



DESIGN PUBLIC HEARING WEBINAR

SEPTEMBER 17, 2020

**FOR THE PROPOSED
SCHELL BRIDGE REPLACEMENT over CONNECTICUT RIVER
Project No. 607588
Bridge No. N-22-002
Bridge Major Projects**

IN THE TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, 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. 607588

A Design Public Hearing Webinar will be published on the MassDOT website to present the design for the proposed Schell Bridge Replacement project in **Northfield, MA**.

WHEN: Thursday, September 17th, 2020

PURPOSE: The purpose of this webinar is to provide the public with the opportunity to become fully acquainted with the proposed **Schell Bridge Replacement – East Northfield Road over the Connecticut River** project. All views and comments submitted in response to the webinar will be reviewed and considered to the maximum extent possible.

PROPOSAL: The proposed project consists of the complete replacement of Schell Bridge carrying East Northfield Road over the Connecticut River. The existing bridge will be replaced with a pedestrian/bicycle bridge. The overgrown and abandoned approaches to the existing bridge will be reconstructed and improved with the construction of a shared use path to connect to the new bridge to the existing East Northfield Road. The bridge will remain closed during construction.

A secure right-of-way is necessary for this project. Acquisitions in fee and permanent or temporary easements may be required. The Town of Northfield is responsible for acquiring all needed rights in private or public lands. MassDOT's policy concerning land acquisitions will be presented in the 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, plans, and a project handout will be made available on the MassDOT website listed below.

Written statements and other exhibits regarding the proposed undertaking are to be submitted to Patricia A. Leavenworth, P.E., Chief Engineer, MassDOT, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, MA 02116, Attention: **Project Management, Major Projects, Bridge Design** Project File No. **607588**. Mailed statements and exhibits intended for inclusion in the public hearing webinar transcript must be postmarked no later than ten (10) business days after the webinar is posted to the MassDOT website listed below. Project inquiries may be emailed to dot.feedback.schellbridge@wsp.com

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). 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 <https://www.mass.gov/massdot-highway-design-public-hearings>

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?

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.

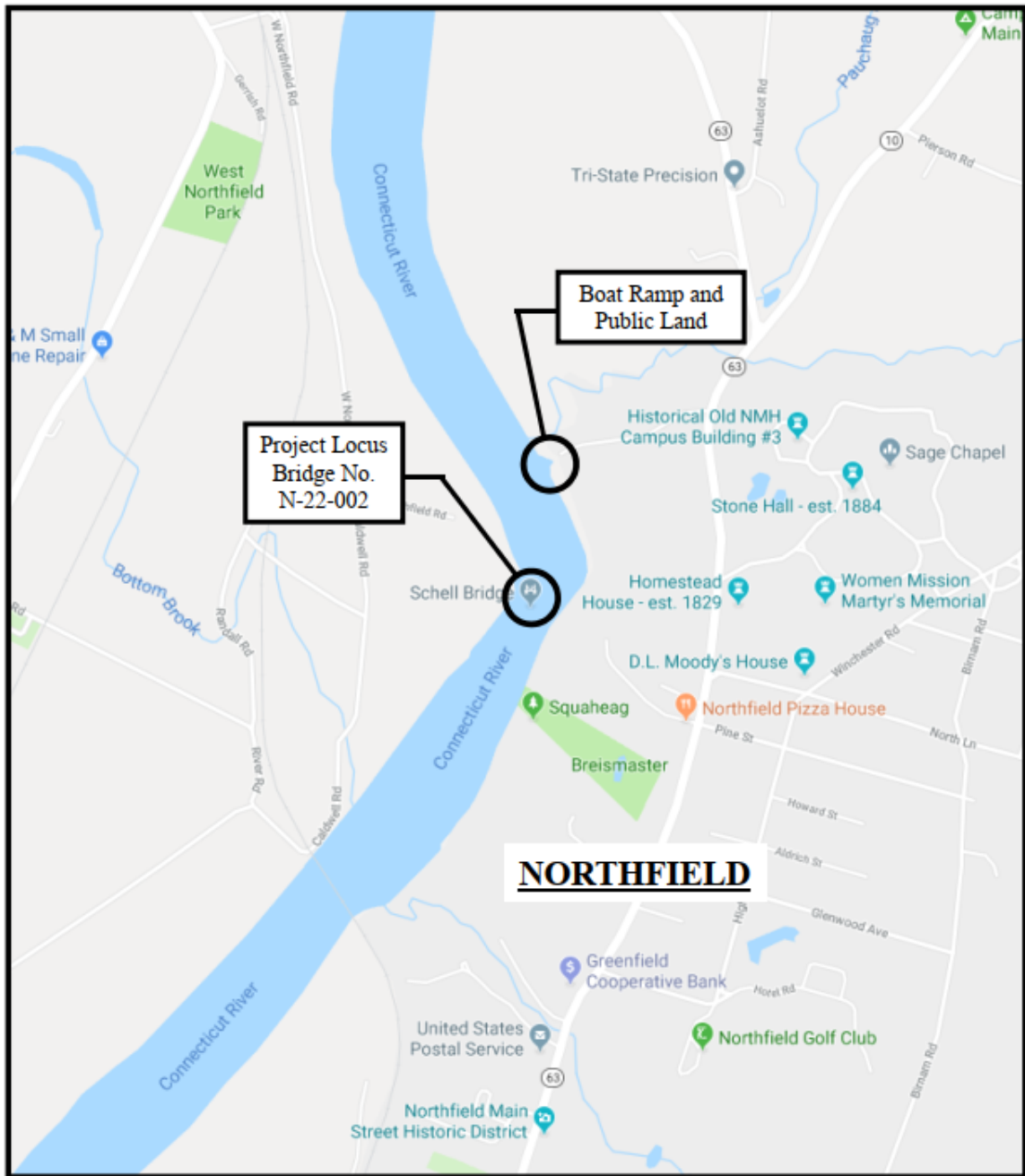
4. WHAT IS A FAIR PRICE FOR THE ACQUIRED PARCELS?

