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To: Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
From: Matthew J. Costa, City Solicitor
Re: Article 97 – Alternatives Analysis
Scadding Street over Snake River Bridge Replacement Project
Date: November 20, 2025

Article 97 Alternatives Analysis Scadding Street over Snake River Bridge Replacement Project, Taunton, MA

In accordance with the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) and the Guidance on Public Lands Preservation Act (PLPA) Implementation issued in February 2023, the City of Taunton submits this alternatives analysis relative to proposed roadway improvements on Scadding Street, Taunton. The purpose of this alternatives analysis is to demonstrate that no feasible or substantially equivalent alternative exists to avoid or further minimize impact on publicly owned land adjacent to the project that is subject to Article 97.

The subject property is located on the easterly side of Scadding Street adjacent to the Snake River in Taunton and the City of Taunton is the project proponent.

Proposed Action and Public Purpose:

The project proposes to replace the Scadding Street over Snake River Bridge and to re-align the Scadding Street roadway to improve safety for all users of the roadway. The roadway in the vicinity of the existing bridge follows a curved path which compromises safety in comparison to a straighter path. The proposed action will replace the existing bridge with a new bridge and straighten the approach to the bridge thereby improving safety for vehicles, pedestrians and others utilizing the roadway. The roadway area affected by the proposed work on the easterly side of Scadding Street, north of the bridge, is abutted by land whose ownership is attributed to the City of Taunton Conservation Commission. The realignment of the road requires the street layout to be shifted to the east, which affects the conservation property. The easement needed for the roadway is relatively narrow, but several hundred feet long, for a total of 6,891 square feet of conservation land incorporated in the roadway layout (shown as Parcel E-5 on the roadway plans). Additionally, to address stormwater, which is presently uncontrolled, an additional 586 square foot drainage easement is proposed for new stormwater control infrastructure on the easterly side of Scadding Street, which will provide water quality improvements

and control of stormwater flowing from the roadway toward Snake River. The drainage easement is shown as Parcel D-2 on project plans.

The purpose of the project is to replace the narrow, outdated bridge over the Snake River and straighten the curved path over the bridge in both directions. These changes will improve safety for all users and address the deficiency of the existing bridge. Additionally, stormwater control infrastructure will improve water quality with respect to stormwater that is discharged from the roadway and toward the Snake River. The Snake River lies in close proximity to the entire section of Scadding Street affected by this project.

The conservation land affected by this project is a small portion of a much larger tract owned by the City of Taunton under the jurisdiction of the Conservation Commission which is inclusive of the Snake River, wetlands associated with the Snake River and riverbank/buffer area along the river.

Project Alternatives:

1. No Action.
2. Relocate bridge and roadway, and introduce stormwater control infrastructure.

Discussion of Alternatives:

1. No Action. Under this alternative the replacement of the bridge would be completed in a manner that does result in widening of the bridge or relocation of the associated roadway. This alternative is not feasible for several reasons. The narrow existing bridge is substandard. There is no room on the bridge for pedestrians, and the curved approach to the narrow bridge presents safety issues for users of the bridge. Replacement of the bridge must result in a wider bridge and, to address safety concerns, the approach to the bridge must be straightened. Making no change to the roadway, bridge location and dimensions would perpetuate safety problems and would preserve the deficient width of the existing bridge. This is not a feasible option.
2. Relocate Bridge and Roadway, and Introduce Stormwater Control Infrastructure. Relocating the street layout as shown on the project plans is the only way to address the deficiencies relating to the width of the bridge and the curve that presently exists in the roadway at the north approach to the bridge. Any reconfiguration of the roadway in this area will affect land protected by Article 97, as the roadway exists along a neck of land with bodies of water on both sides of the bridge with wetlands associated with Lake Sabbatia on the westerly side (a great pond under the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth) and river bank and wetlands associated with the Snake River (under the jurisdiction of the Taunton Conservation Commission) on the easterly side. The roadway reconfiguration shown on the plans is the least impactful change to the roadway layout, in terms of effect on abutting resources, which will address the present deficiencies. Scadding Street will remain a two-lane road. Currently drainage off of the Scadding Street roadway is uncontrolled; water sheds off the roadway, down the slope/riverbank between the roadway and the Snake River, and into the Snake River and buffer area along the River. The drainage easement on the easterly side of the roadway will enable stormwater control infrastructure to be established with stormwater to be controlled and treated at a drainage outlet before it is discharged downgradient toward the Snake River.

Replacement Land:

The City of Taunton is proposing as replacement land a 23,858 parcel on Fisher Street. Said parcel is designated as Assessor Parcel 64-295 and is located on the bank of the Three Mile River. The City has had said parcel appraised and its fair market value exceeds the appraised value of the conservation land affected by the Scadding Street project, discussed above. The Fisher Street parcel also has greater conservation value. Whereas, the areas on Scadding Street affected by the bridge replacement project can fairly be described to consist of land along the shoulder of an existing city street which has little inherent conservation value, the Fisher Street parcel is much larger, includes river bank along the three mile river and a forested area adjacent to the river. The Fisher Street parcel has potential to provide public access to the river by foot and preserves wildlife habitat and the forested area along the river.

The City's intent is to utilize the Fisher Street parcel as the replacement land for both the Scadding Street project as well as another road improvement project on Rt. 79/Rhode Island Road. The alternatives analysis for Rt. 79/Rhode Island Road accompanies this submission in the EEA portal. The appraisals which have been completed document that the value of the Fisher Street parcel exceeds the combined fair market value of the areas to be taken for easements for the Scadding Street and Rt. 79 projects, and for the reasons summarized above the City submits that the conservation value of the Fisher Street parcel exceeds the conservation value of the areas on Scadding Street and Rt. 79 affected by said projects.

Conclusion

The Scadding Street over Snake River Bridge replacement project proposes the replacement of the existing bridge and the straightening of the street layout as it approaches the bridge to straighten the existing curve in the road in this area. This work is needed to improve safety for vehicles, pedestrians and others using the roadway. Drainage improvements will benefit the Snake River by providing stormwater treatment to the extent practicable. There are no feasible alternatives to this work due to location of the existing right of way and topographical constraints, including the bodies of water and buffer areas associated with said waterbodies on both sides of the roadway.

The replacement land which has been identified by the City has important conservation value which more than offsets the parcels associated with this project (and the Rt. 79 project referenced above).