



Morgan-Sullivan Bridge Replacement Project - Public Meeting Summary

Date: October 2, 2018, 6:30 PM

Location: West Springfield Town Hall Auditorium, West Springfield, MA

Project Team

Peter Cavicchi, Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)

John Donoghue, MassDOT

Joe Gaudet, MassDOT

Jim Hoey, MassDOT

Rich Masse, MassDOT

Anna Nadler, MassDOT

Shawn Clark, Northern Construction Service, LLC

Emily Christin, Regina Villa Associates (RVA)

Sarah Paritsky, RVA

Public Attendance (see page 5)

Meeting Purpose

The purpose of the meeting was to update the West Springfield and Agawam communities about the upcoming construction work to replace the Morgan-Sullivan Bridge and to answer questions. The presentation can be viewed on the project website, www.mass.gov/morgan-sullivan-bridge-replacement-project.

Introduction Presentation

Sarah Paritsky, RVA, opened the meeting and thanked the Town of West Springfield for hosting the meeting. She introduced the MassDOT and project team staff. She noted the meeting is being live streamed via West Springfield's local cable television and Facebook. She introduced Peter Cavicchi, MassDOT District 2 Highway Director. Mr. Cavicchi, Shawn Clark (Northern Construction Service, LLC)

and Ms. Paritsky delivered a presentation describing the project overview, project goals and benefits, construction schedule, traffic management, and public outreach (available at link above).

Discussion

Ms. Paritsky opened the meeting to questions and comments.

Cecilia Calabrese, Agawam City Council, said a primary concern of the City of Agawam is how traffic will be managed during the Big E. Mr. Cavicchi said the bridge will still be restricted to two lanes during the Big E (with open sidewalks), but there will be no construction work during the Big E per the contract. He said the team will be meeting with the Big E organizers, local municipalities, and local police departments to discuss this further next year.

George Kelly, West Springfield City Council, said he is happy the project team is here tonight and that the bridge is going to be fixed. He described his concerns about emergency vehicle access between Agawam and West Springfield which often uses mutual aid, and schedule delays, given the Charles Street (Route 20) Bridge project had a schedule overrun. He said the original schedule announcement for this project was 36 months, and now it is 47 months. West Springfield residents are often restricted by CSX rail cars on the Strathmore Bridge already, and residents could be forced to use Route 187 or Route 5 as the only routes between Agawam and West Springfield. He said many tractor trailers are too high for local bridges, so they use the Morgan-Sullivan Bridge. He hopes the project team has a plan for when the CSX trains block the Strathmore Bridge, which is often up to 90 minutes a day. He is also concerned about local businesses as a gas station and restaurant were put out of business due to other construction projects. Mr. Cavicchi said 47 months is the total allotted time for the contract, but 36 months is the contractor's current goal for completing the project. He added that MassDOT is working with CSX on getting warning signs put in place to alert drivers about the trains.

An attendee said specific chapters of state law deal with the obstruction of intersections by railroads and he wants to know why these laws are not enforced. He hopes the Towns can work with CSX to fix this issue.

Mike Eger, West Springfield City Council, asked why MassDOT did not choose to build a temporary bridge during construction so vehicles could still use two lanes in both directions. Mr. Clark said Northern Construction Service was not involved in the design process. Mr. Cavicchi said the project schedule was already reduced from seven years to four years. Dan McCormack, Benesch, who designed the new bridge, explained that the location is restricted by the four quadrants of land surrounding it and building a temporary bridge would require disrupting the land. The constraints include: the Big E's eligibility as a historic landmark, Section 106 issues, Right-of-Way (ROW) issues, private properties including the car dealership and laundromat, and the West Springfield levee protection system which would require a Section 108 permit from the Army Corps of Engineers. Mr. McCormack said, overall, a temporary bridge was determined to be unfeasible and costly in this location.

