

## SUMNER TUNNEL CENTENNIAL RESTORATION PROJECT

# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

## Can MassDOT coordinate Sumner Tunnel closures with the opening of the Chelsea Street and McArdle Street Bridges?

The opening of these two bridges is at the sole discretion of the US Coast Guard as maritime law dictates that marine vessels are given priority over vehicular traffic. Leading up to the 2023 full closure, MassDOT had several conversations with the Coast Guard to try and adjust the openings of the bridges to minimize impacts on the community. The Coast Guard worked with the companies within Chelsea Creek and the vessel helmsman to adjust deliveries to avoid peak hours of vehicular travel as much as possible. During the tunnel closures the Coast Guard saw much success and flexibility within the marine community to adjust schedules when they were able. Unfortunately, due to vessel sizes, there are times when tides dictate the movement of the vessel and must move through Chelsea Creek during high tide. Additionally, there are times a vessel must travel through Chelsea Creek during daylight hours due to security reasons.

MassDOT continues to work closely with all emergency responders to discuss impacts related to the opening of the Chelsea Street and McArdle Street Bridges. The Chelsea Street Bridge is owned and operated by MassDOT and sends push notifications of bridge openings and closings to a set list of emergency responders when the Sumner Tunnel is closed. The public can sign up for traffic alerts, including Chelsea Street Bridge openings, at [Mass511](#). The McArdle Street Bridge is owned and operated by the City of Boston. The City has an independent system for notifying emergency responders of the bridge openings and closings. Past discussions with emergency responders have indicated they have been able to adjust response and transport routes accordingly.

## Can MassDOT suspend the “bus only lane” on the Tobin Bridge/ Route 1 inbound during the full tunnel closure?

MassDOT Traffic Engineers and MBTA Bus Operations have reviewed the request for full removal and consideration for creating new time of day restrictions versus a 24/7 bus only use that is in place now. They found that the benefits of the current “bus only lane” restriction outweigh the potential benefits of suspending the restrictions. The Tobin Bridge “bus only lane” has reduced the inbound to Boston travel time for over 9,000 bus riders per day on Bus Route 111 (May 2023, typical weekday) – and with the Sumner Tunnel closure, we expect ridership to increase significantly due to associated changes in travel patterns and with the Bus Route 111 service being free for all customers during the duration of the closure.

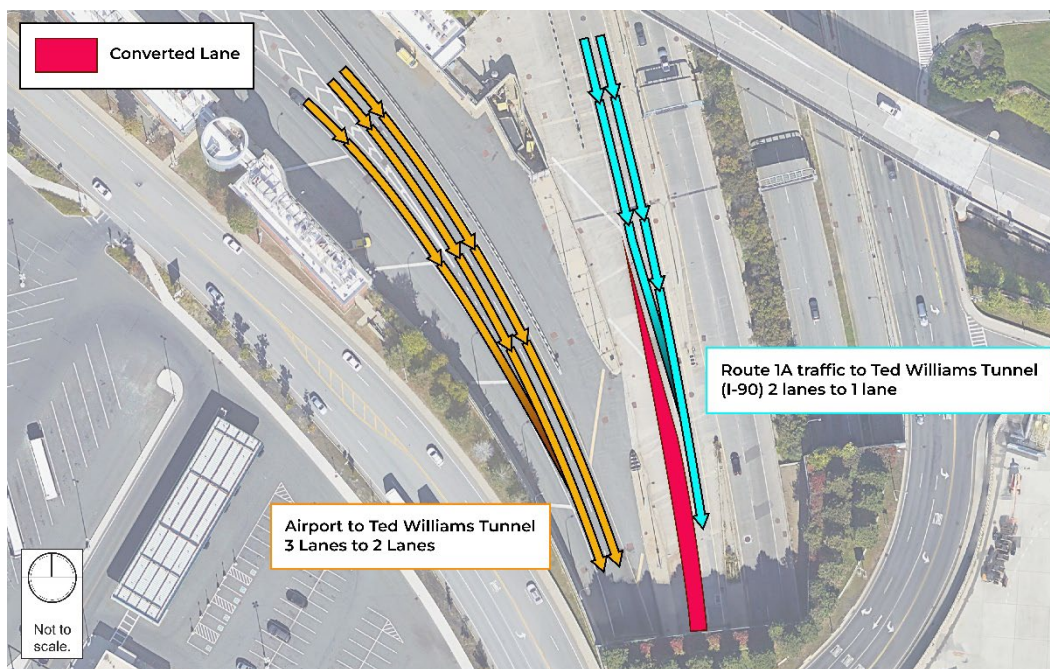
As the traffic patterns adjust during the Sumner Tunnel closure, our Traffic Engineers continue to monitor conditions with the associated detour routing and traffic demands on these roadways. Part of this monitoring will be the continued evaluation of the “bus only lane” operations versus the general-purpose travel lanes to ensure that the current restrictions are the best solution.

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## What is the Ted Williams Tunnel Relief Lane?

During the closure of the Sumner Tunnel, MassDOT implements a relief lane for traffic exiting Logan Airport to the Ted Williams Tunnel (I-90) during times of lower traffic volumes on I-90 Westbound, typically beginning after 11 a.m. and continuing into the evening hours. To implement this relief lane, MassDOT converts one travel lane on I-90 Westbound into a merge lane that allows vehicles exiting Logan Airport to freely join the I-90 mainline.



## Why is the Relief Lane needed?

There are three lanes carrying traffic from Logan Airport and the surface roads to the Ted Williams Tunnel. These lanes must merge with two lanes of I-90 as they enter the Tunnel. Outside of the morning peak hours, the traffic volume entering the Ted Williams Tunnel from the airport is typically greater than the volume traveling on I-90 westbound. MassDOT anticipates an increase in these traffic volumes during these closures which could cause safety issues such as backups on neighborhood streets and gridlock in the airport roadways. Closing the right lane on I-90 as Route 1A traffic enters the Ted Williams Tunnel will ease the merge from traffic coming from the airport.

The relief lane is a proven tool to mitigate traffic backups that extend from Logan Airport and into East Boston neighborhood streets and is only used during times of lower traffic volumes on I-90 Westbound. While the relief lane does not eliminate congestion in its entirety, it assists with balancing traffic delays during weekend

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closures of the Sumner Tunnel and provides safer travel for the increased demand using the Ted Williams Tunnel.

### **Why is the Bennington Street Exit sometimes closed?**

From time to time, the traffic on the off-ramp to Route 145 will back up onto Route 1A North. The backup sometimes extends into the airport roadways, creating safety and security concerns. When this happens, the State Police will close the Route 145 exit for a short time. The detour signage in place encourages traffic to continue north on Route 1A to Route 16 to access Route 1. For East Boston destinations, continue north to the Boardman Street intersection. Here you can reverse direction or access local roads to reach your destination.