

## ***Massachusetts Highway Department (MassHighway)***

### **Fore River Bridge Replacement Elected Officials' Meeting**

#### **Meeting Notes**

**June 23, 2009**

**Thomas Crane Public Library**

**Attendees:** See **Appendix A.**<sup>1</sup>

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Joe Pavao (MassHighway) welcomed the group of attendees and introduced himself as a member of the Accelerated Bridge Program, directed by Frank Tramontozzi. The new Fore River Bridge is to be constructed under this program. The estimated cost of the reconstruction is \$255M; 20% of that will come from MassHighway and 80% from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). To speed completion of the new bridge, MassHighway is using a design/build approach and analyzing the feasibility of innovative construction and financing techniques to allow for single-phase construction.

The purpose of the meeting is to inform residents of Quincy, Weymouth, and Braintree, as well as abutters, about the project and to address their comments and concerns. Joe underscored the importance of the audience's comments and noted that they would be incorporated into the work as much as possible.

#### **Highlights of the Presentation<sup>2</sup>**

Joe introduced Mark Pelletier (STV), who briefed the group on the current phase of the project. Highlights included the following:

- The Fore River Bridge carries Route 3A and connects Quincy in the west and Weymouth in the east. The approximate limits of the project are the rotary on the Quincy side and the intersection of Bridge Street and Monatiquot Street on the Weymouth side.

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<sup>1</sup> Meeting attendance lists have been removed to protect the privacy of audience members.

<sup>2</sup> This presentation can be viewed at <http://www.mhd.state.ma.us/ProjectInfo/>. Search either Quincy or Weymouth for project number 604382.

- The Fore River Bridge is a key component of the Accelerated Bridge Program. Since funding for this program is already committed, construction of the new bridge is going forward.<sup>3</sup>
- Highlights of the Accelerated Bridge Program include:
  - Faster construction techniques;
  - Advanced project scheduling and estimating;
  - Streamlining of the environmental process; and
  - Innovative delivery mechanisms such as design/build and single-phase construction.
- The goal of the replacement project is to create a new, permanent, movable bridge over Fore River that:
  - Addresses vehicular, cycling, and pedestrian issues;
  - Is economical to build and maintain;
  - Reduces bridge openings as much as possible;<sup>4</sup>
  - Provides adequate vertical and horizontal clearance for the navigation channel; and
  - Is aesthetically pleasing to abutting residents and businesses.
- The following elements make up the current project team's scope of work:
  - Inform and meet with the community to seek their input and address their concerns prior to selecting a preferred alternative to advance to the 25% design level;
  - Coordinate among key stakeholders and agencies;<sup>5</sup>
  - Work with local historic commissions to satisfy Section 106 compliance;
  - Conduct a type study to determine the preferred bridge type for the river crossing and approach spans;
  - Selection of a preferred alternative;
  - Conducting the environmental assessment including the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) submission;
  - Advance of the work to the 25% design level;
  - Develop a traffic management plan for construction based in part on the one used during construction of the current temporary bridge; and

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<sup>3</sup> This program commits \$3B over the next eight years to reduce the number of structurally deficient bridges in the Commonwealth and ensure that additional bridges are not added to the list.

<sup>4</sup> The original Fore River Bridge had a vertical clearance of 40 feet. The current temporary bridge has a vertical clearance of 55 feet. This increased clearance has resulted in a 70% reduction of bridge openings. The design team envisions that the new permanent structure will have a vertical clearance of between 55 and 60 feet. The added height will further minimize bridge openings while avoiding land takings on either side of the bridge.

<sup>5</sup> The lead federal agency on this project is FHWA. The Coast Guard also plays a lead permitting role and will ultimately dictate the required width of the shipping channel. The selected width will impact the type of bridge chosen.