Joe Mineo, Agawam City Council, asked for clarification on the number of lanes on the new bridge. The project team showed a diagram on slide 13 and explained the turn lane in the middle of the bridge

would serve traffic exiting both ends of the bridge. Mr. Mineo said there is often more traffic heading into Agawam than leaving it.

Richard Michnovete, a resident of Agawam, asked if the cost of labor and police details would decrease if construction is completed offsite. Mr. Clark explained when the original bridge design was confirmed, alternatives such as prefabricated bridges would have been looked at; he explained these alternatives are often expensive and it is not up to the contractor at this point. Mr. Clark added that Northern Construction Service completed a bridge in Southington in this manner, however it was a more reasonable location to do so as it was on the side of a highway. Mr. Michnovete shared several more comments: he is concerned about traffic congestion and expects that during peak evening hours cars will be backed up to Memorial Bridge; with limited connections between Agawam and West Springfield already, this could post a public safety threat if emergency vehicles cannot get over the bridge; he said public safety should take precedent over the needs of the CSX railroad and the Towns need the help of Congress to fix this problem; he is concerned about impacts to local businesses near the bridge; he said if the Big E is unwilling to work with MassDOT then the town should close the Big E during the project.

West Springfield Mayor Will Reichelt said he is pleased to see a local contractor on the project and everyone is in favor of fast construction. He encouraged everyone to reach out to their elected officials regarding the CSX railroad issue. As a lawyer in West Springfield, he has worked with CSX in the past regarding the statute mentioned earlier, however the Federal Railroad Commissioner said it does not apply. Mayor Reichelt responded to Councilor Eger's comments and said it was not the Town that prevented a temporary bridge construction for this project, as there are businesses on all sides that would be affected even if the car dealership relocated. He said local businesses will benefit from this project once it is complete.

Agawam Mayor Bill Sapelli said Congressman Richard Neal spoke to CSX about installing a signal ahead of the train tracks to warn drivers if a train is present so they could seek alternate routes. He said he understands this project needs to be done and he will work with Mayor Reichelt in sharing information and updates; he thinks the project website will be very useful. Residents of Agawam are very concerned about the traffic and business impacts from this project. He said the final bridge design is well done and he likes the intersection improvements. He understands keeping the bridge open to vehicles lengthens the time of the project. He asked MassDOT to keep the Towns informed and try to work with CSX.

A resident of Agawam asked if MassDOT will pay for repaving local roads that might be damaged by heavy equipment from the project. Mr. Cavicchi said MassDOT is focused on what is in the contract but if MassDOT observes damage caused by the project they will fix it.

Richard, a resident of Agawam, said he has attended public meetings on this project during the design phase and the flyover ramp option was shut down due to cost even though there was a lot of support for it. He blames the railroad and said the Towns are going to pay the price for it now.

Greg, a resident of Agawam, suggested MassDOT have a three-digit phone number to call for instant traffic condition reports.

Jan Hill, a resident of West Springfield, asked if MassDOT is aware of a project announced by Columbia Gas involving a pipeline that will cross over the Morgan-Sullivan Bridge. Mr. Masse said the Columbia Gas work on the bridge consists of the relocation in-kind of an existing 16" main and 6" main; an 8" main will be abandoned. It does not include any upgrade. MassDOT will reimburse Columbia Gas for 50% of the temporary and permanent relocation costs required by the bridge project, if Columbia Gas meets the scheduling requirements set for their work.¹ Ms. Hill asked MassDOT to keep the public updated about the pipeline work.

Donna Jago, a resident of Agawam, likes the five-lane design of the final bridge. She said many residents have just lived through three years of traffic due to the MGM casino project and are not looking forward to more years of congestion. She asked MassDOT to do as much as they can during the winter months to speed up the process. She shared a concern with the design of the Route 57 rotary for traffic traveling from West Springfield going south as she thinks the ramp is too narrow. She requested that MassDOT remove decaying trees around the rotary and begin discussions with the Big E as soon as possible. She suggested there be a park-and-ride with shuttle buses during the Big E to relieve traffic congestion.

