



MEMO

TO: Aleksey Belov, MassDOT Project Manager
FROM: Nathaniel Cabral-Curtis, WSP Assistant Vice President
RE: Vietnam Veteran's Memorial Bridge Replacement Public Information Meeting 1
DATE: April 3, 2025

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OVERVIEW

On Thursday, April 3, 2025, members of the MassDOT and consultant staff associated with the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Bridge held the project's first public information meeting. The meeting was held at the Legacy Church, located at 780 Chicopee Street, a location suggested by Chicopee City Staff since it doubles as a polling place during elections, has a large parking lot, and is approximately 360 feet from the bridge itself.

The Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Bridge carries I-391 over Chicopee Street (State Route 116) in the Willimansett neighborhood of Chicopee. I-391 grew out of a 1953 plan which would have expanded Chicopee Street into an interstate highway. There were two phases of construction that built I-391, with the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Bridge, opening to traffic in 1979. The left lanes were closed to traffic in 2019 due to structural deterioration and remain closed today. In 2022, MassDOT determined that the bridge requires replacement.

The purpose of the meeting was to provide attendees with an overview of the approach to advancing the design of the bridge's replacement to the 25% level, which will be the project's first major design milestone. The meeting included a presentation consisting of an overview of why the project was initiated, goals for the bridge replacement, the design-build process, roadway user impacts, environmental, cultural resource, and community impacts, the construction approach and public outreach. The presentation was followed by a question-and-answer period.

The meeting was advertised through local newsprint, Neuva 98.1 FM and WNEPM 88.5 PM, public access cable TV in Chicopee, Holyoke and Springfield, and four email blasts on March 19, March 26, April 2, and April 3. Flyers for the meeting were dropped at 25 different locations in Chicopee with a focus on Willimansett. Flyers were also distributed using staffed tables at the Price Rite Marketplace and Chicopee Public Library's Fairview branch. State and municipal officials, community organizations, medical providers, schools and social service providers shared the information through their networks and websites. Interpretation was offered in Russian and Spanish.

The meeting's tone was positive. Most attendees were satisfied with the amount of public outreach and status of the design-build process. Questions raised included clarification on the design-build process and concerns about closures, specifically access to local businesses, impact on school traffic, and local parks. Attendees seemed satisfied with the type of bridge selected to replace the current structure and the plan to reduce the overall space



under the bridge. It was noted that maintaining parking under the bridge during construction will be important to the continued operation of local businesses.

PRESENTATION¹

C: Aleksey Belov (AB1): Good evening, everyone. Thank you for joining us to hear a bit more about the replacement of the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Bridge over Route 116, Chicopee Street in Willimansett, project file number 612187. Today, we want to provide you with an overview of our approach to advancing the design to the 25% level, which is our first major design milestone. We have some housekeeping slides to begin before we get into the main portion of our presentation.

Tonight, we have a presentation that will take roughly 30 minutes. You can ask us a question during the Q&A period after the presentation or leave a written comment or question at the sign-in table. Any representatives of the media can direct their inquiries to MassDOT's Communications Director, Jacquelyn Goddard at the following email address: Jacquelyn.Goddard@dot.state.ma.us which is on the screen behind me.

Tonight, we'll be taking a set of meeting minutes so that we can keep a record of the questions and comments we receive in order to help us guide the design. All parts of this meeting are considered public record, and the presentation and minutes will be posted on our project website. We will have plenty of time for a Q&A at the end.

The Notice of MassDOT/MBTA Policy Diversity and Civil Rights: reading slides word for word is a bit boring and normally we don't do it, but this is an important slide, so I will read it in total: All MassDOT/MBTA activities, including public meetings, are free of discrimination. The MassDOT/MBTA complies with all federal and state civil rights requirements, preventing discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, limited English proficiency, and additional protected characteristics. We welcome the diversity from across our entire service area. If you have any questions or concerns, please visit: www.mass.gov/nondiscrimination-in-transportation-program/www.mbta.com/titlevi to reach the Office of Diversity and Civil Rights. All questions and comments are welcome and appreciated. Please refrain from any disrespectful comments.

All right, with the housekeeping done we can move on to the main part of our presentation. Here is our agenda tonight: we're on item one right now. After that, we will go over why this project was initiated, what we want to accomplish, how our design has progressed so far, how roadway users will be impacted, what the impacts will be on the surrounding community, how we intend to build the new bridge, how we will keep you informed, and then Q&A.

This is an overview of who will be speaking tonight. You've already heard from me; my name is Aleksey Belov. I am MassDOT's project manager operating out of our headquarters, 10 Park Plaza in Boston. I will now give the rest of our speakers a chance to introduce themselves.

C: Brenda Codella (BC): Hi, I'm Brenda Codella, I cover Districts 1 and 2 with the MassDOT Right-of-Way Bureau.

