



Needham – Newton Corridor Project Virtual Public Information Meeting Wednesday, September 30, 2020

Project Team Attendees

Chris Kivior, MassDOT
 Chuck Labbee III, MassDOT
 Chuck Sabella, MassDOT
 Donny Dailey, MassDOT
 Eric Feeley, MassDOT
 Kate Barrett, RVA
 Kristen Pennucci, MassDOT
 Kyle Olsen, RVA
 Marie Sullivan, Stantec
 Michael Smith, P. Gioioso & Sons

Public Attendees (from Zoom login names)

Allan Beth	Carol Kong	Ed Barry
Allan Levy	Carys Lustig	Edward Friedman
Amy	Christian MilNeil	Elizabeth Kaponya
Amy Canning	Chuck Tanowitz	Ellen Massarsky
Andrew Zamsky	Colleen Bellotti- Sen Rush Office	Ely Kirschner
Anton Khitrenovich	Courtney Worhunsky	Erik Pedersen
Barney Heath	Cynthia Landau	Eugene Ho
Barry Sullivan	Cynthia Simon	Fredric Margolis
Barry Yogel	David Montgomery	G.A. Ruetenik
Ben Daniels	Deb Crossley	Garry Miller
Bernard McFarland	Dennis Ozer	Gary Bohnert
Bill Humphrey	Devra Bailin	Gerald Clarke
Brittany Schwartz (she/her)	Diane Abbott	Greg Reibman
Bruce Fleming	Diane Pruenete	Hope Cline
Bruce Wolfeld	Dina Creiger	Ismail Moumni
Bruno Difazio	Doug Waybright	James Curtin

James McFarland	Lalor Burdick	Paul Holt
James Purdy	Larry Nathanson	Paul McCarthy
Janey Bishoff	Laureen Guariglia	Paul McFarland
Janice Epstein	Lauri Chmielewski	Paul Prohowski
Jay Werb	Leandra	Phyllis Mays
Jean Greer	Leo Hannenberg	Ralph Barton
Jeanne McKnight	Leonard Rosenthal	Ravi Chari
Jeff Aliber	Leslie Greenberg	Rhain Hoyland
Jeff Bennett	Lisa Radosta	Robert Bucelwicz
Jeffrey Drucker	Liz Roebuck	Robert Cotoia
Jeremy Hill	Lou Taverna	Robert Deutsch
Jim McGonagle	Marc Bloom	Robert Nealon
Jim McGonagle	Marc Gudema	Robert Shriberg
Jini Fairley	Marco Gioioso	Ronald Levy
Joan McEvoy	Margaret Dozark	Rosemarie Mullin
Jodie Zussman	Margo Volterra	Ruth B. Balser
John Bulian	Maria Iriti	Sam Doolan
John Passarini	Mark Bridger	Sharon Soltzberg
John Rufo	Maurice Handel	Shirley Rzasa
Joni cline	Maxine Bridger	Sophia Galimore
Jordan	Michael Medeiros	Stephen Marcus
Joy Feldman	Mike Benoit	Stephen McKnight
Julie Cohen	Mike O'Connell	Steven Capasso
Karen Schueler	Mo Barbosa	Stuart Smith
Karen Tarantino	Monica Gonzalez	Susan Huffman
Kate Mombourquette	Nancy Greenwald	Susan Weisberg
Kathleen Brown	Nicole Freedman	Thomas Currier
Kent Gonzales	Norman Greenberg	Tom Hart
Kerry McCormack	Pam Wright	Walt Woo
Kevin Belmont	Pamela Yunker	Yongjie Yang
Kimberly Howard	Pat	9 Call-In Numbers
Kimberly Donovan	Paul Bavuso	
K. Wiesner	Paul Clifford	

Meeting Purpose

The purpose of this meeting was to review the Needham-Newton Corridor Project and explain the project need, goals, benefits, and construction activities.

Meeting Format

The meeting was hosted via Zoom. It began with a presentation at 6:30 PM followed by time for public comments and questions.

