

**MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
HIGHWAY DIVISION**

INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: Jonathan L. Gulliver, Administrator

THRU: Patricia A. Leavenworth, Chief Engineer

FROM: Michael O'Dowd, Acting Director Bridge Project Management

DATE: August 22, 2019

SUBJECT: Allston I-90 Response to Senate President Spilka

Administrator, please see the attached responses to Senate President Spilka's comments presented to audience members at the Framingham Town Hall on July 18, 2019 and additionally submitted by letter on July 30, 2019.

There have been many questions about this project including what impacts and mitigation are planned. MassDOT places an extensive level of effort into developing its plan to mitigate construction impacts, but in order to properly understand these impacts and what actions could be taken to reduce them we must first know in detail the project scope, design and, more importantly, how we plan on constructing the project.

I appreciate that commuters and stakeholders are rightfully anxious to start this conversation however the scale and complexity of I-90 Allston project has taken some time to get to a point where we can begin having productive discussions. We are just now approaching a 10% level of design and are beginning to understand impacts and develop mitigation strategies. It is important to know that this is truly the beginning of this conversation and as the project advances, the delegation and their constituents will have many opportunities to understand this detailed project and offer valuable comments to improve their commute, and ultimately their quality of life during construction.

Over the course of the next several months MassDOT will be preparing a regional travel demand model to further assess the origins and destinations of the commuters and their current mode of transportation. This model can be tailored specifically for informing the project construction traffic management plan and how best to mitigate the travel routes most likely to be impacted.

At this conceptual stage of design many issues are still being resolved and we do not have complete answers on all of the topics raised by the Senate President. Attached are the team's best answers based on our current understanding of project impacts.

Answers to specific questions

1. **When can we expect full mitigation plans?** Our mitigation strategy is still being developed and we will continue to seek feedback and will be happy to share our plans when they are further developed through Spring 2020. MassDOT will invest significant effort in developing a comprehensive plan to mitigate construction related impacts.
2. **How can we ensure an ongoing dialogue with MetroWest stakeholders?** The outreach process for this project is far from over. The federal and state environmental processes will take approximately two years to complete and requires ongoing public input. The recent informational meetings held in Framingham and Worcester will not be the last time the project goes to MetroWest and Central Massachusetts. We will continue to provide updates on the progressing design and gather input from community members. At the request of the Metro-West Caucus, the I-90 Allston Task Force added Representatives Kane and Robinson as well as Dennis Giombetti and we welcome their representation to provide the regional viewpoint that is so valuable to this project.
3. **How will MetroWest benefit from the project?** The I-90 Allston project benefits MetroWest in several important ways. The current I-90 Allston Viaduct is at the end of its life cycle, is structurally deficient, and functionally obsolete. To keep the current structure open for traffic requires annual maintenance that causes significant and unpredictable impacts to travel. Replacement of the viaduct will additionally improve the overall interchange and will require less maintenance, reducing future traffic disruptions and congestion. West Station will also represent a significant benefit for MetroWest commuter rail users by creating multimodal connections to a variety of points within the Boston area that do not exist today. and in addition will accommodate the future urban rail transit options being considered between West Station, Kendall Square and North Station.
4. **How and for how long will commutes be impacted?** The schedule for construction is still being developed however for planning purposes we anticipate a 2023 start with completion in 2032. At this conceptual stage we cannot provide exact dates for when commuters will be impacted by construction but we will share these as soon as we are able. The project team is committed to exploring construction staging alternatives to minimize impacts to users of the Turnpike, Soldiers Field Road (SFR), Commuter Rail, and Paul Dudley White Path. To the maximum extent practicable MassDOT will strive to build off-line to minimize disruptions to both the highway and rail corridor simultaneously.
5. **How will the Turnpike be impacted by construction-related traffic congestion?**
6. **How will alternate routes be impacted by construction-related traffic congestion?** For both questions, at present, we are working with the Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS) to develop a Regional Travel Demand Model for both existing demand and our future traffic projections to make sure that the roadways connecting the Turnpike to Boston city streets will be able to safely accommodate any projected traffic. As the design advances MassDOT will also be able use this model analysis and real

time traffic data to tell commuters who use I-90, Route 9, and other roadways around eastern Massachusetts what they can expect in terms of travel time.

7. **What will the toll discount be?** Our mitigation strategy is still being developed and we will continue to seek feedback and will be happy to share our plans when they are further developed through Spring 2020. MassDOT will invest significant effort in developing a comprehensive plan to mitigate construction related impacts.
8. **How many buses are planned to be used as a transit/congestion strategy?** Although we are still developing a mitigation strategy at this early stage we have started discussions with MBTA to determine the cost benefit of placing additional bus service in place during this project. While placing more buses on the road makes intuitive sense, it is premature to say exactly what form this will take. We will report back on this issue when we have more concrete information to provide.
9. **What will commuter rail impacts be?**
10. **Will additional trains be utilized?** For both questions, we do not anticipate a reduction in passenger capacity on the commuter rail during construction and we are working closely with the MBTA to ensure that the Commuter Rail is a viable alternative for travelers. The MBTA is seeking to procure new locomotives and additional bi-level coaches which may provide increased capacity by the time construction begins in 2023. As with buses, at this stage of design there is still too much uncertainty about impacts and potential benefits to definitively answer this question. We will report back on this issue when we have more concrete information to provide.
11. **How will air rights projects affect Allston construction impacts?** Allston construction is not anticipated to begin until 2023 and we are confident that the proposed I-90 air rights projects will not overlap with the project. MassDOT and the MBTA have been closely coordinating these projects and others to minimize disruptions, diversions, and impacts and will continue to do so as the project develops.
12. **How will you use technology to make this project go smoothly?** MassDOT has a suite of tools that we can use to engage the public and help them make the smartest possible choices about transportation during construction. We plan to build upon the extensive public outreach program already in place as the project moves into final design and construction. The dedicated project website will be revamped to support construction with specifics aimed to keep all users informed on a “real time” basis. MassDOT will use social media channels, connecting directly to drivers in impacted zip codes by reaching out using the email addresses associated with EZ-pass accounts, and an array of variable message signs, both portable and fixed. Notifications will be made via conventional media in the form of releases to press, television, and radio outlets. On the construction side, we expect that design/build entities will take full advantage of the latest in machinery and techniques that MassDOT has been using in recent years on projects such as Fast14 and the Commonwealth Avenue bridge. These methods include prefabrication of critical components, heavy lifts, and accelerated bridge construction methods that enable us to deliver projects faster with fewer impacts. By 2023, new tools in both construction and outreach are likely to be available and they will be used as appropriate.

13. **How much will this project cost and who will pay for it?** MassDOT will be conducting a more detailed cost analysis of the project as the design becomes more advanced and we complete the Federal and State environmental review processes. Currently MassDOT is projecting approximately \$1.2B for the total project cost. The exact mechanisms by which the project will be funded has not yet been determined. MassDOT has been investigating the combination of public/private partnerships, state, and federal funding sources. As with other aspects of this project, we need to keep working on this and will get back to the public when we have more to share.
14. **How much will private entities contribute?** Detailed plans remain in development and under discussion. Both Harvard University and Boston University have previously offered financial assistance on the construction of West Station.