



VIRTUAL DESIGN PUBLIC HEARING

April 26, 2023

FOR THE PROPOSED

**Downtown Complete Streets Corridor and Intersection
Improvements on Main Street (Route 9)
Project No. 609286
Project Management**

IN THE CITY OF 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. 609286

A Live Virtual Design Public Hearing will be hosted on the MassDOT website below to present the design for the proposed Downtown Complete Streets Corridor and Intersection Improvements on Main Street (Route 9) project in **Northampton, MA.**

WHEN: 6:00 – 8:00 PM, Wednesday, April 26, 2023

PURPOSE: The purpose of this hearing is to provide the public with the opportunity to become fully acquainted with the proposed Downtown Complete Streets Corridor and Intersection Improvements on Main Street (Route 9) 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 a full reconstruction of the right-of-way of Main Street in Downtown Northampton, with the goal of providing a safe and accessible downtown for all. The project begins west of the intersection of Elm and West Streets and extends approximately 0.4 miles east to the intersection of Market and Hawley Streets. The proposed project has been developed to meet the MassDOT Complete Streets transportation design policy and criteria for all roadway users. The improvements include delineating the roadway to clearly provide one travel lane in each direction with a center median running flush with the roadway, affording space for vehicles turning. To improve the accessibility and safety of those walking and traveling by bike, separated bike lanes are proposed on both sides of the entire project corridor, including as part of widened sidewalk facilities. Enhanced amenities, tree planting areas, reconfigured parking and updated lighting are also proposed in the design, as well as improved bus stop accommodations and newly dedicated space for loading/delivery operations. All intersections within the project are proposed to be redesigned to provide safer bike/pedestrian crossings along Main Street, as well as new traffic signal equipment at all signalized intersections.

A secure right-of-way is necessary for this project. Acquisitions in fee and permanent or temporary easements may be required. The city 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. Lavalley, 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. 609286. 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). 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. LAVALLEY, 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. 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

Your Municipality is responsible for securing the right of way for this project. If your property, or a portion of it, must be acquired by the Municipality 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. 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 provide for the public good.

2. WHO CONTACTS ME?

Representatives of the municipality have already contacted or will contact you. They will explain the 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.

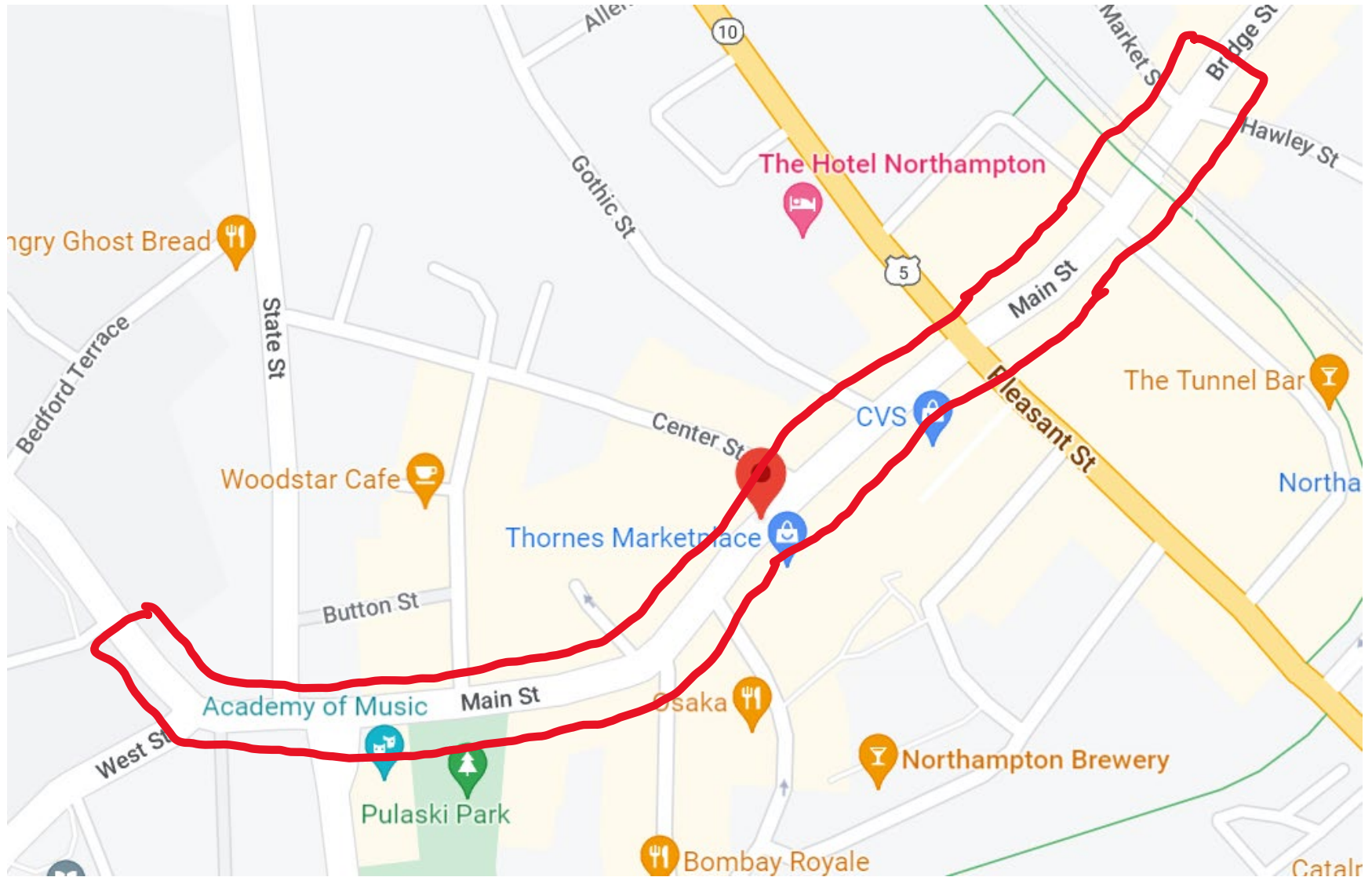
4. WHAT IS A FAIR PRICE FOR THE ACQUIRED PARCELS?