Materials (Available on project website prior to the meeting)

- PowerPoint presentation

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Donny Dailey, MassDOT, welcomed attendees to the Needham-Newton Corridor Virtual Public Information Meeting. Mr. Dailey displayed a map of the project corridor, which highlighted related infrastructure improvements MassDOT has completed along Highland Avenue, Needham Street, and Winchester Street. The Needham-Newton Corridor project will tie together these improvements, creating a safer and more accessible corridor.

Mr. Dailey introduced the project team, comprised of staff from MassDOT, Stantec, the design consultant, P. Gioioso & Sons (PG&S), the project contractor, and Regina Villa Associates, the public outreach consultant. Chris Kivior, MassDOT, outlined the public meeting procedures, noting that the meeting will be recorded.

Mr. Dailey outlined the project goals and benefits. The Needham-Newton Corridor project utilizes a multimodal design approach, which balances the needs of all users. Designated shared use paths and crosswalks will improve pedestrian and bicycle accommodations, while a widened road and signal replacements will improve traffic operations.

Marie Sullivan, Stantec, shared the locus map with the project corridor highlighted in red. The current corridor has many deficiencies, including unmarked and non-compliant crossings, undefined sidewalks, narrow shoulders, wide driveway openings and parking perpendicular to the road.

When the project is completed, the Needham-Newton corridor will consist of a raised bicycle lane and sidewalk on Highland Avenue and Needham Street, and a shared use path on the bridge over the Charles River and Winchester Street. In either scenario, a 2-foot shoulder will separate vehicular traffic from bicycle and pedestrian accommodations.

Ms. Sullivan outlined the specific improvements along the corridor, starting with Highland Avenue from Webster Street to Hunting Road. This segment will be widened to accommodate two vehicular lanes in each direction, with exclusive left turn lanes. Additionally, signals at Webster Street and Hunting Road/Gould Street will be replaced. This work is expected to begin the first week of November.

Highland Avenue from Wexford Street to the Charles River will be widened to accommodate two lanes in each direction, with an exclusive left turn lane heading eastbound. The signal at Second Avenue will be replaced, and a designated crosswalk to the Charles River Reservation Trail will be added. This work is expected to begin in late winter 2020.

Ms. Sullivan explained that the bridge over the Charles River was built in 1875 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Needham-Newton Corridor project will rebuild the top portion of the bridge to provide three travel lanes, shoulders, BR-2 safety railing and shared use paths with ornamental railings. The historic stone arches will remain intact and there will be no permanent impacts to the Charles River. This work is expected to begin in summer 2021.

Crossing the Charles River to Newton, Ms. Sullivan outlined the improvements along Needham Street. The roadway will be widened to accommodate a continuous two-way center left turn lane, and a connection to the Upper Falls Greenway Trail will be established. A new signal will be installed at Charlemont Street, while the signals at Oak Street and Avalon Drive will be maintained. MBTA bus route 59 will remain in service during this work, however, stops will be temporarily relocated as needed. Abutters will be notified before the relocations. This work is expected to begin in summer 2021.

Finally, Ms. Sullivan outlined the improvements on Winchester Street from Dedham Street to Route 9. The roadway will be widened from Curtis Street to the Route 9 bridge to accommodate designated left turn lanes and a shared use path. The Dedham Street signal will be replaced, and two new signals and designated crosswalks will be installed at the Route 9 ramps. This work is expected to begin in winter 2021/2022.

Mike Smith, P. Gioioso & Sons, outlined how the contractor will deliver this project. The typical work shift will be Monday through Friday, from 7:00 AM to 3:30 PM each day. There will be no lane closures during peak traffic hours (6:00 AM to 9:00 AM and 3:00 PM to 7:00 PM) and two-way traffic will be maintained whenever possible. Night work for milling and paving operations will be necessary to minimize traffic impacts. Abutters will be notified two weeks in advance of any night work.