C: Andy Benkert (AB): Hi, I'm Andy Benkert with WSP. I'm the Project Manager working on the design portion of the project.

C: Laura Hanson (LH): Hi, I'm Laura Hanson, I'm at MassDOT and I'm the District 2 Projects Engineer.

C: Paula Simmons (PS): Hi everyone, I'm Paula Simmons. I also work at District 2, and I'm the District Project Development Engineer.

C: Dan Racicot (DR): Good evening, folks, my name is Dan Racicot. I work in the Legislative Affairs Department for Districts 1, 2, and 3.

¹ "C" stands for comment, "Q" for question and "A" for answer.



C: AB1: Thanks so much. How could I forget?

C: Nathaniel Cabral-Curtis (NCC): And I'm Nathaniel Curtis. I'm the project's Public Involvement Specialist with WSP. Thank you, Sir.

C: AB1: Thank you all.

AB1: A little bit of history of how we got here. I-391 grew out of a 1953 plan which might have upgraded Chicopee Street into an interstate highway. There were ultimately two phases of construction that built I-391 with our bridge opening to traffic in 1979. The left lanes which remain closed today, were closed to traffic in 2019 due to structural deterioration. The inspection that sent us off down the path to replacing the bridge was conducted in 2022. Last year we started the design process. In the first quarter of this year, we started outreach with elected leaders and had our initial awareness campaign which Nate is going to talk about in a moment, and that brings us to today – this meeting, April 3rd, the public information meeting.

C: NCC: Thank you very much, sir. So, this just covers a little bit of how we briefed everybody on how you would come to this meeting. For those of you who have been getting our emails, I'm the guy behind the keyboard. We sent our introductory emails on the 19th and 26th of March, then on April 2nd, and then earlier today. As you can see, we did a range of local newsprint as well in English and Spanish. We had radio advertisements on the local NPR affiliate and then also on Nueva 98.1 FM in Spanish. We were also carried by the public access cable channels in Chicopee, Holyoke and Springfield for roughly two weeks. If you picked up a meeting flyer at any point, that's pretty much what was on the cable TV.

Now, we didn't just rely on the media. We had flyer drops and staffed tables. A staffed table is exactly what it sounds like, it's me with a folding table and a stack of flyers saying "please come to my meeting," to anyone who walks past me. One of the more fun ones that I had was at the Fairview Branch of the Chicopee Public Library. I happened to be there at the same time as bingo, so I got to go around to each one of the folks that was playing bingo and give them a flyer and information sheet and say, 'Please come to my meeting.' I got to spend a really nice day in Willimansett last Wednesday, lots of fun.

This is just to give you a sense of every place that we went, the power shovel icon right here, that's where our project site is. I'm not going to read through all 25 of these, but the idea behind all those locations is that we try to pick a balance of sites. We look for public places where everyone goes like the library or the grocery store. Since this is an interstate highway, we used some places that have a regional draw like Granite Electric, or the really wonderful smelling Southern New England Spice, which is probably the nicest smelling store I have been in my entire life, just an amazing place. The idea is to try and get through enough of a range that everybody gets a flyer, but not to unload so many that as I drive into town on the day of the meeting, I can see that my flyer is the litter in every storm drain. If anybody seems to think there's something missing on that list, feel free to talk to me after the meeting. Again, the goal is not to create litter, it's just to make sure that everybody has a chance to pick one up.

And then we want to thank everybody that shared our flyers: your state delegation, your State Representative and Senator, the municipal governments for Chicopee, Holyoke, and Springfield, the Chicopee departments addressing the disabled community, public housing, senior citizens, and veterans, local community organizations, medical providers, schools and social service providers. Also, I would be remiss in not thanking the Chicopee City staff who suggested this meeting site as well as the Legacy Church community for hosting us—so that's a round of thank you.

I will at this point hand this back to Aleksey.

C: AB1: Thank you, Nate. Why was this project initiated? We'll talk a little bit about the project background. Here is our project area. The bridge we will be replacing runs roughly north-south carrying I-391 over Route 116 or Chicopee Street, which runs roughly east-west. We will only replace the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Bridge over Chicopee Street. We won't be structurally involving the adjoining bridges to the north and to the south from it, but there will be some work involving the median barrier and pavement on those structures to accommodate construction period traffic control measures which we'll get into a bit later. We know we're at work in a neighborhood with homes nearby and businesses that are very close to the bridge. Two community resources of



which we're very aware are the Rivers Park which you see at the lower edge of the picture and the other one is the Vietnam Veterans' Park which includes plaques displaying the names of Chicopee residents who lost their lives in the Vietnam War.

