



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: June 9, 2025

CONTENTS

Overview 1
Presentation 2
Discussion 9
Next Steps 12

OVERVIEW

On June 9, 2025, representatives for the MassDOT team charged with the replacement of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Bridge provided members of the leadership of the Valley Opportunity Council’s Saint Louis Avenue site with a targeted briefing regarding the bridge replacement project. The Valley Opportunity Council’s Saint Louis Avenue site operates a variety of programs including a daycare center and English as a Second Language classes and is immediately adjacent to the bridge’s northeast quadrant. While safe for all users, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Bridge, opened in 1982 has reached the end of its useful lifespan and should be replaced. The briefing outlined the structure’s significant deterioration, which led to lane closures in 2019, and the current replacement effort begun in 2024. The project team explained the technical aspects of the bridge, including its superstructure and substructure, and emphasized that the bridge’s unique concrete box girder design precludes rehabilitation, necessitating full replacement.

The new bridge aims to restore three lanes in each direction, accommodate current and future traffic volumes, and be constructed in halves to maintain traffic flow during construction. The design targets a 100-year lifespan and seeks to minimize impacts on regional transit, including local and express bus routes. The project manager described the ongoing design process, including soil borings, traffic data collection, and the development of a 25% design milestone, after which a public hearing will be held.

Community concerns were addressed, particularly regarding parking, which will be reconfigured during construction to maintain access for residents, especially during winter snow bans. The team committed to ongoing outreach and communication, drawing on lessons from similar projects to ensure stakeholders remain informed throughout construction. The design-build approach was explained as a way to expedite the project, with MassDOT employing a best-value procurement process to select qualified contractors and encourage innovation.

The anticipated construction period is about four years, with efforts to avoid long-term closures of Chicopee Street and maintain access for public safety and transit. The team discussed strategies for traffic management, detours, and minimizing disruptions, including coordination with the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA) on bus stop relocations. Maintenance and longevity of the new bridge were highlighted, with MassDOT’s commitment to regular inspections and improved design details to reduce future maintenance requirements.



The meeting concluded with assurances that public input would continue to shape the project, and that communication channels, including a dedicated website and email, would remain open. The team emphasized their commitment to minimizing disproportionate impacts on local organizations and maintaining accessibility and safety for the community throughout the project's lifecycle.

PRESENTATION¹

C: Nathaniel Cabral-Curtis (NCC): Good morning, everyone, thank you for joining us this morning. We can skip over these preliminary slides and come right to our first substantive slide: How did we get here? This situation dates all the way back to 1953. The highway that is there currently grew out of a regional plan that would have in theory taken Chicopee Street, or State Route 116, and grown that up into the highway. The highway then grew in two phases in 1967 and 1982. The bridge was part of the second phase. In 2019, the two left lanes that are closed today were closed down because of significant deterioration of the structure. In 2022, the bridge inspection found significant deterioration in both the bridge's super and substructure, which we will get into in just a moment. In 2024, MassDOT issued the design-phase for the bridge's replacement.

Earlier this year, we began outreach to community leaders, so that's your state delegation and city leadership. On April 3rd, we had our first Public Information Meeting in that building right over there [pointing to the Legacy Church through the room's windows]. We actually dropped flyers off in this very building. Today, June 9th, here we are at the Valley Opportunity Council having this briefing and at 1:00pm, we will buzz down to the Hampton Inn to talk to the Chamber of Commerce.

So just some context, here is where we are right there. Here is Veterans' Park. Here is the much larger Rivers Park. Here is Chicopee Street. This is I-391 going up to Holyoke. There it [I-391] is going down to Springfield and this in blue is our structure.

So just some terms that might get thrown around today. If we say deck, that is where the motor vehicles are driving. The substructure is any part of the bridge supporting the superstructure like the piers, or the abutments, or the foundations. The pier transfers the weight of the deck to the foundations. The superstructure is the deck, the beams, the barrier, and any of that stuff that is up on the top. The abutments are any of the structures that support the ends of the bridge. You can think of them as the last pier.

So why was this project initiated? You can guess it has something to do with the ugliness that you see in the photo. Here are some key facts. You already know that it opened in 1979. It is 840 feet long and 111 feet wide. It is a concrete box girder. That is one of the reasons why, even though the bridge across the river and our bridge were built at the same time, the bridge across the river was rehabilitated recently. Our bridge does not lend itself to that type of rehabilitation, which is why it is being replaced.