Mr. Smith noted that heavy construction on the project will commence in November 2020, and sequencing and durations are subject to change. From November 2020 to spring 2021, abutters will see utility and roadway work on Highland Avenue from Webster Street to the Charles River bridge in Needham.

Before heavy construction, abutters may notice minor activities along the corridor, such as placing signage. Additionally, utility companies have been working to relocate utility poles to the back of the proposed location of sidewalks. As a result, abutters may notice minor tree trimming and removal. No trees will be removed until the final plan is approved. Utility work will continue through 2021.

Between now and the end of spring 2021, Mr. Smith expects that only minor utility work will occur in Newton. In summer 2021, the project team will host another public meeting before roadway work on Needham Street begins.

Before moving to the question and answer portion, Mr. Dailey introduced the project email address (NeedhamNewtonCorridor@dot.state.ma.us), and encouraged all attendees to visit the project website, where they can sign up for project advisories.

PUBLIC COMMENTS & QUESTIONS

Mr. Kivior outlined the instructions for participating in the public comment portion of the meeting. Participants wishing to verbally ask a question must click the “raise hand” button to indicate they would like to speak. Additionally, participants could type their question in the Q&A box.

Mr. Dailey recognized Colleen Bellotti from Senator Michael Rush's office, who explained she had no questions.

Jeanne McKnight explained that she is a member of the Needham Planning Board, which has been focusing its efforts on the Muzi Ford site. Ms. McKnight asked if there will be land takings along the corridor in Needham? Ms. Sullivan explained that there will be strip takings and easements along the entire length of the project. Ms. McKnight asked if there is a plan that shows the exact locations and dimensions? Ms. Sullivan explained that there is a plan at Town Hall.

A participant asked if the meeting PowerPoint can be downloaded. Kate Barrett, RVA, explained that a copy of the presentation is located on the project website.

Diane Abbott explained that she is a resident of Highland Terrace, one of last cul-de-sacs before the Charles River in Needham. Ms. Abbott asked if there are plans to ensure residents of Highland Terrace will be able to move across the additional lanes of traffic to be added during construction. Ms. Sullivan explained that the four lanes start to transition to three at Highland Terrace before the bridge over the Charles. Ms. Abbott expressed concern over the described merge causing a bottleneck, and asked if anything could be done to make sure Highland Terrace residents do not get blocked in during high traffic. Ms. Sullivan explained that there are no plans right now, but requested Ms. Abbott email the project inbox so the team can follow up with a proposal.

Maria Iriti asked for the definition of a retaining wall. Mr. Smith explained that a retaining wall holds up earth that is currently on a slope. There are 12 retaining walls to be created during this project to support widened sidewalks.

Garry Miller explained that he a liaison for the Northland development, which plans to start work soon. Mr. Miller asked if the Needham-Newton Corridor project team has been in contact with the Northland project team, as he has concerns about the projects overlapping. Mr. Smith explained that as the Northland project ramps up, PG&S will begin hosting more frequent coordination meetings between contractors to discuss overlapping work. Mr. Dailey and Ms. Sullivan explained that representatives from their respective organizations have been in contact with each other throughout the design process to coordinate this work.

Leo Hannenberg asked for clarification on the night work for milling, specifically how long it will last and if there will be any opportunities to do this work during the day. Ms. Sullivan explained that milling and overlay work will most likely happen toward the end of the project, and the best time to complete this work is at night as it will require a full road shutdown to accommodate heavy equipment. Mr. Smith explained that the project team will provide abutters with advanced notice of this work.

Allan Levy expressed concern about utility pole relocation given the Northland development, and asked if the project team has been coordinating with utility companies. Ms. Sullivan explained that the project team has been in coordination with utility companies, and the schedule of the Needham Newton Corridor project cannot be delayed due to the schedule of the Northland development. Additionally, Ms. Sullivan has attended monthly utility meetings with Northland, who decided it was best for both parties to move forward with utility pole relocation. Chuck Sabella, MassDOT, echoed Ms. Sullivan's points, and explained that MassDOT has been meeting with Northland project representatives regularly.

