedestrian walkway & bicycle connection at Pawtucket Falls overlook, from Vandenberg Esplanade to School Street have been provided in accordance with applicable design guides.

A secure right-of-way is necessary for this project. Acquisitions in fee and permanent or temporary easements may be required. The **city of Lowell** is responsible for acquiring all needed rights in private or public lands. MassDOT's policy concerning land acquisitions will be discussed at this webinar

Written views received by MassDOT subsequent to the date of this notice and up to five (5) days prior to the date of the webinar shall be displayed for public inspection and copying at the time and date listed above. Plans will be on display one-half hour before the hearing begins, with an engineer in attendance to answer questions regarding this project. A project handout will be made available on the MassDOT website listed below.

Written statements and other exhibits in place of, or in addition to, oral statements made at the Public Hearing regarding the proposed undertaking are to be submitted to Patricia A. Leavenworth, P.E., Chief Engineer, MassDOT, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, MA 02116, Attention: **Roadway Project Management**, Project File No. **607885**. Such submissions will also be accepted at the hearing webinar. Mailed statements and exhibits intended for inclusion in the public hearing transcript must be postmarked no later than ten (10) business days after this webinar. Project inquiries may be emailed to [dot.feedback.highway@state.ma.us](mailto:dot.feedback.highway@state.ma.us)

This location is accessible to people with disabilities. MassDOT provides reasonable accommodations and/or language assistance free of charge upon request (including but not limited to interpreters in American Sign Language and languages other than English, open or closed captioning for videos, assistive listening devices and alternate material formats, such as audio tapes, Braille and large print), as available. For accommodation or language assistance, please contact MassDOT's Chief Diversity and Civil Rights Officer by phone (857-368-8580), fax (857-368-0602), TTD/TTY (857-368-0603) or by email ([MassDOT.CivilRights@dot.state.ma.us](mailto:MassDOT.CivilRights@dot.state.ma.us)). Requests should be made as soon as possible prior to the meeting, and for more difficult to arrange services including sign-language, CART or language translation or interpretation, requests should be made at least ten (10) business days before the webinar.

Hearing webinar cancellation announcements will be posted on the internet at <http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/Highway/>

JONATHAN GULLIVER  
HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATOR

PATRICIA A. LEAVENWORTH, 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,  
Patricia A Leavenworth, P. E.  
Chief Engineer

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

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

During the COVID-19 pandemic the Commonwealth of Massachusetts will utilize technologies as an assured virtual method for furnishing to the public information concerning the State and municipal highways and roadways 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 State and local jurisdiction officials of roadways and highways of the necessity for making decisions in roadway and 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 and comments 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. The public also encouraged to express views and positions whether for or against any part or the entirety of a proposal. It will be helpful to MassDOT if expressed views are accompanied by brief explanation of such views.

## RIGHT OF WAY ISSUES

A secured right of way is necessary for this project. Temporary construction easements may be required. Your municipality is responsible for acquiring all necessary rights in private or public lands. If your property is affected, your rights are fully protected under the law.

### 1. REASON FOR PROJECT

The completion of this project will serve local needs. The proposed enhancement will also be in the interest of others in the greater community and provides for the public good.

### 2. WHO CONTACTS ME?

Representatives of the municipality may have already contacted you or will be contacting you. They will explain the process and procedures used in acquiring any necessary rights in land.

### 3. WHAT ABOUT DONATIONS? WHAT IS A RIGHT OF ENTRY?

Town officials will often seek donations, of parcels, where permanent rights are required. 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 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, and wetland protection, etc. The rights granted are temporary in nature.

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

In the event that donations 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. 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 (for damages that result).

### 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. The owner(s) may be paid pro tanto (for the time being). The pro tanto payment will not prejudice the court's final decision.

# Overall Site Plan



**Pawtucket Falls Overlook  
Pedestrian Walkway and Bicycle Connection  
Lowell, MA | Project File No. 607885**

**Project Description**

The proposed project, combined with companion project No. 605966, would extend the Vandenberg Esplanade to the School Street bridge thereby creating a link to Lowell's 5.6-mile canal walkway system. The first section would start at the easterly end of the Vandenberg Esplanade and extend 1200 feet on a new pathway through the State park area (DCR). It would include a pedestrian bridge over Clay Pit Brook. It would then intersect the existing sidewalk on the State Highway right-of-way just before the mouth of Flagg Meadow Brook. The second section (1300 Ft) would be within MassDOT layout and would be included in the VFW Highway Resurfacing project (No. 605966) with the exception of a small overlook node. The third section of the walkway will diverge from the highway sidewalk onto DCR land and follow the existing river wall for 700 feet over a small portion of City land at the approach to the School Street (O'Donnell) Bridge. The new walkway would continue the standards and design of the existing Vandenberg Esplanade including walking surface, benches and park light fixtures.

