



PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING

APRIL 3rd, 2025

FOR THE PROPOSED

**BRIDGE REPLACEMENT, C-13-038, I-391 OVER (ST 116) CHICOPEE STREET
VIETNAM VETERANS' MEMORIAL BRIDGE**

Project No. 612187

Bridge No. C-13-038

Major Projects

IN THE CITY OF CHICOPEE, 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 INFORMATIONAL MEETING**

**Project Description: Chicopee – Bridge Replacement, Br# C-13-038 I-391 over Route 116
(Chicopee Street)
Project File No. 612187**

A Public Informational Meeting will be held by MassDOT to discuss the proposed project in Chicopee, MA.

WHERE: Legacy Church
780 Chicopee Street
Chicopee, MA 01013

WHEN: Thursday, April 3rd, 2025, 6:00 PM

PURPOSE: The purpose of this meeting is to provide the public with the opportunity to become fully acquainted with the proposed project. All views and comments made at the meeting will be reviewed and considered to the maximum extent possible.

PROPOSAL: The proposed project consists of the full replacement of the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Bridge which carries I-391 over Route 116, locally known as Chicopee Street, in the Willimansett neighborhood of Chicopee. The existing bridge is a concrete structure, originally opened to traffic in 1979. It provides three northbound lanes (towards Holyoke) and three southbound lanes (towards Chicopee), though the left lanes of both directions are currently closed to traffic. Though safe for all users, this bridge has reached the end of its useful lifespan and must be replaced. MassDOT proposes to replace the existing structure with a new bridge which will provide three lanes in each direction, a 75-year design life span, and incorporate modern bridge design elements to reduce maintenance impacts to the Willimansett neighborhood and the traveling public. During demolition of the existing structure and construction of the new bridge, some limited detours and closures may be required to ensure public safety, but in general, MassDOT will seek to maintain traffic on both Chicopee Street and I-391. We invite all members of the community to attend the meeting and learn more about this project.

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 meeting.

In the event of inclement weather a cancellation announcement will be posted on the internet at <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/highway-division/events>.

JONATHAN GULLIVER
HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATOR

CARRIE E. LAVALLEE
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 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 CONCERNS

The State is responsible for securing the Right of Way for this project. If your property, or a portion of it, must be acquired by the State 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. 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.

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.



Figure 1: Locus Map

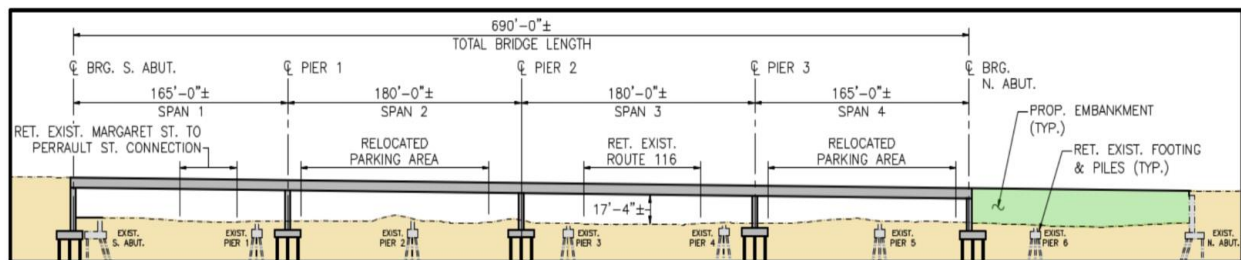


Figure 2: Currently Anticipated Replacement Bridge Configuration

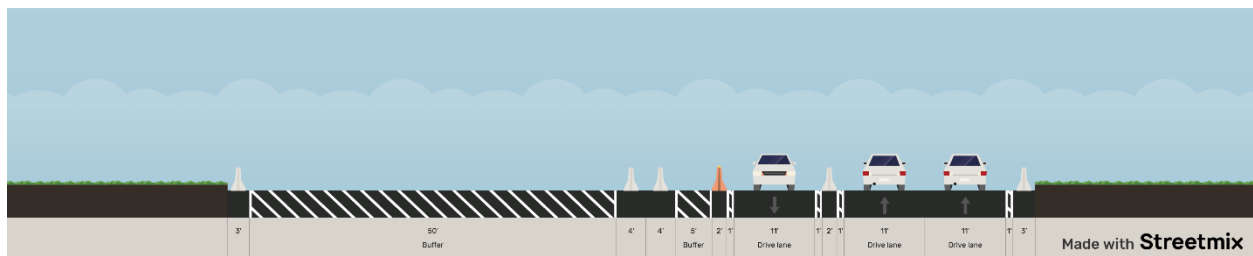


Figure 3: Currently Anticipated Construction Period Traffic Configuration on I-391

Project Location

The Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Bridge, MassDOT Bridge Number C-13-068, carries I-391 over Route 116, locally known as Chicopee Street, in the Willimansett neighborhood of Chicopee. Opened to traffic in 1979, the Veterans' Memorial Bridge is between two other structures, one over the Connecticut Valley Railroad line to the south, and one over the Connecticut River to the north.