It has six piers and two abutments. The approximate daily traffic numbers may get revised because we just collected new traffic data last week, so that will be updated, but those were the previous numbers. We did have 3% heavy vehicles; that's buses and trucks. At the 25% design meeting or at the next public hearing, we will have updated numbers or maybe they will be the same.

We are supposed to have three lanes in each direction, but the left lanes have been closed now for a while. The bridge is deteriorated with both the super and substructure in very poor condition. There is exposed reinforced bar. There are damaged expansion joints. It is safe for traffic, but it is at the end of its useful life and needs to be replaced.

What are the goals for a new bridge? We want to have all three lanes in each direction. We want to provide for current and future traffic volumes. Importantly, we need to be able to construct this thing in halves. I am going to pass it off to Andy in a minute, but you can see we have a seam where we construct it in halves to allow us to keep traffic moving. We want to have a 75-year design lifespan to reduce impacts to regional transit. We know that there

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



is the 21 bus that travels underneath but there is also the 21 Express bus that travels on top. So, at this point I am going to hand it over to Andy to talk through project status for a bit.

C: Andy Benkart (AB): Thanks, Nate. I am Andy Benkart. I am the Project Manager with WSP so I am responsible for putting the whole project together. I will go over the project status. Here is the current status of the design work. As Nate mentioned, one of the first things that we did was what is called a Preliminary Structures Report and that where we go out and analyze the existing bridge to figure out if we can fix the deficiency. This bridge is kind of an odd type of construction. It's a cast-in-place bridge that doesn't really lend itself to being rehabilitated so we determined that through testing and various analysis that the bridge has to come out. The next stage of that is the bridge type selection worksheet and this is where we try to figure out what the best way is to replace the bridge. What the span length is going to look like, what the superstructure is going to look like, and basically feel out the lay of the land for the bridge for future design.

We did do some initial traffic data and the big thing that we did here over the last year is completed, I believe last summer, the survey of the area. Currently in progress, as Nate had mentioned, is some supplemental traffic data collection. You may have seen borings going up on the site over the last two months. That is where we actually do bore holes in the ground to try and figure out what the composition of the soil is. We figure out various frequencies for waves going through the soil for seismic design. We have two more borings that will go in at the level of the bridge, but everything below the bridge has been completed to date. Our next submittal is the 25% design, so we are actively doing that right now. Once that 25% design is done, we will be back out to the community to present it at a design public hearing and that is where we will have a really good idea of what the structure is going to look like and traffic management, and other stuff like that.

Here is the anticipated span arrangement and the view is like you're standing on Chicopee Street looking at the bridge. The proposed bridge is going to be a lot shorter than the original bridge. The original bridge is around 800 feet or so and the new bridge will be approximately 690 feet, so we are actually going to fill in the northernmost span. If you picture yourself standing in that back parking lot, there is a lot of unused space. It is currently fenced off but that area will be filled in, and won't be part of the structure, but will be retaining walls and that kind of thing.

We are looking at 690-foot total span length, split into four-spans so we have about 165-foot end spans and 180-foot center spans. One thing to keep in mind though, is Route 116, we are not touching it. We are not relocating it. We are not moving it. We will talk about it a little later on, but we are not closing Chicopee Street other than when we have direct construction going on above it. So, if we are demolishing the existing bridge, obviously we have to shut down traffic. If we are lifting any girders, we are going to have to shut down traffic. Those will all be short-term closures, but it is not like we are detouring Chicopee Street for three years.

Q: Valley Opportunity Council Member (VoC Member): Where is Chicopee Street located?

A: AB: Chicopee Street is right here, and it is not being relocated. The most work we are doing on Chicopee Street is mill and overlay, which is basically just grinding the pavement and then resurfacing it.

Q: VoC Member: The parking is going away, is that right?

A: AB: As of right now, the north parking lot is going away. The south parking lot is being reconstructed so it will still be there. We are working with the local business owners to make sure that we have sufficient parking on the south side. This is something that we discussed with the city so if you have questions or concerns, by all means, give them to Nate to help us out. The more information we have is always helpful.

C: VoC Member: That parking lot fills up in the winter. Neighborhood residents park their cars there during snow bans.