You're going to hear us throw around some words in this meeting and we want to make sure you understand what they mean. The deck of the bridge is where motor vehicles travel, that's the top part. The superstructure includes the deck, the beams under the road, barriers between the lanes or at the edges of the bridge. The substructure is anything that supports the superstructure. The piers transfer the weight of the bridge to the foundations. You can think of the abutments as a special sort of pier which is at either end of the bridge.

Today's bridge dates back to 1979. It is 800 feet long and 111 feet wide from edge to edge. It is a concrete structure resting on two abutments. The traffic numbers were obtained in 2023.² We will be supplementing that with new counts as we work through design. The bridge is supposed to be six lanes wide, three in each direction, but the north and southbound left lanes are currently closed due to structural deterioration. I want to underscore that today's bridge is safe for all users or there wouldn't be any traffic on it, but it is in poor condition, and you can see that just by looking at it. This bridge has reached the end of its useful lifespan and needs to be replaced.

Here is what we accomplished to date. While we are in the opening stages of design, we have gotten some work done already. We have completed the bridge type selection worksheet, giving us a sense of which kind of bridge we want to replace this structure with. We have collected our first round of traffic data, and we have a structural report, and we have completed our survey. At this point, I'll turn this over to Andy Benkert, our designer, to talk through what we want a new bridge to accomplish with the new bridge.

C: AB: Hi, thanks Aleksey. So again, my name is Andy Benkert with WSP. I'm the Project Manager working on the design portion of this project. We're working with MassDOT to try to figure out the best way to replace this bridge. For the first slide here, is what do we want to accomplish?

There are several audiences that we have to consider when we're trying to replace the bridge. In particular, for this bridge, we have the roadway users, so our goal is to restore I-391 to it's full six lanes of capacity. That's three lanes in the northbound direction and three lanes in the southbound direction. We want to provide for both current and future traffic volumes. Probably most importantly, we want to build the bridge in halves to help us facilitate the traffic management on the bridge. This is something we will talk a little bit about a little later. Finally, we're building a bridge that will have a 75-year design life using modern construction standards and modern details to help get a structure that lasts so we're not back out here in 20 years trying to do this again.

We also realize that we're in the middle of a community, so we want to minimize our permanent Right-of-Way impacts. We also want to minimize our temporary impacts— We want to get in and we want to get out. We want to minimize the disruption to you, the local public, and we want to use accelerated construction techniques to reduce impact. When we're on I-391, we want to minimize impact to abutting sections by maintaining the vertical profile—the vertical profile, you can think of as the height of the structure. We also want to maintain the horizontal alignment of the bridge—so you might be asking yourself, what is horizontal alignment? If you open Google Maps and look on your phone or looking on your screen and you're looking down on a map; that horizontal alignment is a position on the map. We want to maintain that as we replace the proposed bridge. We also want to minimize the demolition and construction impact. There's going to be noise impacts from construction vehicles and equipment sitting around the site, so we want to try to minimize that and control it as much as possible. We want to maintain the Margaret/Perrault Street connector and when we're done with the project, retain some parking underneath the structure for the local businesses.

There are some other considerations that we have to take into account: one being the location of the future foundation locations. Our goal is to replace or remove the entire superstructure. So, as Aleksey mentioned, that's the part of the bridge that you're actually driving on. We want to remove the supporting structure, the sub-substructure, that's all of the visible columns and piers that you see walking underneath the structure. What we don't want to do is

² 27,600 vehicles in a 24-hour weekday period; 3% heavy vehicles.



remove the bridge foundations because trying to remove those would add significant complexity to our job. Our goal is to relocate the new piers around the existing foundations, so avoid any conflicts. We've had some initial discussion with City officials, and we've determined that reducing some of the vacant space that's under the bridge may be beneficial to help reduce some of the nuisance activities that can occur in those vacant spaces, and introducing lighting under the bridge might help facilitate more nighttime safety.

How has our design progressed? There are several considerations that we have to go through when we figure out a span arrangement for the bridge. One of those things that we just discussed is reducing the unused space below the bridge and we want to avoid the existing pier locations. Right-of-Way impacts are a primary concern for us. We want to minimize any and/or we want to prevent any permanent Right-of-Way takings, and we want to minimize any temporary impacts. We also want to maintain that Margaret/Perrault Street connector and then when we're done with the structure, retain parking for the local public.

Now, I'll just take a second here to go over this photo here on the screen. I know the text might be a little bit tough to read, but I'm going to do my best to orient you, walk you through it and hopefully make it make sense for you. Picture yourself standing outside the church right here on Chicopee Street, and you're standing looking at the side of today's bridge. This, right here, is a representation of what the proposed bridge is likely going to look like. Now, I get that it's just a drawing, it's not a fancy photo-rendering, but I hope it gives you a sense of what the future structure might look like.