Paul, a local business owner, said his tenants at 303 Walnut Street in Agawam have moved out because of the concerns about this project. He is very concerned about losing business and asked how the project team will maintain access throughout construction and when the work will begin in front of his business. Mr. Cavicchi said construction personnel from MassDOT will be onsite monitoring the situation. Mr. Clark assured him that business access will be maintained and MassDOT can post signs saying that businesses are open. Mr. Clark pointed to the presentation and provided a general overview of the work in Agawam, which may be done in segments.

A participant said he has worked in construction for years, including the Strathmore Bridge in the 1970s, and said concrete was poured all winter long.

Danielle Placanico said she owns a business and asked how customers will reach her store during construction. Mr. Clark said her driveway will remain open and there will always be access to her store. He said he can work with her on the best times for crews to work near her store depending on her business hours.

Joe Spano, a local business owner, said his property abuts the project on the West Springfield side of the bridge. He is concerned about the traffic island that would prevent cars from turning left into his business which would permanently affect his business and could put him out of business. He is also concerned about traffic speeds as people exiting the bridge to Agawam can pick up speed.

Kevin McQuillan, Assistant Superintendent for West Springfield Public Schools, said there is a bus garage in Agawam that holds about 19 full size buses that use the bridge throughout the day for the Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative. He said the Big E caused problems for the buses and police were needed to assist. He wants to be sure the project team will consider these buses throughout the project.

¹ This information has been supplemented with additional details.

Councilor George Kelly added that West Springfield City Council has scheduled a public hearing for utility work on October 17. If applicable, MassDOT should provide a petition no later than October 3.

Ms. Paritsky thanked everyone for attending and encouraged attendees to visit the website and sign up for email updates.

Attendance

Jeffrey Auer, Town of West Springfield
Department of Public Works
Kathleen Auer, Town of Agawam Health
Sandy Ausara
Michael Ballway, Agawam News
David Barnes
K Beach
Richard Bennett, Agawam CARD
Cecilia Calabrese, Agawam City Councilor
Fred Cassellius
Michelle Chase, Agawam Town Engineer
William Clark
Larry Cole
Rich Crane, WGGB
Hayley Crombleholme, WWLP
Jim Czach, Town of West Springfield
Jeffrey Dayneou
Maria Drake
Maureen Droi
Pierre Drouin
Robert Duffy, West Springfield Chief of Police
Michael Eger, West Springfield Councilor
Paul Federico
Susan Federico, Agawam RD Doering School
Bob Foresi
David Gardner
Ellen Graner
Jan Hill
Rosa Hill
Deborah Huber, Walk Bike Springfield
Donna Jago
George Kelly, Town of West Springfield Town
Councilor at Large
Gerard Kiernan, Big E
Conner Knightly
Steve Lemanski, Agawam Public Schools
Maggie Lohmiller, WGGB

Maurice Mailcoey
Angela Majka
Wayne Majka
Walter Mantani, Ch. 15 West Springfield
Bill Maxwell, The Colvest Group
Daniel McCarthy
Dan McCormack, Designer Alfred Benesch
Kevin McQuillan, West Springfield School
Department
Richard Michnovete
Joseph Mineo, Town of Agawam City Councilor
Jeanne Naeniright
Edward Parest
Anthony Pestari
Maryellen Phelan
Francis Phila
Danielle Placanico
Doreen Prouty
Ed Quinlan
Michael Read, Town of West Springfield Police
Rosemary Sandlin, Agawam City Councilor
Mary Serreze, The Republican/MassLive
Dan Shattuck, MassDOT
Joe Spano
John Spano
Tim Sugrue
Andrew Szabo
Carolyn Tetrault
Jane Thomas
Jeanne Udas
Andrea Witek
Mike Zablk
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