C: NCC: That is very good to know. It did not come up in our Public Information Meeting so thank you for that.

C: AB: The other thing to know, when it comes to that parking during construction is that we will be bouncing back and forth between the two lots because as the contractor gets out there and starts doing work, they are going to have to work from one side of the bridge to the other. As they interrupt parking, we will try to jockey it back and forth so



that there is some semblance of parking during construction. We are aiming for a minimum parking level but that is new information so thank you.

The other piece is that Margaret/Perrault Connector on the south side. We are retaining that in the final condition. The parking lot is in the same location, but the piers will be in different locations. One of our main goals here is to limit the right of way impacts to residents. We do not want to take property. There may be some temporary impacts to sidewalks and driveway entrances to make them handicapped accessible.

We looked at several different types of structures and several different types of span arrangements to figure out what is best for the site and what best helps us accomplish our goals for the area. Some of the bridges that we looked at were a steel-plate girder bridge. These are very conventional looking structures. Then steel-box girder, even a splice bulb-tee concrete girder. Of those three, the spliced bulb-tee offered the best of all the worlds for us. It is similar in appearance to the existing structure, reduces maintenance, in part because it is less susceptible to damage from road salt. As of now, it is also expected to be the shortest construction period of the types we looked at.

On a normal everyday project, we would do what is called a design-bid-build, which where I would be hired by MassDOT to do the complete design, soup to nuts; from the very beginning to the final design, and then we would put the package out to bid where contractors would bid on it, then build it.

For this project, we are doing design-build, so what is going to happen is, WSP is going to take this up to 25% level, then we will put together what is called a Base Technical Concept and then MassDOT will hire a new engineering firm teamed with a contractor who will work to get shovels in the ground sooner. As design is happening, they'll start construction rather than waiting until the design period ends. As a result, you will see construction start and end sooner.

Just to give you a sense of what it could look like, I know it is nothing fancy like the Zakim Bridge in Boston, but it does have a concrete parapet, which will be up to the latest MassDOT standards. There will also be the addition of a snow fence and I do not believe there is currently a snow fence out there now, so right now you may see debris come off 391 when they are plowing and this will help to prevent that.

One thing to keep in mind, as you walk under the current bridge if you have ever looked up, it is a nice smooth surface. This will now be broken up with individual beams that helps facilitate reconstruction in the future and helps to make maintenance easier. The image here on the right is the new types of piers that we are going to use on the site. There is a little more mass to the piers; they cover more area. MassDOT calls them their Architectural Piers so I wanted to give you a sense of what the structures look like.

Here is your list of initial questions which Nate was kind enough to collect from all of you. If you didn't get a chance to answer the questions about things like parking and something comes up during this conversation that is why we are here. We want to get your input because you are here every day so if there are questions and concerns – even small – feel free. They could change the course of the way we are doing design.

So, length of construction is a little tougher at this phase. We will know more once we get to Design Public Hearing. We will have what is called a Construction Time Duration completed so we will have a pretty good handle on construction duration. We are anticipating about a four-year period and that includes about six months for initial design. Once this gets awarded to a design team, the designers such as someone like me from a different firm will get some initial designs done, say the foundations of the design. As soon as the foundations of the design are done, they will get released for construction while the design of the rest of the structure is being completed.

The design portion is about six months, and the construction portion is about three and a half years. We are not shutting down Chicopee Street long term, so traffic will remain flowing as much as possible throughout construction. We do anticipate short-term closures, probably over nighttime periods where we will be demolishing the existing bridge and bringing in the new bridge, and that could take several days. So maybe over a week's period of time, we are shutting it down each night to take out a piece of the bridge and then clean it up before opening it back up to traffic the next morning.



We are aware that people are using the street on Memorial Day where things are happening in the Veterans' Park or if there is something going on in the area, there are provisions in the contract to stay away from those dates because things can get hectic. We are not anticipating doing anything during peak periods so it will be nights and weekends. The same applies to the Margaret/Perrault Connector, so both of those will be generally open during construction. Again, they will be closed at certain times when construction is overhead. We are trying to work it so that one or the other would be open so we could detour most traffic along the Margaret/Perrault Connector when Chicopee Street needs to be closed during those short shutdown periods.

Q: VoC Member: What about the buses?