What we propose is a four-span bridge with 165-foot end spans. Those are the spans on both the north side of the bridge and on the south side of the bridge. Then, the two center spans are 180 feet each. One thing to note here is that we're retaining the location of Route 116, there's no changes to the alignment on 116, we are going to keep it right where it is. The same thing with the existing Margaret/Perrault Street connection on the south side of the bridge, there will be no changes to that. There may be some changes to the parking around that area, but the connection will remain the same. Once the project is complete, we'll have relocated the parking area to accommodate the new pier locations.

The key thing I want you to take away from this picture is going on at the right side of the screen. The right side of the screen is the north half of the bridge, so this is the side that's closest to the Connecticut River, so that area highlighted in green there is a big change to the structure. The existing bridge as Aleksey had mentioned, is about 840 feet long. The proposed bridge is going to be roughly 690 feet long. That comes from a roughly 150-foot reduction on the north end of the bridge. That north end would no longer be part of the structure and would be converted into a solid embankment. To give you a sense for those of you who are from the local community, if you're standing in parking lot on the north side of Chicopee Street and you go to the backside, the closest point to the Connecticut River, that's approximately where that new north abutment will be and that's the end of the new structure.

When we're trying to think of different ways to replace the structure, there's always numerous considerations that we look at in terms of the type of super structure for the replacement. In this case, we looked at steel plate girders, steel box girders, and concrete bulb-tee girders. We felt that each of those had something to offer for this site. All of them have plus or minuses when you compare them to each other when you're considering things like life cycle cost, maintenance, ease of construction, procuring materials, all of that can add to the favorability of one option over the other. After that analysis, between those three types, when you consider a similar appearance to the existing structure, the lowest anticipated construction costs and lifecycle costs, especially because of the way concrete stands up to deicing salts, we're recommending using the concrete bulb-tee girders. Now this bridge is still in design. We are at the very beginning phases, and everything is subject to change as we're going through this and so we're just trying to give you an overview of what to expect.

So, these are sample images. The one on the left is Winter Street over I-95 in Waltham and on the right is Belmont Street over I-290 in Worcester. The reason why I'm bringing these up is to give you a sense of what the future bridge could look like. The one on the left is a concrete girder superstructure which is similar to what we would be proposing. Then you have a concrete barrier at the edge of the lanes that's very similar to what you see out on I-391 now, but what is different about I-391 is the addition of a snow fence along the top of I-391. On the picture on the



right-hand side, granted it's fuzzy, I understand, but it has a similar look, it has the same concrete barrier, it has the same snow fence on top, but rather than a concrete girder there's a steel girder underneath there. Again, difficult to see in this lighting condition, I understand. One thing to point out, if you can see, is the pier supporting that underneath the bridge. That's MassDOT architectural pier design, which we anticipate using out here on Chicopee Street, it gives it a little nicer look for the finished condition once the bridge is constructed.

So how will roadway users be impacted? We really have two different groups that we have to consider. We have the public traveling up on I-391 and then we have the public traveling on Route 116 down below the bridge. Up on the bridge, you've got motor vehicles, trucks, and the PVTa bus. On the local streets you've got everybody, you've got trucks, PVTa buses, bicycles, and pedestrians. We have to have accommodation for all of those users underneath the bridge.

Our goal is to keep you moving during construction. Nobody likes a lengthy detour. Our goal is to maintain northbound and southbound travel up on I-391 and to also maintain traffic on the local streets below the bridge. On I-391, our goal, something I mentioned early on in this presentation, is to shift traffic from the northbound side of the bridge over to the southbound side. What that is going to do is allow us to remove half of the bridge, replace the bridge half of the bridge, and then swap traffic back onto the first half of new bridge and finish the other side. We looked at several different traffic analysis configurations to try to accomplish that. One being running a single lane in the northbound direction and two in the southbound direction and flipping that running two in the northbound direction, one in the southbound direction, and then even going so far as to reduce it to a single lane in each direction. We looked at the pluses and minuses of all of those conditions and determined that the probable best configuration is two lanes in the southbound direction and one lane in the northbound direction. Now you will note that there are two lanes in each direction now. That is also still on the table for managing traffic throughout construction.

Below the bridge, the public safety impacts, we want to maintain traffic on Chicopee Street and Margaret/Perrault Street, Whiteman Street, St. Louis Avenue, and all the streets around the local area. The goal is not to disrupt those during construction. We do have a lot of state Right-of-Way to fit equipment and store materials and that should hopefully minimize the impact on the local roads. The only time that we will have disruption to traffic is when we're demolishing the bridge or building the new bridge over the roadway. In those instances, we anticipate nighttime work. We would close the road at the end of the day, bring equipment onto the road, state to demolish the bridge, clean it up in the morning, remove, then open it back up for the morning rush hour and then we would repeat as we finished the demolition and when we construct the proposed bridge.