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.

NORTHFIELD – Schell Bridge over Connecticut River



LOCATION MAP
Scale: No Scale

Project Overview:
Schell Bridge over Connecticut River
Northfield, MA

Project Location:

The bridge is located on East Northfield Road and crosses over the Connecticut River, in the Town of Northfield. The project limits consist of a stretch of East Northfield Road approximately 940 feet west of the bridge and ends approximately 1,025 feet east of the bridge, making the total project length approximately 2,485 feet along East Northfield Road.

Project Purpose:

The primary focus of the project is to replace the existing Schell Bridge carrying East Northfield Road over the Connecticut River with a pedestrian/bicycle bridge due to the structurally deficient condition that has required the bridge to be closed since 1985.

Proposed Improvements:

The proposed structure will be comprised of a steel tied arch main span and two (2) steel girder end spans. The center span arch will span a distance of 352'-0", with each end span being a distance of approximately 86'-0". The entirety of the structure will have a concrete deck and a hot mix asphalt wearing surface creating an 18'-0" wide shared-use path over the new bridge.

The existing abutments and wingwalls will be retained due to their historic value and unique aesthetic configuration. The existing west abutment will be retained for aesthetic purposes only with a new concrete abutment supported on piles being constructed within the existing abutment. A new concrete cap will be constructed on the existing east abutment, which is supported by a concrete footing which will be reused. The two (2) bridge piers will be reconstructed in approximately the same locations and will be reinforced concrete walls supported on piles. Concrete formliners will be used on the piers to provide an aesthetic representation of the existing piers.

At the approaches of the Schell Bridge, East Northfield Road will be reconstructed as a shared-use path. The path will be 14'-0" wide on the approaches. Both approaches will be reconstructed with full depth pavement due to the poor condition of the existing pavement. Pedestrian fencing will be installed within the project limits where required, in addition to new pavement markings.

A small park to memorialize the Schell Bridge will be constructed on the north side of the east approach roadway near the end of the bridge. A memorial plaque and a monument, consisting of elements taken from the existing bridge structure will be constructed.

Traffic Management:

The road at the bridge has been closed to vehicular traffic for many years. Therefore, a detour will not be required for the closure and the roadway will remain closed beyond the last driveway on each approach. Barriers and signage indicating that the road is closed to traffic will be provided and temporary fencing will be installed to discourage anyone from entering the area.