A: AB: The bus impacts. We do have buses, the 21 running from 5:00am-9:00pm and the 21E running from 6:00am-8:00pm. You will note that there are two bus stops underneath the current bridge and we are working with the PVTa to try and figure out whether we should move them north or south of the bridge site just to maintain safety during construction. That will be ongoing coordination, but I do not have an answer for you just yet.

Q: VoC Member: So, when the night work happens, what time would it wrap up each morning?

A: AB: We are working on these times. These are the times for the bus route impacts. I do not have the exact construction times yet.

Q: VoC Member: Our vans meet here at 6:00am so that is information I need.

A: NCC: Road closures are typically allowed between 10:00pm-4:00am, that's based on the I-495 Andover-Lawrence Bridge Replacements at which I'm at work currently. The highway effectively drives right across the town line and for that, they have closures on the main line and then they have closures on Route 28 where it passes underneath the highway and so typically, when they have closures on that they are from 10:00pm-4:00am. It can vary on direction and time of year, but it is either 10:00pm-4:00am or 11:00pm-5:00am. Those are MassDOT's times for overnight work. That 10:00pm-4:00am is kind of an average. As Andy said, we do not have exact times yet but it appears for the moment that 21 and 21E would miss that window. It also appears that your vans can miss that. So, fingers crossed, but that is why we are here. That is the kind of thing that can go in the contract so that when the design-builders are looking at it, they can say Valley Opportunity Council vans need to go at 6:00am so that they can know.

C: AB: Yes. The more reasons we can have to know help make the case. Construction period communication: Just like we are doing today, coming out here and talking with you folks, the public outreach does not end once we get into construction. That will continue, but slightly different than we have here. Filling out the Gov-Delivery list with your email gets you on the project contact database and that will be carried over through construction.

C: NCC: I mentioned the Andover-Lawrence job. For that project, there is an email that comes out to anyone in the database every week. You get this email that is basically a progress report. It includes what we got done last week and what you can expect this week, and it goes over all the lane closures and detours. There are diagrams on the website so you can read your detour as bullets or look at it as a map. As Andy said, this does not end. It is not like we will be perfectly communicative now, but once construction starts you are left in the dark. That won't happen.

C: AB: Keeping you moving during construction. We had a Public Information Meeting on April 3. At that meeting, we had been looking at a three lane cross section on I-391 with one lane going northbound and two lanes going southbound. This is sort of in flux. We are trying to maximize the amount of traffic we can keep moving on I-391.

As of now, we are looking at opening it up to two lanes in both directions so as Nate mentioned, we want to build this bridge in halves. I know I mentioned that we can't rehabilitate the structure to get the 75 years we want, but we can fix the short-term problems for short-term use. So, the first phase of our project will be a repair to reopen that southbound left lane. That will allow us to shift all traffic to that southbound bridge. One thing in our favor here is that the existing bridge is really two structures with a seam down the middle. Once we shift all of the traffic over to one side, that allows us to remove an entire structure at once and build a whole new structure at once, then we will



flip flop back and forth. You can see in the image down here that there will be two lanes toward Chicopee and two lanes toward Holyoke.

Some of the public safety impacts. So again, the Margaret/Perrault Connector and Chicopee Street, those are closed for demolition and construction, but not at the same time unless we have to. We do have to give the contractor a little bit of flexibility, but those kinds of things can be written into the contract, so we can write in language saying “hey, you have to keep one open at all times.” Those are the things that we will be developing over the coming months.

Up on I-391, if we have a beam lift, that beam could fall, so we do what is called a rolling roadblock which stop traffic on I-391 just to keep it out of the way. This allows us to set the beam in place, and as soon as that beam is in place, traffic can then resume on I-391.

The Route 21 bus stops, we are working to move those away from the underside of the bridge and coordination with PVRTA is ongoing. We are aware of the uses of the site and want to make sure that people are impacted as little as possible.

In terms of potential detours, once the area above Chicopee Street is under active construction and we do have to close it, we are looking at a temporary detour. These are nightly detours, they are not going to be something that is there long-term. Car traffic would be able to use the Margaret/Perrault Connector, but we might have to detour truck traffic a little bit further just because the turn radius around here can be a little bit hairy. You will get more information on that as we get closer to the Public Design Hearing.