- Creation of the design/build procurement package.
- Replacement of the Fore River Bridge presents a complex challenge for a number of reasons. These include:
  - Environmental concerns, particularly the winter flounder spawning grounds and herring run;
  - Maintaining vertical and horizontal clearance of the shipping channel below the bridge;
  - Ensuring that the new permanent bridge serves cyclists, pedestrians, and motorists equally well;
  - Construction staging and traffic management during construction; and
  - Ensuring that the aesthetics of the new bridge are acceptable to abutters and the larger community.
- In conducting the type study, the design team will be guided by:
  - The shipping channel width selected by the Coast Guard;
  - Determination of acceptable vertical clearance (to reduce required number of openings);
  - Permit agency constraints;
  - Site conditions;
  - Engineering parameters;
  - Cost; and
  - Aesthetics.
- In conducting the type study, the design team will select between a bascule and a vertical lift bridge.<sup>6</sup> This selection will be guided by the Coast Guard's decision regarding the width of the shipping channel below the bridge.
  - If the Coast Guard selects a channel width of 200–225 feet, a bascule bridge would be possible; or
  - If the Coast Guard selects a channel width of 225 feet or greater, a vertical lift bridge would be required due to the length of the movable span.
- The design team wants to ensure that the new permanent bridge is aesthetically pleasing to the community and abutters and welcomes input regarding this aspect of the work. Rosales + Partners, the design team's bridge architect, can assist in creating a bridge that looks either historic or modern, regardless of which bridge type is ultimately selected.

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<sup>6</sup> Mark Pelletier explained that a new, permanent, vertical lift bridge would neither look like the current temporary span nor have the same problems. In short, issues with the current structure occur because it is temporary, not because it is a vertical lift bridge. The two types studied will be a vertical lift bridge with 1 lifting segment or a bascule bridge with 4 lifting segments. In either design, there will be two 12-foot lanes of traffic, as well as sidewalks and bicycle lanes, in both directions.

- In terms of the approach structures,<sup>7</sup> the design team is analyzing two alternatives: plate girders, which would look much like the approach structures for the original 1936 bridge, and more streamlined, modern-looking pre-cast concrete New England Bulb-Ts. Once the Coast Guard has selected a channel width, the design team will be able to address the approach structures in greater detail.
- The design team is very cognizant of the role of the Fore River Bridge as a key transportation and commuting link on the South Shore. As part of developing the procurement package, the design team will create a detailed traffic management plan to mitigate the traffic impacts of construction. A key part of developing this plan will be a review of the methods used during creation of the temporary span. During construction, the public will be updated regarding major project milestones—particularly those impacting commuting patterns.
- To minimize the impact of construction on commuting patterns, the design team will sequence construction as follows:
  - Construction of the movable span of the new bridge in the footprint of the 1936 crossing;
  - Modification of the approach structures that currently carry traffic to the temporary bridge to connect to the new permanent span; and
  - Demolition of the temporary bridge and restoration of landscaping and amenities surrounding the site.
- Major milestones in the replacement of the Fore River Bridge will include the following:
  - Basic design: 2008–2010;<sup>8</sup>
  - Creation of the 25% design: January–August 2010;
  - Creation of the design/build package: September 2010–April 2011; and
  - Completion of construction of the new bridge and demolition of the temporary span: 2015.

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<sup>7</sup> Approach structures are the ramps leading from the roadway to the moveable section of the bridge.

<sup>8</sup> During the process, additional stakeholder meetings and briefing sessions will be held in both Quincy and Weymouth to ensure that the public has adequate information regarding the project and its progress.

## Question and Answer Session

**Q = Question**

**A = Answer**

**C = Comment**

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**Q. Daniel Raymondi (DR):**

Will there be additional opportunities for the public to learn about the project, and will there be opportunities for local civic associations—we have a vibrant civic association in Ward 2—to voice their views? Those types of meetings will give you a good flavor of the community, especially with regard to aesthetics. I encourage you to reach out to the community through either myself or Representative Mariano.