Demolition of the existing bridge and construction of the new bridge will require work within the Connecticut River. The nearest access to the river is located approximately 1000 feet north of the bridge at the Pauchaug Brook Boat Launch and is proposed as the Contractor's main access point to the river in order to avoid disturbances to the river banks.

Property Impacts:

After construction is completed, ownership of the structure will be transferred from the Town of Northfield to the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). A permanent easement will be required along the length of the bridge between the abutments to designate DCR's ownership of the bridge.

Temporary and permanent easements will be required for the reconstruction of the approach roadways and proposed parking accommodations. These easements are necessary for slope work, wetland replication, guardrail installation and other incidental construction.

Utility Impacts:

The overhead electric wires on the north side of the bridge will be removed during construction. The overhead communication wires on the north side of the bridge will be relocated temporarily approximately 100ft north of their current location over the Connecticut River. Both the electric and communication lines will be permanently relocated beneath the proposed bridge at the completion of construction.

It is anticipated that the installation of street/pedestrian scale lighting will not be included in the project.

Environmental Permits:

The project is located within a heavily forested area with trees and brush overgrowing the existing roadway. Reconstruction of the roadway will require the clearing of trees along much of the project length. Additional selective clearing and thinning is proposed to create a view of the proposed park from the bridge.

There are Bordering Vegetated Wetlands, Intermittent Streams, River Bank and Land Under Water present within the project site. There are anticipated permanent and temporary impacts expected for construction of the bridge to achieve riprap placement, reconstruction of the drainage system, and regrading. Intermittent Streams and Bordering Vegetated Wetlands which are permanently impacted will be replicated at a 2:1 ratio, resulting in approximately 2,378 square feet of wetlands being replicated. Reconstruction of the bridge piers within the Connecticut River will result in permanent impacts to the Land Under Water within the River. The pier footings will be enlarged, and channel protection will be installed around each of the piers. Dewatering is anticipated within a cofferdam to reconstruct each pier.

The explosive demolition of the existing structure will have impacts on the Land Under Water within the Connecticut River.

Bicycle/Pedestrian Accommodation:

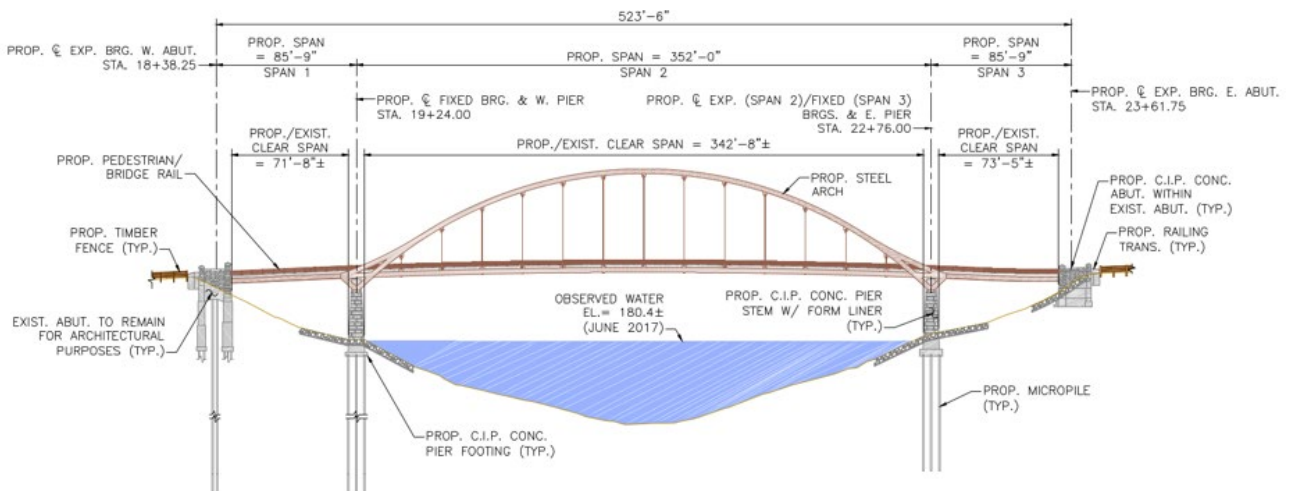
Roadside hazard countermeasures will be implemented along the shared-use path within the project limits. New pedestrian fencing will be installed where required in accordance with the AASHTO Guide for Development of Bicycle Facilities. Reflective pavement markings will be installed along the path, as well as warning signs for bicycles indicating steep downgrades and sharp turns.