Willimansett is a historic neighborhood of Chicopee having developed as a residential area for both its own city and neighboring Holyoke during the second half of the 19th century. Central and Western Massachusetts grocery chain Big Y was founded within sight of the bridge on a plot of land created by the Y-shaped intersection where Chicopee Street and Meadow Street come together. The neighborhood is considered to be traditionally underserved with a population burdened by a number of environmental justice factors including Limited English Proficiency (LEP), price of housing relative to income, and the presence of lead paint in the available housing stock. The Veterans' Memorial Bridge is tightly enmeshed in its surroundings. There are homes and businesses that closely abut the structure on Margaret and Perrault Streets. To the southwest is Rivers' Park which provides basketball courts, baseball fields, and an outdoor swimming pool. To the northeast is Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Park which commemorates citizens of Chicopee who lost their lives in that conflict. Parking used by area businesses is located directly under the viaduct.

Project Purpose

A routine inspection of the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Bridge was performed in 2022 and found significant deterioration in its super and substructure. Though safe for all users, the bridge is at the end of its useful lifespan and must be replaced to continue to provide a reliable connection for travelers on I-391. Based on traffic counts obtained in 2023, this section of I-391 is used by in excess of 27,000 vehicles every 24 hours. This includes 3% heavy vehicles comprising both commercial trucks and the 21-E bus route of the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA) which connects Springfield Union Station and the Holyoke Transit Center.

Existing Conditions

The existing bridge is 840 feet long and 111 feet wide measured from one outer edge to the other including travel lanes, shoulders, outer crash barriers, and median barrier. It is a concrete box girder bridge supported by six piers and two abutments. The structure was designed to provide three travel lanes in each direction, but since 2019, the left lanes of both directions have been closed to traffic due to ongoing deterioration. The bridge's poor condition is visually apparent with areas of spalled and delaminated concrete, exposed reinforcing steel, and damaged expansion joints.

The area below the bridge is generally occupied by parking lots, leased by MassDOT to the City of Chicopee. These lots are used by area residents and businesses. At the southern end of the bridge is a short street commonly called the Margaret-Perrault Street Connector which, according to Chicopee city staff is an important access point to Rivers' Park especially for parents watching youth sports. Where Chicopee Street passes below the bridge, there is a bus stop for PVTA Route 21, the 21-E's local equivalent on either side of the structure. There is some vacant area under the bridge at the structure's northern end. The space below the bridge is unlit and City officials have noted that it plays host to nuisance activities such as illegal dumping and public drinking.

The Currently Anticipated Replacement Bridge

MassDOT currently anticipates that it will propose to replace the existing bridge with a new structure consisting of four spans, the two outer spans would be 165 feet long and the two inner spans would be 180 feet long. The remaining space, approximately 150 feet would be taken up by an expanded northern abutment. This configuration appears to offer the following advantages:

- Maintaining the location of the Margaret-Perrault Street Connector.
- Reducing the vacant area below the bridge available for nuisance activities.
- Maintaining parking for local businesses and residents.
- Opening the remaining under-bridge space and making it more visible to neighbors, police, etc.
- Shifting the location of the bridge piers such that the new and old foundations do not overlap.

MassDOT also currently anticipates that it will propose a concrete, pre-stressed bulb-tee bridge as a replacement structure. This structure offers advantages in terms of initial cost and lifecycle cost, particularly since it is far less susceptible to damage from road deicing salts than comparable steel structures.

The agency expects to maintain traffic on I-391 by pushing all traffic to one half of the current bridge, demolishing the vacant half, building the first half of the new bridge, relocating traffic to the partial new structure, removing the rest of the 1979 bridge, building the second half of the new bridge, and finally opening the completed new bridge with three northbound and three southbound lanes. Chicopee Street below the bridge will also generally remain open, but there will be times, such as during demolition immediately above the road, that it will need to be closed and traffic detoured to ensure public safety. I-391 will generally remain open, but rolling roadblocks could be implemented at times.

Project Schedule

MassDOT's currently anticipated schedule includes the following milestones:

- Second public information meeting – summer 2025
- 25% design public hearing – fall 2025
- Advertise for construction – spring 2026
- Issue notice to proceed to the winning bidder – fall 2026
- Begin construction – spring 2027

Preliminary Project Cost

The preliminary project cost for the currently anticipated replacement bridge is \$167.9 million.

More information about construction staging, traffic management, project cost, and project timing will be provided at the second public meeting and the 25% design public hearing. All interested members of the public are encouraged to sign up to receive emails at our project website: www.mass.gov/i-391-bridge-replacement-chicopee.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
HIGHWAY DIVISION

FEDERAL AID PROJECT

Chicopee, MA
BRIDGE REPLACEMENT, C-13-038, I-391 OVER (ST 116) CHICOPEE STREET
Project File No. 612187

This sheet is provided for your comments. Your input is solicited and appreciated. You may e-mail comments directly to I391bridgereplacementchicopee@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: Major Projects

Statements and exhibits intended for inclusion in the public meeting transcript must be emailed or postmarked no later than ten (10) business days after the meeting.

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: Public Information Meeting
BRIDGE REPLACEMENT, C-13-038, I-391 OVER (ST 116) CHICOPEE STREET
CHICOPEE, MA
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