What are the environmental, cultural resource, and community impacts? This is a footprint replacement project. As I mentioned, we want to maintain the existing vertical profile of the bridge. We don't want to change the height, we want to maintain the horizontal line and we don't want to move its position from where it is now, so it will be roughly the same width as the current bridge, roughly the same height and the same look. The design is not finalized, so as we're going through this iteration, some of the finer details will still have to be worked out. We want to avoid permanent Right-of-Way issues if at all possible and we definitely want to minimize any temporary takings. There will likely be impacts to the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Park due to construction staging and the need to place cranes. We may have to impact the northern end of Rivers Park. Our goal is to stay out of the parks as much as possible, but the one thing I want you to take away from this is anything that's damaged as part of construction will be replaced or reconstructed as part of this project.

Now as we get through the rest of this presentation, we start to enter the Q&A period, I want you to ask yourself some questions and help formulate some questions for us as we go along. What are your concerns about traffic congestions, noise, or nighttime construction operations? What are your concerns for landscaping, what do you want the area to look like when we're all said and done? Anything else that might come up, please think about it and feel free to offer any questions that you might have.

Right now, I'm going to turn it over to Brenda, she's going to talk about Right-of-Way.



C: Brenda Codella (BC): Thank you, Andy. Hello, everyone again, my name is Brenda Codella. I represent the Right-of-Way Bureau of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, Highway Division. The Right-of-Way Bureau is responsible for acquiring all the necessary rights in private and public lands for the design, construction, and implementation of this project. Affected property owners will be contacted by someone from the Right-of-Way Bureau or a consultant representing the Massachusetts Department of Transportation. We will come and visit with you, and we'll discuss the project, we'll explain the impacts to your property and the procedures used must comply with state and federal regulations governing the acquisition process. Fee taking and permanent easements may be required, but has not been determined at this point, temporary easements may be required as well. Effective property owner's rights are protected under our Massachusetts General Laws, primarily Chapter 79. If a project is receiving federal funds, the property owners' rights are further defined under Title III of the Real Property Acts of 1970 as amended. I will be happy to answer any questions you have about Right-of-Way during the Q&A. I'll hand it back to Aleksey now, thank you.

C: ABI: Good, thank you.

What is our construction approach? We're nearly done here, but I want to mention our construction approach since it is a little different than what you may be used to from other projects. MassDOT intends to deliver this project using design-build methodology. The means the team that you see here tonight will generate a 25% design and base technical concept or BTC for this project and that will be presented to be bid on by design-build teams. Design-builders are teams of a contractor and an engineering firm, and we do this because it tends to shorten construction duration because we don't have to accomplish a 100% design and present those plans and only then can the construction begin. This approach promotes innovation by teaming the engineer and contractor. MassDOT will give the contractor parameters in which they have to operate, around things like noise and traffic, but we will give them enough flexibility in terms of construction approach. With a job of this size, it is likely that an incentive/disincentive mechanism will be used to make sure they get project milestones done on time.

Design builders typically propose alternative technical concepts or ATCs as part of their bid. These can address construction staging or techniques, the materials used for construction, structure type, and traffic management. That's not to say they can completely upend everything since any ATC has to be proved to MassDOT's satisfaction.

On this slide, (Slide 36); you will see our next steps. After tonight, as we get into the spring, we expect to have some targeted briefings. Over the summer, we will come back to you for a second meeting like this one. This fall, we will present the project officially in a 25% design public hearing. Assuming everything goes well at the hearing, we would be on track to advertise next spring, issue a notice to proceed to our winning design-builder in the fall, and be in construction in 2027. I will now pass this off to Nate to close us out and talk about upcoming outreach and how to stay in touch with us.

C: NCC: Thank you so much. OK, this spring, as Aleksey said, we have some anticipated targeted briefings. There are some groups that we would typically go to, and we'll be working on that, reaching out to say, "Hey, what are your specific concerns?" The second public meeting, as you heard from Andy, there are some things here that are still in flux, like, how exactly we will manage the traffic and exactly how the new bridge might look so we would want to come back and be able to give you an update on that. We'd also expect to get some comments from you this evening, some guidance from you on how we would do things, and we want to make sure that when we come back, we can kind of gut check ourselves with you and say did we hear all that correctly? That second meeting is really there to say, "Are we getting this right?", "Are we understanding this community?" If we all say yes at that point, that really gives us the assurance that we can go ahead to a 25% design public hearing and have that hearing come off well. So, that is what the second meeting is about.