Here is an example of some of the construction period outreach, so like I said, we are here now to talk to you about the project that is in design, but once it gets under construction, it will be ongoing. So, we don’t want to keep you in the dark. We will give you access to as much information as possible. Nate mentioned the Andover-Lawrence construction, and this is a little bit of a case study of what is going on. So we had a public meeting ahead of construction and community briefings just like this. Flyer drop-offs, a dedicated email address, construction hotline, weekly reports, and that is just a sample of something that can be put together for this project to help keep you informed.

So, what is our construction approach? Our team right now is developing the 25% design and what is called the Base Technical Concept. That is the design-build approach that I mentioned to you earlier. What that does is allows shovels in the ground, allows construction to occur, while we are completing design. So, it is a little riskier for us to do it that way, but it helps to condense the schedule.

What MassDOT will do is a Best Value Procurement. When we put together this Base Technical Concept, it will go out to the public where people will want to bid on it and send in Letters of Interest to MassDOT. MassDOT will shortlist the best qualified teams to make sure we do not have an unqualified team working on a \$100 million bridge job. We want to make sure that they are capable of doing the work just to make sure that stuff stays on track. This does shorten the project duration and promotes innovation. Every project has its own methods of how it can get out there and do things in a faster way and that may mean adaptations to the Base Technical Concept. We may think we know the best way to do it but then the Contractor gets it and throws wrenches in the mix so it is a benefit of the design-build process.

MassDOT’s contract will stipulate requirements for traffic management, so the stuff that we are talking with you about today will ultimately end up in the contract for those teams. MassDOT could introduce incentives and disincentives just to keep the contract on time.

Alternative Technical Concepts (ATC’s) is one of the best parts of the design-build process. Again, we are doing our work independent of a Contractor at this point. WSP is taking it to the Base Technical Concept. Once we put out our package, the design-build teams that want to win this job can put together what is called Alternate Technical Concepts. They could choose, instead of the concrete bridge I showed you earlier to shift the focus to a steel girder bridge. They can introduce that to MassDOT as part of the bidding process and they essentially have to prove to



MassDOT that it is equivalent. They are not going to introduce something that takes longer. MassDOT will evaluate it and ultimately decide whether to introduce it into the project.

So, for next steps, I think Nate will take it back over.

C: NCC: So, this is where we are right now. Later on today, we are going to go see the Chamber of Commerce. Next week we are going to talk to the American Legion Post 452, which is the Veterans' group most closely aligned with the park that is over there. There may be some small impacts to the park, so we want to talk with them about maybe some potential changes to that space, or maybe putting it back the exact way that it was. Later on, during the summer, we are going to have a second public information meeting. We are going to summarize everything that we have heard from you folks and really what that is to do is to tee us up for the Design Public Hearing. The purpose of that second public information meeting is to go to everyone one more time and ask "did we get it right because the next thing that you are going to see is that 25% Design Public Hearing."

The reason why we do all of the public outreach is because back in the 1970s and 1980s, it was not even MassDOT at the time, the Department of Public Works would go out and just do the 25% Design Public Hearing and that would be the first time that the public would see anything and a lot of times they would put in a lot of effort and then the public would say that they hates it. The team would then have to go back to the drawing board. So, the point of this is once you put in the effort to have the 25% Design Public Hearing, you know what you are going to get.

The Design Public Hearing will come in the fall. Next summer, this project will be put out to bid through a very interesting process. Andy talked about ATCs, so there are ATC meetings where the contractors will come in and present their ATCs. There are usually two or three of those. MassDOT will ask questions about the ATCs. The Design Teams that put the ATCs together will look through them, review them, and make recommendations. It is actually a really cool process. It does take a while, as you can see, because we advertise in the summer. Issue the winning build and design notice in the fall and anticipated construction in 2027.

How will we keep you informed? This is where we are right now. That is why I had you all sign in, so you can all come to our next public information meeting. We want you to reach out. This project already has a website and already has a dedicated email address. Those things will eventually be converted to support construction activities. This is why we are here. When design-build was introduced, I was on one of MassDOT's first design-build jobs back in 2009. People were very afraid about it because they thought the Contractor was just going to go fast and break things. Public outreach is there to let us build that contract in a way that gives flexibility but also requires us to stay in our lanes and not make a mess. I will say I have worked with most of the Contractors at this point and most know what they are doing and understand that they are in a neighborhood and act accordingly. And I think that is it. So, that is our email address. That is our website. If you want to send a letter, you can as well. That is our presentation. If there are any questions at this time, go ahead.