Personally, I prefer the bascule bridge and a historical look. The area abuts a shipyard that was the economic engine for this community for decades and that built the ships that allowed this country to maintain its freedom. I want a design that nods to the historic significance of the shipyard. Also, the shipyard will eventually become home to high-end condominium units, retail, and restaurants—an eclectic use rather than a single use. The bridge needs to speak to those changing demographics. I am happy about the landscaping to beautify the new bridge, especially on the Quincy approach. And I am curious about the staging areas for the bridge—particularly, how large those will need to be, where they will be, and how they will be secured. At the next meeting, I hope to learn more about that.

**A. Mark Pelletier (MP):**

In terms of the community and civic groups, we will hold additional meetings as this process moves along. We will look at the construction staging scheme that was used to create the temporary bridge. By the next time we meet, there will be more on that. As I mentioned previously, whether we can build a bascule bridge is dependent in a large part on the channel width selected by the Coast Guard.

**A. DR:**

I don't like the temporary bridge; it's awful. The bascule bridge seems more accommodating to the environment. This bridge is in an industrial area, but it's also a stone's throw from residences and mom-and-pop stores. It's not some huge bridge in the middle of downtown Boston. I prefer the bascule bridge. From an elected official's standpoint, if you are going to present the community with two options, each should be equally feasible.

**A. MP:**

The channel width is a Coast Guard decision. I am sure that MassHighway doesn't want a bridge that's any bigger than it needs to be, but the size relates to what the Coast Guard says. If we are within the 200–225 foot range for the channel width, then we can recommend a bascule bridge. If we are pushed past that range, then it will be a lift bridge. Our scope is to evaluate a range of widths from 175 feet to 300

feet. There is documentation that maritime users are asking for the full 300 feet. The design team ultimately will do what the Coast Guard and MassHighway mandate us to do.

A. Joe Pavao (JP):

Regarding the meetings, this is by no means the end of the public process. More meetings are coming. If you would like us to brief the community and civic groups, we can definitely do it.

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C. Victor Pap (VP)

I echo that it would be a good idea to go to the civic associations. Also, I prefer the bascule bridge. There will be, I hope, a lot of development around the bridge in the next 8 years. The commercial interests pushing the wider channel width would need to provide significant mitigation funds if they substantially change the landscape. The erector-set temporary bridge or anything that looks like it would be a tough pill to swallow. You would see broad-based resistance to such a structure.

I am happy about seeing a firmer, more positive approach towards providing bike lanes on the new bridge. Just so the design team knows—and this isn't a criticism—to connect with the civic groups, I'd recommend a lead time of between 3 and 4 weeks.

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C. Nick Verenis (NV) (reading from a prepared statement)

The City of Quincy considers the replacement of the bridge at Fore River critical to the economic development not only of the immediate business and residential community, but of Quincy and the South Shore as well. The current temporary bridge is not only an eyesore; it does not adequately meet the needs of businesses and residents in a safe and efficient manner. The successful completion of this project is hugely important to our business community and the stability of the residential community as well. This will serve as a critical link to the South Shore. The City of Quincy greatly appreciates the efforts of the Massachusetts Highway Department in completing this project. We in Quincy are aware of the challenges involved and support the efforts of our legislative delegation, Representatives Ronald Mariano, Bruce Ayers, Stephen Tobin, Senator Michael Morrissey, and—locally—Ward 2 City Councilor Daniel Raymondi.

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Q. VP:

What do you see as the short-term impact, for example on jobs, of this project?

A. JP:

We are in the opening stages of designing the project; I don't believe anyone has done that kind of calculation yet.

A. MP:

That's not in the scope of the design team at present. Our task is to bring the project to the 25% design level and develop the design/build package.

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C. Sid McDonough (SM):

Seven or 8 years ago, MassHighway held a meeting about the temporary bridge at the Whipple Senior Center, and it was packed. I am concerned that inadequate notice was provided for this meeting. I think many of my neighbors would have been interested in coming. On the positive side, the deck on the temporary bridge is much quieter and lets us sleep on summer nights; please keep that aspect on the new bridge. As a driver and a boater, I'd also ask that you keep the vertical clearance at 55 feet or higher. It makes things easier for everyone. I think it's important to note that 30 years ago General Dynamics asked for a 300-foot channel width at the bridge and then promptly went out of business. I would be skeptical of any one commercial user having that kind of impact on this project. Lastly, I'd like to see an Art Deco bascule bridge.