We do have a dedicated email address that it on the fact sheet. This event that we're having here tonight and the other meetings, that's certainly not your only opportunity to reach out to us. If you write us at that email address, we will get back to you. Writing back to those emails is a big part of my job every day, so you know, please keep me employed. We will get back to you. We want to hear about the issues, we did hear from your Chicopee City staff that there are some nuisance things that go on under the bridge, you know, off-book oil changes, dumping of air conditioners and sofas, you saw how we can maybe reduce some of that activity. If there are other things that



changing out the bridge could address, let us know. Does your community group want a brief? Let us know. Do you have concerns about construction? Let us know. Are there events that take place in the neighborhood at certain times of the year? Let us know. I have a bridge that I'm working on in Haverhill right now. The Saturday after Thanksgiving, the local Veterans of Foreign Wars do a Santa Parade. They all dress up as Santa Claus and parade across the bridge. It says in the contract specifications, "Thou shall not work on the Saturday after Thanksgiving." We wouldn't have known that if somebody hadn't raised their hand and said something. So, we want to hear from you.

This is how to reach us—There's this wonderful question and discussion slide, which is very pretty, but this has a bit more utility (NCC switches to Slide 39). This is how to get in touch with us. If you got one of those packets when you came in, on the back sheet you can write a comment, fold it up, tape it shut, stick a stamp on it, and it turns into an envelope and goes through the mail. Funny story: our translators are extremely good, and they translated the entire back page into Cyrillic for our Russian translation. If I hadn't noticed that today, I don't know how the mail would have handled it, but we fixed that before I printed a bunch. You can send a written comment if you want to tear off a comment tonight and leave it with me, there's a cardboard box you can put them in right on that table. You can email it directly to that email. I strongly suggest that everybody visit the website and sign-up to get the project emails. If you signed in with me, I will add you to that database. The point is it's important that you do sign in, and it's not just so I can send you emails and ask you to come to another meeting. Andy talked about lane closures or detours. Once we go to construction, the email database gets used to send out email blasts that will say things like "Detour of Chicopee Street tonight from 11 PM to 5 AM, here's your alternative route."

At this point, we are going to a question and answer. I've been informed by Katia that we actually have five people who are taking interpretation, which is great. If any of those folks wish to do so, you can submit questions by text, and I can get them from Katia. So, we will take some periodic breaks of check in with her and get those.

I think the first thing I want to do though—your Ward 7 City Councilor here, I think the only elected officials we have here—So, I'm going to walk over—Oh, you are too—You're all City Councilors, is that correct? Oh, school committee. OK. We'll go through all of you first and give you the first bite at the apple and then we'll go into the general Q&A. We will do Elected Officials first, we'll check in for any texts, and then we'll do hands across the audience, and I will walk this around and we'll try to answer all of your questions. All right. Here we go. Just remember to talk into the microphone.

Q: Bill Courchesne (Ward 7 City Councilor): I don't have any questions right now, but please feel free to reach out to me if you're not getting what you need from DOT. They've been really good to me in the past, so I don't anticipate any problems, but I did post on social media for the last two weeks to email me any questions for people who can't make it and I got no response, so I'm hoping that's a good sign. I think it's much needed and I'm looking forward to taking care of some of those problems that's been going on for 10 years underneath the underpass. It's not just about oil change; it's more about drugs.

A: NCC: I didn't want to say the part about drugs, but I heard the drug part too.

Q: Mary Beth Costello (Ward 9 City Councilor): Hi, I'm Mary Beth Costello from Ward 9, which is right up the hill. Many of my constituents use Chicopee Street on a regular basis and I was very pleased that the information got out in Ward 9 through the Price Rite Marketplace, other ways, and the Fairview Library. That was a big help, people were talking about it when I had my office hours at the Fairview Library. They're interested, and I appreciate your time and I'll be able to contact you by email if they have any questions through the construction process. Thank you and thank you for supporting the Fairview Library.

C: NCC: As someone who worked in a library in college, I always try and work in at least one or two libraries in every flyering drop but thank you for the kind words. It was nice to get up there. Again, if there's a request by any community groups that would like us to pay them a visit, you know where to find us.

Q: Don Lamothe (Ward 7 School Committee Member): My concern would be traffic during school departures and going to school. There is going to be other construction going on in Chicopee and too many streets get tied up. Are we going to have kids late for school or late to get home? The other question that I have for you is if this one has reached the end of it's time, what about the rest of the bridges that were built at the same time?

A: NCC: I can give you the first part of that and then I'll give the rest back to our panelists who know more about bridges. As Andy stated, the idea here is that any closure would be for public safety, right? You close Chicopee Street, you close the Margaret/Perrault Street connector, which would be something that would be done either in the overnight hours or on a weekend. One thing that we do want to talk to the community about is whether you'd prefer a night closure or whether you'd prefer a weekend closure because they both have their plusses and minuses. If you close at night, well, you know the activities can be noisy, so do you want to take nighttime noise or do you close on a weekend, and then have potentially a business impacted? Again, that's something we want to hear about from all of you folks. But the idea that we'd have Chicopee Street closed when the kids were going to school and everyone's going to work, that's not the intention. So, there is that part. As to the nature of the structures, I'm going to let somebody who went to school for that answer that question.