Project Status and Schedule:

The project plans on display in the public hearing presentation are in the 25% preliminary design stage. Comments from this Public Hearing will be incorporated into the final design plans to the maximum extent possible. It is anticipated that the final design plans will be completed and the project advertised for construction bids in Fall of 2021 with construction beginning in Spring of 2022.



Existing Schell Bridge - Structurally Deficient Requires Full Replacement



Proposed Bridge Elevation



Rendering of Proposed Bridge – North Elevation

Project Questions:
Schell Bridge over Connecticut River
Northfield, MA

1. Will the bridge deck be timber or concrete?

The bridge deck will be concrete with an asphalt overlay due to the additional long-term maintenance requirements of a timber deck.

2. Will there be street lighting on the new bridge, it's approaches and/or at the new park once construction is complete?

Street lighting will not be installed under this project. The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) envisions the usage of this facility to be from dawn to dusk. Eversource will be installing underground connections for potential future lighting on the approaches to the bridge, which may be used if the Town of Northfield decides to install lighting in the future.

3. Will emergency vehicles be able to drive across the bridge?

The bridge can support smaller emergency vehicles such as an ambulance or small truck.

4. Will snowmobiles be allowed across the bridge?

Snowmobiles will not be allowed to cross the bridge. Use of snowmobiles on the bridge would likely cause damage to the bridge pavement and concrete deck.

5. Will horses be allowed across the bridge?

Horses will be restricted/prohibited by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). Use by horses would require higher railings, which would impact views from the bridge. It would create potential safety issues with the mixing of horses into pedestrian and bicycle traffic. In addition, horses would create a waste management issue on the bridge.

6. Will the Pauchaug Brook Boat Ramp be open during construction?

The boat ramp will remain open during construction. There may be some situations where the ramp must be closed for a short duration while the Contractor uses it. The Contractor will also not be allowed to use the boat ramp on weekends.

7. Will boaters be able to use the Connecticut River during construction?

The river will remain open to boat traffic throughout most of the construction. However, during certain phases (such as demolition and construction of the new piers), the river under the bridge must be closed to boat traffic.

8. What will be the color of proposed bridge?

The color currently proposed is MassDOT Dark Bronze (Federal STD. 565B Color No. 10045).

9. What about Parking ?

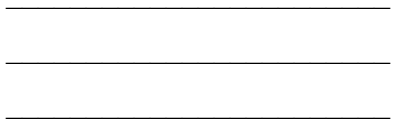
East Northfield Road has operated as a dead end since the closure of the bridge in 1985. It is anticipated that the replacement of the Schell Bridge will increase traffic to this area. Currently, there are no parking areas near the bridge. This poses a problem, as each approach is a dead end and vehicular traffic will not be allowed to cross the bridge.

Therefore, anyone visiting the park or bridge will need to park near the project limits. In the current condition, cars will not be able to turn around, nor will there be adequate shoulders to handle any volume of traffic. Therefore, it is proposed to construct two small parking areas at each end of the project. The dedicated parking areas are currently sized for 3 vehicles with one dedicated to handicap accessibility. The entrance to the bridge and memorial park area will be gated off to ensure no vehicular traffic will be allowed on the shared-use path approaches to the bridge.

10. Why are the parking areas not located closer to the Bridge or Park?

The parking areas have been located to provide minimal disturbance to private property and wetlands. The steep roadway slopes closer to the bridge and park would require increased slope and retaining wall work. This slope work would increase the impacts to private property and wetlands.

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Boston, MA 02116-3973

RE: Public Hearing Webinar
SCHELL BRIDGE REPLACEMENT over CONNECTICUT RIVER
NORTHFIELD
Project File No. 607588
Bridge Project Management