A. Nathaniel Cabral-Curtis (NCC):

As the public involvement specialist for the project, I apologize if you feel the outreach effort was inadequate. We did advertise in *The Boston Herald* and the *Quincy Patriot Ledger*, and sent letters to a fairly long list of stakeholders and all of the elected officials who attended our elected officials' meeting in April. If you would like, I can spend some time with you after the meeting and get a list of people or organizations you would like contacted next time.

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C. Sandy Gildea (SG):

The North Weymouth Civic Association will take full credit for that meeting; we organized it. If there's any money when this is over, we'd like to spruce up the road from the Hingham Bridge to the Quincy Rotary. Every time we want to do something along that road, the Town says we can't because it belongs to the Highway Department. We would like a few trees. We would be happy to have a meeting with you, but please give us enough time to advertise it. If you are going to put sidewalks and bike lanes on the new bridge, please have a shelter up there with an emergency call

box in it, just in case. I would also prefer a historic look bascule bridge. We're squeezed between the power plant and the shipyard, so let's have it look good in the middle!

A. MP:

Once we have a defined channel width, we will come back to the community and provide you with a better idea of what the bridge's appearance might be. We certainly won't advance anything to the 25% design level and then surprise you with what we came up with.

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Q. NV:

What impact do you see on the rotary on the Quincy side of the bridge?

A. MP:

We will hold to a 5% grade, the maximum allowable grade for ADA; 5% gives us a 57-foot centerline vertical clearance with a bascule bridge and a 60-foot vertical clearance with a lift bridge. We can get those clearances and maintain the current touch-down points at the rotary and the Monatiquot intersection. If we go higher—say, to 70 feet of vertical clearance—that would mean property takings, and nobody wants to think about that. We want to give you a footprint bridge.

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Q. VP:

What is the timeline for the Coast Guard for giving you a channel width?

A. JP:

We submitted a request to the Coast Guard for a determination just about a month ago and are waiting to hear back from them. As soon as we know, we will tell you.

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C. Bill Morrell (BM)

The channel width you are discussing depends on Citgo. It would seem to me more feasible to build a pipeline to let Citgo unload to its tank farm outside the Fore River Bridge; then the channel could be made much smaller, since it would just need to accommodate sailboats.

A. MP:

It's the purview of the Coast Guard to maintain those navigation rights. In making their determination, they will be looking not only at Citgo and pleasure boats, but also defense interests.

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C. Dean Rizzo (DRz)



As Executive Director of Quincy 2000, I would be happy to help get the word out to the business community. Any project to get us away from the existing structure is a good idea. I posit that the business community would prefer a more modern structure. Quincy is investing in a major redevelopment of downtown, and there will be substantial redevelopment of the Fore River Shipyard. The bridge should match the new dynamism. The Fore River Shipyard is also a major water transit point that we would like to use as a gateway to increase tourism to the area. We're going to have this bridge for a long time, so let's make it as beautiful as it can be, with nice lighting and walkways. It should be great—slick and something of which we can be proud.

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Q. Tally Lauter (TL):

Twin Rivers Technologies would like to know a lot more about staging. We still have parts of our site under MassHighway control. During construction of the temporary bridge, the employee parking lot was used as part of the staging, which would be much more difficult this time around. Access to our site became so convoluted that we sometimes had to employ an access route we called "The McGyver," traveling the wrong way around the rotary to reach the opposite frontage road. There was a parking lot somewhat farther away that our employees used during the first round of construction, but it is now being used for boat storage, so it might not be an option this time. We would definitely appreciate being involved in the development of the traffic management plan, since we require 24-hour access for trucks and rail cars at our facility.

