MEMORANDUM

To:	Michael O'Dowd Project Manager	Date:	September 26, 2016
From:	Nathaniel Cabral-Curtis Howard Stein Hudson	HSH Project No.:	2013061.17
Subject:	MassDOT Highway Division North Washington Street Bridge Replacement Project West End Civic Association Briefing Meeting Notes of September 8, 2016		

Overview

On September 8, 2016, members of the On September 14, 2016, members of the North Washington Street Bridge Replacement Project team from the City of Boston Department of Public Works and Department of Transportation, MassDOT Highway Division, Alfred Benesch & Company, and Rosales + Partners held a targeted briefing at a meeting of the West End Civic Association. The North Washington Street Bridge Replacement Project is being undertaken to replace the structurally deficient North Washington Street Bridge with a new structure that will provide improved vehicle, pedestrian, cycling, and boat navigation facilities while serving as a visual complement to the iconic Zakim Bridge. The project will also maintain flood control measures associated with the Charles River Locks which are just west of the bridge site.

Agenda

I. Opening Remarks: Sean Connolly
II. Presentation: Para Jayasinghe, Miguel Rosales
III. Questions & Comments

Detailed Meeting Minutes[1]

C: Sean Connolly (SC): I want to introduce Para Jayasinghe. Para, thank you for coming. For one, we're excited to hear about this project, and second, I really appreciate your whole team coming. This project will impact our neighborhood, and we look forward to hearing about it.

And I just want to ask the group, let them do their presentation and videos, and then I've asked that those be wrapped up within 30-40 minutes at the most, so that we can have at least 15 minutes for questions before we end.

C: Para Jayasinghe (PJ): Sean, thank you so much. And hopefully, we won't bore you to tears. Okay folks, my name is Para Jayasinghe, I'm your City Engineer, and have been with the city for 20 years. On behalf of the Mayor and Commissioner Dennehy, it is our honor and privilege to be here tonight. And, for a second: I'm so annoyed with myself for coming so late to your neighborhood; we've taken this roadshow all over the city, so please accept my sincerest apologies, and I hope we saved the best for the last.

We're going to give a very high-level presentation, because some of the details are very boring. If you are interested, we will cover much broader subject matter in a meeting next Wednesday at the Institute of Health Professions in the Charlestown Navy Yard – September 14 at 6:30pm.

I'm going to introduce some key staff members that are here with me: Ben Sun, the City's Chief Structural Engineer, as well as the state Department of Transportation and their consultants.

In the interest of time, we'll give a very quick overview, and show an animated video – which is actually available on YouTube. We've delivered this presentation in various neighborhoods including the North End and Charlestown.

So, Miguel will do the honors of going into detail. First, a quick overview at the highest level: this is a really, really old bridge, and it is so very tired.

Is anyone from the press here? Are there any elected leaders or their staff here? [pause] No. All right, so with your permission, I'd like to introduce Miguel Rosales, who is one of the preeminent bridge architects. It has been our privilege to work with him for this project. And it is just icing that he lives in your neighborhood.

---

[1] Herein "C" stands for comment, "Q" for question and "A" for answer. For a list of attendees, please see Appendix 1. For copies of meeting flipcharts, please see Appendix 2.

C: Miguel Rosales (MR): As Para was saying, this project impacts part of the West End. It is a project to replace the existing bridge, from this intersection [gesture to City Square / Charlestown side to the other intersection on the West End / North End. This is a project of the City of Boston with sponsorship from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation.

We'll start with an overview of the project. This bridge is over 100 years old, and has come into worse repair over time, but it must be considered now completely obsolete and needs to be replaced. It's going to be three years for the completion of the project, and construction could start next year.

One of the problems that this bridge has is that it doesn't have very good facilities for pedestrians and bicycles. Right now the bridge is very uncomfortable, especially crossing this area here, where you have the openings in the deck. It's not the best location for pedestrians. We also want to increase as much as possible the bus capacity, including a new dedicated bus lane, which doesn't exist right now. That's a major improvement.

To give some history of the bridge: Para reminds us that repairs have been ongoing on a constant basis.

C: PJ: We spend more than a million dollars each year keeping this bridge functioning. So, it is time that something else be done, because all the repairs we've made have to be pulled away. That stuff cannot be recycled. So, the bridge is very, very tired, and we need to do something. Now is the time.