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.

#609286 – Locus Map



MAIN STREET (ROUTE 9) COMPLETE STREETS RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT

PROJECT NO. 609286

PROJECT LOCATION

The Main Street corridor in Northampton, MA is an approximately 0.4-mile segment extending from West Street/Elm Street at the western limits to Market Street/Hawley Street at the eastern limits. The corridor is a generally east-west-running principal arterial roadway operating under City of Northampton jurisdiction, providing pedestrian, freight, transit, and vehicle transportation from surrounding residential streets to Northampton's downtown commercial area. The project area, which includes the Main Street corridor and ten intersections, four of which are signalized, crosses the Mass Central Rail Trail and is located just east of Smith College and approximately one mile west of Interstate 91.

PURPOSE & EXISTING CONDITIONS

The project proposes to comprehensively reconstruct Main Street in Downtown Northampton from building face to building face to provide mobility, utility, and streetscape investments as a foundation for the future success of Main Street. The project will be implemented in concert with MassDOT Complete Streets practices and provide a safer functioning downtown with improved accessibility for all users. Three primary goals for the project have been established through years of extensive public engagement and project development:

Goal 1: Provide Safety and Access for All

On average, there is around one crash each week on Main Street, and people walking and biking make up 60% of injury crashes. MassDOT has long identified this stretch of Main Street as one of the region's top crash clusters for all roadway users. Confusion regarding the number of travel lanes and poor visibility at crosswalks and intersections were often cited in crash reports as challenges to safe travel on Main Street.

The safety challenges on Main Street are magnified for people with mobility impairments. Narrow sidewalk widths, uneven or broken pavement, and curb ramps and pedestrian signals that don't meet national accessibility standards limit the ability for people to move freely and independently around Downtown. Additionally, while there are trails and bike lanes nearby, there is no place on Main Street for people to bike safely and away from cars pulling out of parking spaces.

Goal 2: Promote a Vibrant and Attractive Downtown

Main Street within Northampton's downtown is the foundation of one of the region's most important economic engines. To sustain economic activity, Main Street must be a competitive and attractive place for businesses and customers. Many businesses have limited access to outdoor commerce given narrow sidewalk space and amenity zones. Space for seating, civic gatherings and art is also underrepresented. The need for available and accessible on-street parking is in regular demand.

Goal 3: Create a Functional, Enduring, and Sustainable Streetscape

Finally, the Northampton community has set a priority for a functional, enduring and sustainable streetscape. There are currently no designated spaces for loading and deliveries, and transit stops could better support access and comfort. The experience of users traversing the corridor by foot, bicycle and transit use warrant consideration to ensure equitable access to all that Main Street affords. Space for trees and climate resilient infrastructure is limited, and many existing trees are in poor health and poor growing conditions. Operationally, maintenance, snow management, and emergency response considerations should be better integrated into the design of Main Street.

PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

In response to the challenges and needs listed, this project seeks to address and refine the allocation of roadway space to better suit the multitude of uses and needs exhibited on Main Street. This includes providing enhanced dedicated space for both pedestrians and cyclists, clarifying travel lanes, and use curb extensions and high visibility markings to increase visibility at crosswalks and shorten their lengths. The project widens sidewalks significantly and applies best practices to upgrade curb ramps and pedestrian signals to meet or exceed accessibility standards. New traffic signal

equipment will be installed and optimized to ensure efficient vehicular traffic operations. Accessible parking is provided throughout the corridor.

Separated bike lanes are incorporated throughout, with thought given to spatial clarification and crossings for both pedestrians and cyclists at intersections. Space is also clarified for bus queuing, and additional space is provided for people waiting on or entering/exiting buses.

This project increases sidewalk space for outdoor cafe and display use by restaurants and other businesses. Larger pedestrian travelway and treeway and added bike lanes will provide more comfortable means for people to travel and spend time on Main Street. Dedicated space for loading is provided in flexibly timed zones that will otherwise serve as parking or pickup/dropoff.

Lastly, the treeway and other areas will also support a significant quantity of new tree planting with a much greater soil volume than is available to trees today and more room for root and canopy growth. We also propose to infiltrate stormwater runoff where feasible to reduce water flow into the drainage system and to filter out pollutants.

RIGHT OF WAY

The City of Northampton is responsible for acquiring all necessary rights in public and private land for design, construction, and implementation of this project. Temporary construction easements will be required from 12 abutting properties for matching the proposed work to existing conditions and to allow the Contractor onto abutting properties to facilitate construction. Fee takings are required in 3 areas where the existing ROW is constrained to maintain a five foot wide sidewalk beyond other proposed elements in the cross section. The ROW status may change as the design progresses.

PROJECT COST

The total preliminary construction cost estimate for the entire project is approximately \$19 million as listed on the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

PROJECT STATUS

The design plans presented here represent the 25% Design Level. Comments made at this public hearing will be incorporated to the maximum extent feasible in the final design documents. The project is scheduled to begin construction in Fall 2025.

Please Fold and Tape



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

RE: Virtual Public Hearing
Downtown Complete Streets Improvements on Main Street
CITY OF NORTHAMPTON
Project File No. 609286
Attn: Project Management