**Proposed Improvements**

The new walkway would be 8' to 10' wide depending on available room, composed of hot mix asphalt, and would continue the standards and design of the existing Vandenberg Esplanade. The walking surface, and benches and park light fixtures would duplicate or emulate those previously used. The pedestrian bridge would be a prefabricated glulam bridge near the level of the adjacent highway to allow maximum clearance in high water events. Steel pedestrian guard railings or improved fencing would be required along the river retaining walls of the second and third sections.

The project includes approximately:

- 16,900 square feet of additional pavement for pathway
- 787.5 sq ft bridge over the mouth of the Clay Pit Brook
- 29953.5 sq ft additional disturbed and restored for grading, landscaping, and construction

In total, 47,641 square feet, or 1.09 acres, will be disturbed by the project.

**Existing Conditions**

The project area is approximately 3,400 feet in length from the Vandenburg Esplanade to the O'Donnell Bridge. This area is located between the Merrimack River and Pawtucket Boulevard/Varnum Avenue intersection. This area is owned almost entirely

by the DCR, with the exception of a 1,866 sq ft parcel owned by the City of Lowell. An existing residential area with several side streets resides across Pawtucket Boulevard along with Lowell General Hospital are nearby. Downtown Lowell is located across the Merrimack River along with both the northern and southern sections of the UMass Lowell campus. Existing Canal and Riverwalk paths are located within the Lowell National Historic Park (LNHP). These paths are a major attraction within the City of Lowell.

The path is located along Pawtucket Boulevard and Varnum Avenue. There is an existing sidewalk that is approximately 6 feet wide in poor condition, obstructed in places by highway signage and guardrails separating the traffic from the sidewalk. Pawtucket Boulevard has 4 lanes and a posted speed limit of 45 miles per hour. A median guardrail separates the eastbound and westbound traffic. Illumination is provided on the southeastern side of the road using streetlights affixed to wooden utility poles until Varnum Avenue, which further obstruct the sidewalk in that area.

### **Right-of-Way Impacts**

The current design plans indicate that there are **no** fee acquisition, **no** permanent easements, and **2** temporary easements required. These temporary easements are anticipated to be solely on parcels owned by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation and the City of Lowell.

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

It is the intent that all streets will remain open to traffic during the project's construction. However, impacts to shoulders or lane widths on Route 113 may occur during critical times.

### **Project Status - Schedule**

This project has been programmed in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program for Federal Fiscal Year 2022. The Plans on display this evening are at the 25% Design Stage (Preliminary Design Stage). Design and right of way acquisition are anticipated to be complete in early 2021 with construction starting in early 2022. Comments from this hearing will be reviewed and considered to the fullest extent possible.

### **Project Construction Cost**

We estimate the total project will cost \$2.7 Million, which will come from Federal Aid funding with the Federal Highway Administration funding 80% of the total construction cost.



THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS  
MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
HIGHWAY DIVISION

FEDERAL AID PROJECT

Pawtucket Falls Overlook  
Pedestrian Walkway and Bicycle Connection  
Lowell, MA | Project File No. 607885

This sheet is provided for your comments. Your input is solicited and appreciated. Please mail this sheet with any additional comments to:

Patricia A. Leavenworth, P.E., Chief Engineer  
MassDOT – Highway Division  
10 Park Plaza, Boston, MA 02116-3973  
Attn: Roadway Project Management

The final date for receipt of written statements and exhibits for inclusion into the official hearing transcript will be ten (10) days after the Public Hearing Webinar.

**PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT LEGIBLY.**

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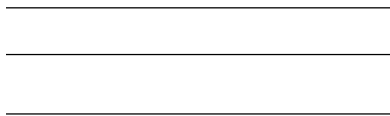
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Patricia A. Leavenworth, P.E.  
Chief Engineer  
MassDOT – Highway Division  
10 Park Plaza  
Boston, MA 02116-3973

RE: Public Hearing Webinar  
**Lowell**  
Pawtucket Falls Overlook  
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