A: AB: Thanks, just to follow up to the school buses drive on I-391 too or just down below?

A: DL: It's just Chicopee Street as far as I know.

A: AB: OK great because the goal is to maintain traffic on Chicopee Street during those times that kids would be traveling to and from school. In regard to the bridges, the bridge over the Connecticut River is a different type of construction than this bridge here. This bridge is somewhat unique in its reinforced concrete construction. It's not something that we do a lot of nowadays. It likely had a lot of form work when it was built to cast the structure in place. Nowadays, even with this proposed structure, we would prefabricate the beams off-site, deliver them on trailers, lift them up with cranes and set them into place. There's more of a Lego aspect to it when we're building the structure on site. The bridge over the Connecticut River, I think that's a steel bridge structure that just recently went through some repairs and that type of structure affords itself to being able to be repaired, whereas this type of structure does not. It's just the type of structure that dictates when one structure will be replaced versus another.



C: AB1: MassDOT has a very robust program. Each bridge gets inspected regularly and rated accordingly. Once the rating falls below a certain threshold, it generates the project either replacement or repair, just not time for those other structures yet.

C: NCC: Any questions, Katia, over text? No, OK, great. So, we've cleared elected officials—General hands, anybody have questions or comments?

C: Bill Heyn (Chicopee Resident, Business Owner): Hey everybody, I'm Bill Heyn, I own the 52 Perrault Street Properties. We've talked on the phone a couple of times. I just want to throw it out there, speaking for my businesses and my tenants, obviously working at nighttime is going to be better for us to answer that question. Also, to any of the potential contractors or MassDOT, I've got 2.5 acres space adjacent to your work site and I'd be open to discussing your needs if you need a staging area, office space, etc., so reach out to me, give me a call, let me know. That's about it, thank you.

C: NCC: Thank you, sir.

Q: Blake Bryan (Owner, O'Connell's Irish Pub & Grill): How you are doing? Blake Bryan, owner of O'Connell's Irish Pub and Grill located on 733 Chicopee Street. Two things that I'm that I'm hearing. One—nighttime construction starting at 11 PM. That is kind of when we start to do our business. I support a bunch of cool league teams, dart league teams, acoustic bands, and if Margaret Street and Chicopee Street are closed at that time that's going to be a huge deterrent for my business. We've spent the last almost three years grinding and trying to make a family committed great business. I'm there every single day and it's really nerve wracking and scary for me to hear the night part of it. It's completely understandable and I know it's going to happen. The other thing is our parking. I would say 80% of our parking is off of Margaret Street under the bridge. I've been there for three years straight, and I see all kinds of stuff, drugs, homelessness, and mattresses being dumped, but our direct parking is so vital to our success and without it, I don't know what's going to happen. We've developed a great 50–65-year-old clientele that come in for fish and chips on Fridays that have a regular regimented time that they're coming in. If there's no parking there out front or on Margaret Street, there's only limited spaces, I don't see them parking down the street and coming to our business or across the street. Those are my two concerns. Thank you very much.

A: NCC: Those are really good comments and thank you for coming. I appreciate those. Andy, do you want to talk a little bit about how the staging wouldn't be all at once?

A: AB: One of the things that I mentioned during the presentation is we want to keep the local streets open the majority of the time and the only closure would be a very limited time when we're over top of Chicopee Street because obviously that's a big safety issue. We can't have cars and stuff driving while concrete is falling. The same thing over the Margaret/Perrault connection, but those will be staged at different times. So, likely we should be able to keep the Margaret/Perrault Street connection open at the times we close the Chicopee Street connection, so there still might be a bypass for you in that area. The same thing goes with parking, if we're working directly on the span that's over the parking area that's directly across from your business, the one across the street would likely still be open. We can sort of work that into the contract that we at least maintain a semblance of parking in that area. One thing we'd love to discuss with you is how many spaces that you typically use on a night. If you have a good sense of if it's 50 cars or 100 cars, that really helps us gauge how much space is needed.

A: NCC: Depending on how soon we get done, we can go up and discuss it right now, though we probably shouldn't as it's a long drive back to Boston. Go ahead ma'am.

Q: Melissa Breor (Chicopee Resident & Director of Chicopee Chamber of Commerce): Thank you. Melissa Breor, Chicopee Resident and Director of the Chicopee Chamber of Commerce. I'm not familiar with some of the terms that you used. So, if your team is going to go to 25% design, that means the other firm does the other 75%. Does that firm have to adhere to what you decide, or can they do something else? Are people going to have to protect that access to parking and all this is the 25% things decided? I'm just trying to do my math here.