C: MR: One of the interesting parts of this bridge is that it is part of the Freedom Trail. There are a lot of visitors and tourists that use this bridge. In the future, the structure needs to support them as well. The bridge is an historic bridge, and a very massive structure. For large parts of the bridge, it is very wide, and you cannot see anything; it completely blocks view of the water. The new bridge will make much more space underneath. The piers will be farther apart so it is much more open, so that you can see and appreciate the harbor. When these were done, the harbor was very industrial, but now the harbor is the center of the city.

Another important piece is the location of the Zakim Bridge, which is a landmark in the city, and we tried to make the new bridge complementary to the Zakim so that they can be a matched pair.

Project goals: we basically to improve pedestrian and bike conditions; better intersections; open a navigation channel (right now, it is blocked by this big drum because the bridge used to open, but that's going to be taken out. So for boats, there will be much better navigation of the channel).

This is one of Para's main ideas for this bridge: we have the Zakim Bridge, which has a very nice form, but function of the Zakim Bridge is basically for cars – there is no pedestrian, no bicycles there. We wanted to be inspired by the form of the Zakim Bridge, but improve the function for pedestrians and bicycles, and make it for a new generation of people that are going to be using the bridge. Right now, all over the US, cycling and walking are becoming a bigger priority, which was not the case when the Zakim Bridge was being done, twenty years ago.

There was a study done of different ways to design the cross, which was part of our selection. We came up with an idea for the bridge which has piers that relate to the tower of the bridge, like taking its tower and inverting it. So, we're talking about taking the existing bridge and making it a different design. We have had a lot of meetings over the last year and a half, and we have gotten very good reviews for this design, it is very much supported by the city and the community.

Here's the existing bridge. All of this part will also be demolished, and we're going to make a new final system so that access to the docks will be much better. Instead of having so many piers, there will be only five, which is half of what we have now.

C: PJ: This is the new bridge.

Q: Theresa Raso (TR): Are they going to repair the bridge or tear it down?

A: MR: Tear it down. We're going to make a special area at the tallest point in the crossing, where we're going to have an area where you can sit and look out. There is going to be an overlook location; there are also going to be plaques with information about landmarks you can see from the bridge – for example, you can see the Bunker Hill Monument, the USS Constitution – and there will be an explanation of those landmarks. So now, you cross the bridge and you don't know where you're going, but now it will be a special location.

The superstructure of the Zakim Bridge is steel, and there will be also steel on this. It will be a smooth, constant box of steel. Another view: the Zakim Bridge is famous for the lighting. We're also going to have lighting in the new bridge. We want to make it complementary, so if the Zakim goes red, the new bridge can go red – they can be paired.

New things that this bridge has: it will be much more livable. We will have a cycle track separated from the cars, and they will still be able to pass. Usually bike-lanes are only about four feet; these will be seven feet wide. It will be much greener: for the first time, we are attempting to put trees on a bridge. This is very ambitious. We are researching native plants to be put in. The idea is to make this feel more like an avenue over the water.

C: PJ: This is a city street that just happens to be over the water. We want to give you all the amenities that you are used to on any other designed city street.

C: MR: Another view: we are planning improvements to this walkway. Right now the walkway goes very deep into the water, which is a problem because of floods; it's too low. As weather goes hotter, water will be going up. So we're going to raise that and make it a higher walkway, which will also be better for bicycles. This walkway is actually part of the Connect Historic Boston grant, and will be part of the major connections for bicycles.

Another view of the crossing: it is a V-shape design, and as the bridge gets taller, then the leaves are shaped in that location. The foundation as to go all the way under; it is a difficult construction because it's in the water, the ocean.

The bridge will be illuminated at night – both the piers and also the roadway area.

This is what you have right now: eight feet each side for pedestrians; and most of the rest is for cars. Unfortunately this center span is not operational right now, it was closed many years ago – that is one of the big issues for the bridge.