Mo Barbosa asked if the contractor has a plan for pest mitigation, and if so, when it will be published. Mr. Smith explained that the Needham-Newton Corridor project does not include extensive sewer work, which is what usually draws pests. The contractor will monitor this issue and address on an as needed basis.

Allan Beth expressed concern over the two-way left turn lanes and how they will be enforced. Ms. Sullivan explained that the proper way to use a two-way left turn lane is to stay in the through lane until you are approaching where you need to turn. Education within the communities on how to properly use a two-way left turn lane will help mitigate the issue.

Ronald Levy asked how high the bike lane will be raised from vehicular traffic and if there will be a barrier to protect bicyclists from vehicles. Ms. Sullivan explained that the bike lane will be raised six inches higher than the vehicular traffic lane, and that the average car cannot jump the curb. Additionally, Mr. Levy expressed concern about the bridge not being widened enough to relieve traffic buildup. Ms. Sullivan explained that an extensive analysis of the corridor was completed during design, which showed traffic from Needham into Newton was worse, which informed the new lane arrangement.

Ellen Massarsky asked if utility lines will be moved underground for this project? Ms. Sullivan explained that all overhead wires will remain during this project, noting that utility companies will remove unused wires.

Nancy Greenwald explained that she is a resident of 615 Highland Avenue, and expressed concern about the project widening removing green space in front of her building. Ms. Sullivan explained that the existing curb will move about 1 – 5 feet closer to the building to accommodate the new bike lane. Ms. Greenwald asked if the sidewalk would come up to the building. Ms. Sullivan explained there will still be greenspace between the building and sidewalk.

Jeff Aliber asked if the Needham-Newton Corridor project considered the proposed developments at the Muzi Ford site. Ms. Sullivan explained the project team has coordinated with the Muzi site property owners, but the project limits do not account for any redevelopment of their property.

Maurice Handel explained that he is the Chair of the Needham Select Board and suggested the project team meet with residents of Highland Terrace. Additionally, Mr. Handel explained that the fishpond at the Muzi Ford property is a local landmark, and asked if the project team knew what will happen to it. Ms. Sullivan explained that the pond will be removed at the request of the property owner.

Greg Reibman asked when work on the bridge over the Charles River will begin and how long it is expected to take? Mr. Smith explained that he expects construction on the bridge to begin next summer. More details on this construction will be presented at the next public meeting, which will focus on work in Newton.

Ralph Barton asked if any proactive measures are being taken in relation to traffic flow to assure businesses remain open during construction? Mr. Smith explained that the contractor does not anticipate closing any lanes of travel unless absolutely required, noting that there will be time, especially on the Needham end, where alternating traffic will need to be implemented. Mr. Smith assured Mr. Barton that construction will not be sited outside specific businesses for extended periods of time. Mr. Barton asked if Mr. Smith expects traffic counts to go up. Mr. Smith explained he does not have specific numbers.

John Rufo asked if there will be new retaining walls on Highland Avenue west of I-95, and if there is a plan containing the location and design of all retaining walls. Mr. Smith explained that there are plans, which will be posted to the project website. Ms. Barrett explained that the email list will be notified once meeting materials are posted and encouraged Mr. Rufo to email the project inbox if he does not find what he is looking for.

Leonard Rosenthal expressed concern about the environmental impact of drainage into the Charles River and the integrity of the bridge given its age. Ms. Sullivan explained that the project team has coordinated extensively with Needham and Newton on environmental issues, and will include catch basins with oil separators, as well as leeching trenches to filter water before it exits into the river. Regarding the integrity of the bridge, Ms. Sullivan explained that the project team has reviewed all reports and inspections, and determined that the bridge is structurally sound requiring no major substructure repairs. Mr. Rosenthal assumed that the widened roadway on top of the bridge would add weight, and questioned if this would impact the inspections. Ms. Sullivan explained that during the design of the bridge many calculations were done as well as coordination with MassDOT, and the team feels comfortable with the substructure integrity.