A. JP:

I was unaware there were still MassHighway vehicles on your site; thank you for bringing this to my attention. We are in the early stages of developing the traffic management plan and the staging, but until we know what type of bridge we will be building, we won't be able to say exactly where the staging area will be. When we know we will get back to you.

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C. Frank Calabro (FC):

I'm a lifelong resident of Quincy and am also here representing the Massachusetts Building Trades Council. Like everyone here, I've been stuck on that bridge. True story: I was late getting to my senior prom because my date lived in Weymouth. We could mine that tunnel in less than 2 years. If this isn't a final phase and you're not hell-bent on a bridge, I'd consider a tunnel at this location. There'd be no more traffic concerns, fewer environmental impacts, and it would be faster. Just look at the Fall River Bridge—that's taking forever. Also, what is your timeframe for demolition of the temporary structure?

A. JP:

We are not considering a tunnel, that alternative was previously studied and reported by Vollmer Associates in 2002, and dismissed due to cost, takings, and environmental impacts. But you're welcome to submit your comments. In terms of the schedule for demolition of the temporary bridge, that would be done in 2015 along with completion of the new span.

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Q. John Peruzzi (JPz)

Traffic is our concern. The temporary bridge creates backups all the way to East Weymouth and Weymouth Landing when it goes up. If the bridge is up for half an hour, that can make people late for work; that's a lot of time and money lost. Also, once people head for the bridge, and it then goes up, it can be very difficult for them to turn around and select a different route. It would be nice if there were signs telling people when the bridge will go up so that they could take the Expressway. How long will the permanent bridge take to open and close?

A. JP:

In terms of the traffic, we are doing counts and a license plate survey. That will feed into the traffic management plan and help mitigate the backup during construction. We are also trying to have a new bridge with a vertical clearance of between 55 and 60 feet to reduce the number of openings.

A. Nikole Bulger (NB):

We have found that the bulk of the time that the bridge is in the open position is the time that it takes for the vessel to pass underneath it. That time can be lengthened when the vessel isn't quite lined up and ready to go through when the bridge goes up. The temporary bridge has its own issues opening and closing, but that is because it's temporary, not because it's a vertical lift bridge.

A. MP:

To alleviate the backups during construction, we can put variable signage into the construction package. I believe there is also a Web site where people can check for the dates and times of bridge openings.

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Q. VP:

So the amount of time that the new bridge will need to open and close will be shorter?

A. JP:

Remember, the time the bridge is open has lots to do with the length of the vessel and whether it is properly aligned to pass through the bridge, but a permanent movable bridge will be faster in terms of opening and closing, then what you are experiencing now.

A. MP:

I can assure you that a new permanent bridge will open and close faster than either the 1936 bridge or the temporary bridge. Also, because the new bridge will be higher, there will be fewer openings overall. We can try to have opening and closing operational times available at the next meeting after the channel width is known.

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Q. SG:

Is the temporary bridge safe?

A. MP:

The maintenance on that bridge is at a high level. It's a very safe bridge. MassHighway has done a terrific job maintaining it. The maintenance on it is almost constant.

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C. Ron Clough (RC):

I live in Hingham, but I use the bridge a few times a week. Whatever you bring in for a new bridge, I'd like it to open and close faster than the temporary bridge, and I'd like it to be a historic bascule bridge.

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## Next Steps

At this point, the next major step forward for the design team will be when the Coast Guard provides a definite channel width.

The next public involvement milestone will be a meeting in late July to brief the area business community on the project. Joe Pavao noted that the design team would be willing to conduct additional briefings.

**Note to the Reader:** the materials made available through this section of the website have been developed by the project team to support the public involvement process. As the materials cover roughly a year's worth of meetings, the reader should assume that all materials reflect the project team's best understanding of the project at the time prepared. Later materials offer the reader a deeper and clearer look at the project and should be assumed to supersede earlier materials.

These minutes are a close representation of what transpired at the meeting summarized herein, but should not be considered a verbatim transcript. Contact information provided by meeting attendees has been removed to protect their privacy.