In the future, here's what will be happening at the bridge. In this area we are going to be wider, but most of the bridge is very narrow. There will be a buffered area here with bikes, separated, and the sidewalk. This is the area where you have five lanes, which are tight, but they fit. And one of them is dedicated for the bus, which was a requirement we heard from many people who wanted to have a bus lane. A lot of people take the bus across the bridge, and this will expedite it. In the center of the bridge is much wider, at 19 feet, and that will be where people will be able to sit and have overlooks. You have more space here, which is actually the center of the structure. So if you are tired, or you want to stop there and look out at the water, you can do that. Part of this proposal includes a structural tie here which is required for the tower.

We put a lot of attention to this structure because we want it to be memorable, people have said it looks like a fish scale, other people see many other things such as hockey sticks, you can see whatever you want to see, but wanted to make something special, that people will enjoy. This

will be a nice space where you can actually have a meeting, if you want. You could maybe have a community meeting there. That's very possible.

We also made the design for all the elements – the signage, the lighting, it's all going to be state-of-the-art, LED, the best technology that we have available, so we won't have to change the lights over time.

This is part of the plaque system with all the information. The Freedom Trail will be well-marked. Now these are the six components of the signage that we're going to use. We wanted to include both something old – like the historic landmarks, the USS Constitution, the Bunker Hill Monument – and some of the new structures, like the Zakim Bridge. When you cross the bridge, it's very special near the center, because you'll be able to see the whole panorama, with all these landmarks.

Q: NNG: Para, with the new ships coming in, will they stop, or will this be after this is complete?

A: MR: Well, it's supposed to be complete by, I think, 2020.

C: MR: These are some views from different locations: this is the Harborwalk, you can see these structures working together. The cables also go with the V, you can see the same angle visually. We spent a lot of time working on this design – it's been basically two years now.

Here: another view, of the separation between bikes, pedestrians, and the cars. We have a system of evergreens and grasses that look nice in the cold of the winter, also. We want to always a presence there on the deck, giving directions. The area near Charlestown will include vegetation; right now it's very barren, with very wide-open asphalt.

Here's the overlook, you can see down. And the walkway that will be going underneath, which also will have LED lighting. Right now that walkway has lights, but they are old and they are broken, and it is not very safe. So this will be safer.

From underneath: one thing we're doing is we're doing this green system that will enclose all the utilities. If you look underneath right now, the bridge has lots of pipes that carry gas and other things. All of that has to remain, but we want to enclose them to make it more attractive from underneath for people who are going to be walking under on the walkways, and also to protect the utilities, like the big gas line.

Here's another view from this area.

Q: **SC:** Miguel, is the video that you're going to show us the same one that you showed us already?

A: **PJ:** It's a three-minute video, because I am being conscious of time. This stuff is sort of boring.

C: **SC:** I just want to make sure that we have time for some questions.

C: **PJ:** Yes, of course. Why don't we take some questions now?

Q: **NNG:** How do you get at the utilities for repairs?

A: **MR:** For repairs, we walk inside the bridge. There are four boxes, which maintain the system of screens that are walkable. We want to be to walk the whole thing inside. Now, you have to use barges for maintenance.

Q: **Margarita:** This is supposed to start in 2017? That's before the Longfellow Bridge finishes, right?

A: **PJ:** Yes.

Q: **Margarita:** How will you manage traffic for two bridges at the same time?

A: **MR:** Well, at the beginning you have a lot of big work, you have to work with the foundations, and it's not going to happen right away. The Longfellow Bridge is supposed to be almost-complete by the summer of 2018, so we have about a year there, but we are coordinating now.

A: **Ed Baumann (EB):** What we're proposing now is advanced signing all along the Rt. 128 corridor that the Charlestown Bridge will be going under construction, seek alternate routes. And we're trying to get rid of cut-throughs way ahead of time. So that will at least alleviate.

Q: **SC:** So, the bridge won't be closed then?

A: **PJ:** Let me clarify: most times, the majority of the time, there will be two lanes coming into the city, and one lane leading out, saving some space for construction. Every once in a while, we may have to shut the bridge down, whether it is for a day, or some hours, or a weekend, just so that you can get the bridge built. It would be foolish and highly irresponsible for me to ever say to you that we can build a bridge of this nature, in this area, with all the restrictions we must have – including access and all the other challenges.