Robert Deutsch echoed Ms. Abbott's access concerns for Highland Terrace residents. Additionally, Mr. Deutsch explained that he could not find the PowerPoint presentation on the project website. Ms. Barret explained that it can be found on the public meeting events page.

Ms. Greenwald asked how close the new sidewalk will be to 615 Highland Avenue in Needham following construction. Ms. Sullivan explained it would be about 10-15 feet away. Ms. Greenwald expressed concern about sidewalks being too close to residential buildings.

Greg Reibman asked when the contractor is expected to complete this project, and if they have any incentives to complete the project early. Mr. Smith explained that the current completion date is scheduled for August 2023, which is target date. There are no incentives to complete this project early.

Jordan asked where snow will be plowed once roadway widening is complete. Mr. Dailey explained that no MassDOT operations representatives were in attendance to answer that question, but encouraged Jordan to email the project inbox with this inquiry and the team will follow up.

Paul Bavuso asked if utility poles would be buried for this project. Ms. Sullivan explained that the short answer is no.

Janey Bishoff explained that she is a resident of 230 Needham Street, and recently experienced unannounced power outages. She asked if the project team expects frequent power interruptions during construction. Mr. Smith explained that he does not have information about any of the recent power outages Ms. Bishoff mentioned, but during construction for the Needham-Newton Corridor project, there will be a number of services that need to be relocated, which may require temporary power outages. Mr. Smith explained that the project team will coordinate with abutters as needed.

Julie Cohen asked for Ms. Sullivan's title. Ms. Sullivan explained that she is a Senior Associate at Stantec, and her role in this project is project manager and designer for the design portion of the corridor.

Elizabeth Kaponya echoed Ms. Abbott's concerns on access from Highland Terrace, noting that there are three town meeting members who live on Highland Terrace. Ms. Barrett encouraged Ms. Kaponya and others to sign up to receive project updates via the project website.

Jini Fairley, ADA Coordinator for the City of Newton, asked if there are any visuals showing what the shoulder separating the bike lane from vehicular traffic will look like, to see if it can be detected by a white cane user. Ms. Sullivan explained that the design and dimensions are detailed in the project plans. Ms. Fairley explained that she knows what six inches looks and feels like, but has concerns about the texture of the separation, specifically for white cane users. Ms. Sullivan explained that she can coordinate with the contractor to see if a sample can be produced before the corridor is completed.

Additionally, Ms. Fairley asked if there will be a signalized crosswalk for pedestrians on Route 9 East. Ms. Sullivan explained that at the Route 9 interchange, there will be five pedestrian

crossings under signalized control. Ms. Fairley asked if these crosswalks would include accessible pedestrian symbols, such as RRFBs. Ms. Sullivan explained that they would be part of the traffic signal system and not separate RRFBs.

Following up on Mr. Smith's comments on pest control, Mr. Barbosa asked who he should contact about this as the project progresses. Mr. Dailey explained that he should sign up for updates on the project website to see where the contractor is working. Mr. Smith echoed this, explaining that Mr. Barbosa should have a good idea of when work will be near him based off the email list.

Bruce Fleming explained that he lives towards the north end of the corridor, near Winchester Street. Mr. Fleming expressed concern about Needham Street being reduced to one lane during construction, as Needham Street will only get busier in the future. He suggested making Needham Street in Newton a one-way road going north instead. Ms. Sullivan explained that would be a better question for the City of Newton. Mr. Dailey suggested he send this question to the project inbox.

Ms. Kaponya echoed Ms. Abbotts concerns about access from Highland Terrace, and requested there be a meeting with residents on upcoming construction. Ms. Kaponya explained that in Brookline there are many intersections with visible cross hatches and signage explaining vehicles can't cross. Ms. Barrett explained that the project team is happy to meet with community members, and suggested she email the project inbox.