DISCUSSION

Q: VoC Member: So, there are multiple projects going on. Is the first part of it, fixing the southbound, breaking down that bridge in two. That part is also happening in 2027, or that part is earlier?

A: AB: No. Start of construction, that fixing part, will be 2027. They might be able to do some of the repairs earlier than that. We are advertising for construction in summer 2026 with notice to proceed in fall 2026, so you can see there is a six-month delay here. That is usually because there is a design process going on. I would bet money that the contractor will be out there trying to fix the deck and get through that pre-phase work as early as possible so that very well could happen, maybe summer or winter of 2026.

Q: VoC Member: So, the same construction company will do the whole thing?

A: AB: Yes. Once it gets advertised and MassDOT is able to select the winning design-builder, then all the work would start from that point. Then they will figure it out with their schedule but they are going to want to get the work done as soon as possible and there is not a ton of design work that is needed for that, they just have to get out there and do the work.



Q: VoC Member: Will they work during the winter?

A: AB: Likely, yes. There are certain things we can't do like paving and stuff like that. We can pour concrete, but it is a little bit more labor intensive because they have to heat it and use concrete blankets overnight. I would envision them working over the winter.

Q: VoC Member: I know you said you can't make promises for MassDOT but for Chicopee Street, not closing it or the closures are only overnight, is that confirmed?

A: AB: That part won't change. We have already discussed that with the public, so it is pretty solid. The only thing that could change is the closure window, so whether it is 9:00 pm or 7:00 pm so that may be flexible and we take into account the buses leaving at 6:00 am, so I don't anticipate having to close the road. We know that the detour route for Chicopee Street is not fun, so we want to avoid that as much as possible.

Q: VoC Member: Right, I was going to bring that up too. If you don't live here, you don't necessarily know the community, but there is a low bridge over there that absolutely isolates this area for public safety. Never mind the trucks and the detours and people coming through, but the public safety, the firetrucks you would need for this building would essentially have to go on I-391 and go around Holyoke to get here.

Q: NCC: What street is the low bridge on? The one by the diner? Okay.

A: VoC Member: It is the railroad bridge right over there.

A: NCC: Yes. I got you.

C: VoC Member: Yes, so if that is closed for traffic, we will be on an island.

C: AB: Yes. So, one of the things we look at from a design perspective. As soon as we get traffic counts, that is a huge thing. You start to understand what kind of cars and heavy trucks are using it. We try to look for a detour route and that helps us decide whether or not we can close the road. We looked at Chicopee Street and it is a pretty intense detour, it is not fun. So, our goal was to shift all traffic on I-391 to one barrel. Take it down one at a time and then we got a lot of state right-of-way there. You may not realize it but there is a lot of right-of-way right underneath the bridge and to the sides so they have a lot of room so they should be able to stage them.

Q: NCC: Your shuttle vans, do they also run on weekends or just weekdays.

A: VoC Member: Weekdays. 6:00am-7:00pm

Q: VoC Member: How about the lifetime of the bridge. It will be different than the older one?

A: AB: Yes. So, every bridge is supposed to last for 75 years, baseline, minimum. Some of the federal highway guidance likes to push it out to 100 years, but ours is 75 years, but it is not just set it and forget it. There are ongoing maintenance needs. We try to work in details for our structure to help their longevity. One thing that MassDOT has gotten very good at is recognizing a problem on structures and changing that detail to avoid repeating the problem. Joints on a bridge are a big deal. You approach the bridge on one end or the other end and you hear that bump-bump. That is because the bridge has to expand and we have to handle that movement. The longer the bridge is the more movement. Those joints are not 75-year joints. That pavement is not 75-year pavement. You have to come out and replace those more often. If you don't. If you wait too long, those deteriorate. We have tons of salt on the roads in wintertime. That leaks down and corrodes the beams. That happens on every steel beam bridge built in the last 30 years, but in the last 10 years, MassDOT has changed that detail to give us more protection. It is not set it and forget it. We try to go for 75 years. The details that we use look to minimize the amount of maintenance in the future, but it does require MassDOT to go out there to clean the bridge and remove debris, that kind of stuff.