On one hand, we want to get in and get out as soon as possible, like pulling a Band-Aid. So we think that three years is the quickest we can get everything done while balancing so many

things, including preserving the very beautiful Charlestown Marina. There's a gentleman that represents the marina here, and of course when you live there, you don't like to hear people jackhammering with noise and all of that stuff. So, we're trying to plan and balance with so many things, and be simultaneously sensitive to the fact that this is a major transportation corridor: city buses from all parts of the city come here; the construction economy of our city is managed through the trucks that come over this bridge. So, we are trying to be mindful of all of that and still give a break to this very old and tired bridge. I cannot overemphasize how tired that bridge is.

Q: NNG: The Leverett Circle pedestrian bridge: is that going to be built before this?

A: PJ: The pedestrian bridge is independent from this project. One bridge has nothing to do with the other, but that's another very lovely bridge, which was promised as part of Big Dig mitigation, and we are all supportive of it.

C: NNG: I know that's not tonight, but I asked because Miguel had talked about this route.

A: MR: The schedule for the Leverett Circle Bridge is still not completely established. Right now we're between the beginnings to 25% design, and until you get to the 25% milestone, it's hard to say when it's going to be completed.

C: PJ: Now, we're going to take a question that is related to the North Washington St Bridge.

Q: SC: You guys said that it will be five lanes, two going in and two going out, and a bus lane. Is that bus lane going in one direction?

A: PJ: It will be going inbound.

Q: SC: Okay. And these lanes aren't flexible to the flow of traffic like an HOV lane?

A: PJ: So right now, the way the top surface of the bridge is designed, we are assuming that the transportation will be multi-modal, and we want to respect the cars, the cyclists, the pedestrians, all of it. The surface area, in 10 years, in 20 years, if it needs to be reprogrammed, it can be done at very little expense.

C: SC: You can push the bike lane over?

A: PJ: You can do many things. We can repurpose the surface area. We wanted to build in flexibility so that this bridge lasts in its functionality, but there are two parts: the bridge needs

to not fall down, first; and the surface needs to be properly programmed. So, we build in that flexibility so that this stuff can be moved, if we all want to walk, we can have it that way. Or if we say we all want to bike, it can be programmed that way.

Q: **SC:** I was just curious if there was flexibility for the flow of traffic for those lanes, if they could switch.

A: **PJ:** Well, building a bi-directional lane is an operational issue. Right now, you will have two lanes going in, two lanes going out, and the bus lane. The Transportation Department could elect to have an HOV lane; a bus lane; a bus lane and an HOV lane; one-way in/out, etc.

Q: **NNG:** Do both sides of the bridge have pedestrian and bicycle sidewalks?

A: **PJ:** Absolutely. So this is mirrored, you can see the design on both sides of the bridge. Right here – sorry, my stomach is kind of big – actually, that's what inspired these designs in the center, I was watching my stomach and I realized… but seriously folks, the middle of the bridge will give you a little bit more space so that you can enjoy the space. And it is mirrored on both sides.

Q: **NNG:** Are you anticipating any situations where you have to close down the bridge entirely? What's going to happen trying to get from here to there? Is there going to be a detour, are there going to be shuttle buses? I have to get to Spaulding hospital and I don't want to walk.

A: **PJ:** We are mindful, but I'm not sure – do we have a complete shutdown scenario?

A: **EB:** No, we're not planning that yet.

C: **PJ:** Right, we're not planning that sort of thing yet.

C: **NNG:** Okay well I'd like that we be consulted when you have a shutdown, because this neighborhood was very affected by the change to the T stop. Older people have to go out to North Station, we lost that subway. So we want to be sure that we have transportation that's accessible, and we'd like input to that when you're considering that. Anyways, this was a beautiful presentation.

C: **PJ:** That's sweet, thank you. Yes, to speak to your point: this lovely lady brings a very serious issue. If, for some reason, the world should rotate in a certain direction, and it is absolutely needed for us to shut this bridge down for any period, there were be so much community consultation that it's not going to be funny. Think about it, you've got the bus routes coming in. You've got Charlestown that needs to get home. You've got MGH on that side, there's a full suite

of issues. I just want to be very factual in what I say, and not let you have a false sense of security, but we will have everything planned if needed.

C: NNG: This neighborhood been here a long time, and has a lot of good ideas, and we think you should work with us on this.