David Montgomery asked if there have been discussions with the MBTA on a new Route 59 bus lane. Ms. Sullivan explained that would be a better question for the MBTA. Ms. Barrett suggested Mr. Montgomery email the project inbox so the project team can follow up with the MBTA.

Jordon explained that the Warehouse Picture Framing parking lot at 49 Highland Avenue is perpendicular to the corridor and feels unsafe. Ms. Sullivan explained that the project team will have a 1-on-1 discussion with this parcel owner. Additionally, Jordan asked why the bike lane is planned to be 5-feet wide. Ms. Sullivan explained that MassDOT has a standard width of 5 feet for bike lanes.

Pamela Yunker, property owner at 98-100 Winchester Street, asked what the easement placed on her property is for. Ms. Sullivan explained that the temporary easement was constructed to accommodate space for the contractor to build new sidewalks. Ms. Yunker explained that there is already a sidewalk in front of her property and asked if that is the only time the project team will need to use this easement. Ms. Sullivan explained that was correct. Ms. Yunker asked how long this work would take. Mr. Smith explained that sidewalk work is expected to be completed quickly, however other work will need to be done in the area. Ms. Yunker asked if this easement would be used to work on the traffic signal post. Mr. Smith explained that he would need to look more closely at the specific site before answering. Ms. Yunker followed up explaining that she is concerned about parking spaces on her property, and just wants a timeline of work. Ms. Barrett explained that the project team will be in touch via email.

Andrew Zamsky asked how wide driveways will be addressed. Ms. Sullivan explained that standard widths have been proposed, and if abutters email the project inbox with their specific address the project team can coordinate offline.

Jeff Aliber asked if utilities on Needham Street would be moved underground during this project. Ms. Sullivan explained that there will be poles on Needham Street until Northland moves them underground for their development project.

Cynthia Simon asked how long it will take to complete the section of road between Gould and Webster Street. Mr. Smith explained that location is where the project team will begin work, and that many activities will need to be performed. All activities in the described areas will not be completed until late 2021.

Diane Prunte expressed concern about coordination between the Needham-Newton project team and the Northland Development project team, asking if the Northland team will need to dig up the new roadway at any point. Ms. Sullivan explained that the project teams have been coordinating to make sure this does not happen, as MassDOT has a moratorium of 5 years for all new roadways, meaning no new roadway can be disturbed for five years (except in an emergency situation).

Jeanne McKnight asked if there would be any work between Gould and Wexford Street. Ms. Sullivan explained that the only work to occur in this area is a small stretch of road between Gould Street and the Southbound off-ramp to Needham.

Kathleen Brown requested more detail on specific segments of roadway improvements be posted on the project website. Ms. Barrett explained that the project team can work on adding more detail to the website as the project progresses.

Brittnay Schwartz asked how the bike lane would connect to the shared use path. Ms. Sullivan explained that they will merge into the shared use path when necessary, as the bike path and pedestrian sidewalk will be on the same level.

Julie Cohen asked for the contractor name. Mr. Smith explained that the contractor is P. Gioioso & Sons.

Dennis Ozer asked for an approximate completion date for work from Webster Street to Hunting Road. Mr. Smith explained that this was described in more detail earlier, but work will go well into 2021.

Jordon requested clarification on snow removal. Ms. Barrett explained that the project team discussed this earlier, and will bring the concern to MassDOT.

Carol Kong, 1670 Centre Street, explained that a fence on her property was removed for an easement, and asked how her property will be protected in the meantime. Ms. Sullivan explained that the project team should be able to install a temporary fence when the sidewalk is being installed, and reinstall the permanent fence when the sidewalk is complete. Mr. Smith explained he will look closer at the area in person and follow up via email.

Seeing that there were no more questions, Mr. Dailey thanked all attendees for their active participation, and explained that the project team is committed to engaging with the public throughout the completion of this project. Mr. Dailey reminded the audience of the project email address (NeedhamNewtonCorridor@dot.state.ma.us) and encouraged all to check the project website before closing the meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 8:20 PM.