A: NCC: I'm going to try this because I've done this a couple times and then I will let Aleksey tell me I'm wrong. The way this typically works is that there are things like Andy said about the number of parking spaces that get



written into the specifications that go into that 25% package. For example, if we say there has to be 30 parking spaces under the bridge at any time. That's the number I've made up right now, it has no bearing in reality, I just want to underscore that, but if we say there have to be 30 parking spaces at any time that's now written into that package. The design builder has to live with that. There are other things that they could potentially look at and say, "I could do this differently, I could do this faster, instead of using this type of method for constructing, my engineer thinks he could do it this way and it would go faster that way." Those are things the ATC's that were mentioned. Those then have to be presented to MassDOT and MassDOT then yes you can or no we don't think we want you to do that ATC, but it's not as though the community is in a position to have to come back and defend something that's been enshrined in the package that goes to the contractors. Aleksey, was that good?

A: AB1: Good. Typical design has four parts to it, so 25%, 75%, 100%, and then final design. Usually when we give it to the contractor to bid on, all the rest of it has been done internally. Because this is a design build, at 25% we're going to give it to the design build team and they're going to develop the rest. They're going to do 75% design and 100% design, all while constructing some parts of the project already, we're just getting to construction faster because the bridge needs it. Whatever design at 25% will change at 75% and 100%, but it's not like anyone is going to take your access or your driveway or sidewalk or anything like that—that will remain.

Q: NCC: Katia, anything on text? No? Terrific. Others?

Q: Mike Pise (Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office): Mike Pise, Chief of Staff to the Mayor. Just a couple of community considerations: On the Sunday before Memorial Day, there's always a Vietnam Veteran's Memorial service at the park there. It might be a good time to reach out to the individuals who have relatives who have passed away because they usually place a flower at each side of each deceased stone, and I know the veterans are very protective of that site so we can reach out to them as well. Stephanie Shaw is the Veterans Director. The other thing is the Valley Opportunity Council headquarters is next door. They run day programs for students and for people to learn skills. They also have a preschool program and other types of programs. I don't know how that would impact them at all, but they probably someone you will want to talk to as well, if you haven't already.

A: NCC: I'm so glad you said that because they are one of our flyer drop sites. I was there last Wednesday, and I sincerely hope that none of the kids saw what I did because I got stuck in their playground and I had to hop the fence. So, I hope that none of them got the idea that's that a thing they should do. When I said community briefings, Valley Opportunity Council is one of the ones we would like to reach out to. When the Mayor's Chief of Staff tells you to do two things you've thought of doing, that a victory on the night.

Other hands? No. This is not your last opportunity by any means, but if folks are good, we don't have to drag it out. All right. Well, I'll give it back to Aleksey to officially wrap up because he is our Project Manager.

C: AB1: Well, thank you everybody for attending. Thank you to the panelists for presenting. Thank you for everybody who asked questions and thank you for Legacy Church for providing us with this facility. Thank you all. The meeting is closed.



Later this spring and early summer the project team will host stakeholder briefings with specific community groups. There will be a second public meeting later in the summer to provide an update on the concept design and gather reassurance that the team understood the input from the first public meeting. In the fall of 2025 the project team will present the project officially at a 25% design public hearing. If the public hearing is successful, the project will be on track to advertise to contractors in Spring 2026, issue a notice to proceed to the winning design-builder in Fall 2026, and begin construction in 2027.



APPENDIX 1: MEETING ATTENDEES

First	Last	Affiliation
Mark	Antunes	Resident
Aleksey	Belov	MassDOT
Andy	Benkert	WSP
Melissa	Breor	Chicopee Chamber of Commerce
Blake	Bryan	Owner of O'Connell's Pub & Grill
Nathaniel	Cabral-Curtis	WSP
David	Chia	The Collaborative
Brenda	Codella	MassDOT
Darren	Conboy	Jacobs
Mary Beth	Costello	Ward 9 City Councilor
Bill	Courchesne	Ward 7 City Councilor
Shawn	Dumont	Resident
Doug	Ellis	DPW, Engineering
Tyler	Garnet	Provider
Laura	Hanson	MassDOT
Kevin	Harp	Resident
Bill	Heyn	Resident, Property Owner
Ashna	Jaiswal	The Collaborative
Erik	Kristensen	MassDOT
Don	Lamothe	Ward 7 School Committee Member
Doug	Lombury	Chicopee Police
Nicholas	Parmentier	Resident
Michael	Pise	Chief of Staff, Chicopee Mayor's Office
Joseph	Pisete	Resident
Dan	Racicot	MassDOT
Gary	Roux	PVPC
Paula	Simmons	MassDOT
Lawrence	Walden	Resident