Q: NNG: If I want to get to that video on YouTube, what can I use for search?

A: PJ: Search "North Washington Street Bridge", and you will find one of these presentations, and you can fast-forward right the video.

Q: SC: Based on the timeline, a lot of the skyscrapers will be going up in our area around the same timeline. Do you guys coordinate with all those buildings, because this area is unique in that sense?

A: PJ: Yes. Right next to this bridge is the whole TD Garden complex. We are working very closely with them, because construction over here can have impacts in terms of their timeline. We have gone to great lengths to talk to any person who cares to listen to us. But I cannot say that from that side of my mouth when I haven't come here for all these months. So I am feeling like I'm being hypocritical by saying that. But I hope you forgive me for being so late in coming to see you.

Q: Theresa Raso (TR): I have a question.

C: PJ: Yes ma'am.

Q: TR: It seems like this is a dangerous…

C: PJ: Challenging?

Q: TR: … challenging, yes, and it seems dangerous. I'm not an architect or an engineer, but I'm visualizing those concrete stakes going under the bridge...

Q: PJ: Do you mean the piers?

Q: TR: Yes. How far down does that go? That's too long. And that's important. I mean, we want a sturdy bridge.

C: SC: That raises a good question, as well: what are the phases of this? Is it one side first, something else?

A: PJ: Alright. Let me use my three fingers, because there are three barrels of the bridge. The middle is closed, because it got so tired that we had to shut it down completely, around fifteen years ago, 2000. So we have to fix the middle first. Then, we can switch traffic and balance things out on either side. Now, to make things more interesting for us, we have all these utilities that are underneath this bridge – you've got gas lines, power lines – so we have to manage their location. I promise you this isn't fun, trying to balance everything, but that's why those nice gentlemen gets paid more than $2.99 per hour, to think through all of this stuff. Their task is to give us a world-class, iconic-lite bridge - not as grand as the Zakim, but complimentary, and something that all of you can be proud of. So, they have thought of all of this stuff, and we don't do this by ourselves. The state highway department works very closely with us, the Federal Highway Administration, have both devoted lots of resources to getting this done. It's very expensive, more than $120 million – not cheap.

C: SC: But it's not as much as the other one.

C: PJ: Yes, the other one is a little bit more, about $160 to $200 million.

Q: TR: You've got a lot of traffic, and you're not going to be able to lose that, so you're going to have to detour towards Martha Road. How are we going to get in and out of here?

A: PJ: It is challenging, to say the least. But this bridge every once in a while starts talking to us: a little hole appears. One of the most recent holes, I could have put myself through that hole. And I have a picture of it. So this bridge is talking to us, saying "please", and we have to fix it.

C: SC: At this point, I'd like to ask for any final questions.

Q: NNG: How are you dealing with the coffer dams?

A: PJ: We work with the Department of Conversation and Recreation, which manages the Locks. And there's the Harbor Police on one side, and the marina on the other side.

Q: SC: You mentioned that the walking path will be changed. Is that one of the last things that will happen?

A: PJ: It might be, yes.

A: MR: It's important to maintain access throughout.

A: PJ: Yes. And afterwards, we can lift this up, make it skinnier.

Q: **SC:** There are new residents that will be moving into 88 North Washington, who should be notified of this project.

A: **PJ:** Yes, we know. The developers and neighbors, they are all partners with us, because someone has to help us to keep this a very nice place. We will have to manage the situation, because it would be a shame if we had to give up all the things that give this place personality.

C: **SC:** Thank you for coming on such short notice.

Next Steps

The next public meeting will be held at 6:30 PM on September 14, 2016 at the MGH Institute of Health Professions, 36 1st Avenue, Charlestown Navy Yard.

Appendix 1: Meeting Attendees

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation
Jane	Wilson	WECA
John	Wilson	WECA
Angela	Rotondo	WECA
Andrew	Hayo	
Theresa	Raso	WECA
Sean	Connolly	WECA
Jim	Kersten	MassDOT
Kate	Bell	Councilor Josh Zakim
Mike	O'Dowd	MassDOT
Ben	Sun	City of Boston
Erin	Talevi	City of Boston
Nate	Cabral-Curtis	Howard Stein Hudson
Hannah	Brockhaus	Howard Stein Hudson