Q: VoC Member: How do the large bridges like Tri-Borough or George Washington Bridge over water, how do they maintain those types of projects?



A: AB: Well so if you have a steel girder bridge, it's painting. If the state DOT can get out there and have a routine, like literally just going out there and power washing the bridge every year, it removes that road salt. If it sits there, it is going to just keep corroding and then it happens again and again every year. If you clean it routinely it helps to maintain the structure. Now, I don't want to scare anybody because Federal highway has very robust requirements to inspect every structure in the state, so every two years we are out doing that hands on inspection looking at every detail so it is trying to find the future problem and then if it gets to a certain point, MassDOT can prioritize to have it fixed. It is painting, cleaning, those basic things, and then replacing joints if they go bad; don't let them sit.

C: VoC Member: Thank you all for coming out. It is great to have a conversation.

C: NCC: When I was talking to Jennifer about the research that goes into the Public Involvement Plan, I immediately noticed all of the social services that you folks offer here. MassDOT is committed to doing all the right things when it comes to organizations like yours and making sure that disproportionate impacts don't fall on you folks. We just wanted to make sure that we touched base with you, and you know where to come in the future if things come up. The things about snow parking, I am surprised the city did not bring up. When we talk about space under the bridge, and trying to shrink it, we are not doing it arbitrarily. One of the reasons we are trying to shrink it down is you know there are some nuisance activities that go on down there. It has been used as a dumping ground, for drinking, and stuff like that, so the thought was to try and take some of that waste space away. We would keep enough parking but try to reduce the supply driving turnover and activity so there would be less space for nuisance activities. Now that you are talking about people needing it for snow parking, we may need to revisit it.

C: VoC Member: The lighting would be great. It is all sort of deteriorating now.

C: AB: Yes. The lighting that is out there now is even privately owned. I do not even know that the city owns it.

C: VoC Member: So, there was a plan when they built it, and I have seen the plan, but I did not get copies of it. There was a plan for, underground is the wrong word, but there was supposed to be a market. Someone was supposed to do a market under there.

C: AB: This is state property and for the most part, the state does not want anything underneath their property because it can lead to vandalism. That said, we recognize that we are in an urban environment so when the bridge was originally built, there was a lease agreement between MassDOT and the City of Chicopee where the city was allowed to do certain things underneath the bridge. The market was not mentioned in that, what they did allow for was the parking areas and the creation of that Vietnam Veterans' Park. There is a new agreement that is being drafted for the future. Nothing like that has been discussed, nor have I seen a plan. We would love to see it.

C: VoC Member: It was very interesting. There were these 1970s sketches of cars and people shopping and this feel like Faneuil Hall but without the building, so we took that and we had a Farmers Market there a few years ago. The City suggested the idea and showed the picture, so we held the meeting and were told that we were trespassing, so we immediately stopped.

C: AB: Yes. For things that like, you can work with the city, but the city would then have to work with MassDOT because MassDOT will typically not allow for anything. If you can think about this, parking can be a big problem. There have been numerous bridges that have collapsed just because fire has started underneath them so that is something that we have to look at when we are putting things underneath the bridge. Luckily, this bridge is tall enough. We did have a meeting with the fire department and there is plenty of water access for them in this area but those are considerations that we have so that is probably why MassDOT wants to limit the uses under the bridge.

C: VoC Member: Absolutely. It is all very interesting.



The second scheduled stakeholder briefing for June 9th will be with the Chicopee Chamber of Commerce. A briefing to the Patriotic and Memorial Committee of Chicopee at AmVets Post 452 is scheduled for June 19th. It is anticipated that 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
Andrew	Benkert	WSP
Nathaniel	Cabral-Curtis	WSP
Heather	Carr	Valley Opportunity Council
Andrea	Hernandez	Valley Opportunity Council
Jennifer	Hinton	Valley Opportunity Council
Renee	Hodges	Valley Opportunity Council
Stephen	Huntley	Valley Opportunity Council
Jyton	Hunton	Valley Opportunity Council
Alex	Jansen	Valley Opportunity Council
Jennifer	Malone	Valley Opportunity Council
Nadeem	Sikandar	Valley Opportunity Council
Laura	Walden	Valley Opportunity Council
Melissa	White	Valley Opportunity Council