

**Whittier Bridge /I-95 Improvement Project
Whittier Working Group Meeting
SUMMARY NOTES**

LOCATION OF MEETING: Salisbury Town Hall
Auditorium
5 Beach Road, Salisbury, MA

DATE/TIME OF MEETING: September 21, 2010, 2:30 PM – 4:30 PM

HANDOUTS:

- Agenda, *Draft* Section 106 MOA, Hines Bridge Replacement Project Presentation

Welcome and Introductions

Mike O'Dowd, project manager from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT), welcomed attendees and asked participants to introduce themselves (see list). Mr. O'Dowd thanked Jerry Klima, Salisbury Selectman, for sending an example of the Old Eastern Marsh interpretive signage.

Mr. O'Dowd asked for comments on the draft September 7, 2010 meeting notes. There were none.

Hines Bridge Replacement Project Presentation

Mr. O'Dowd reminded the group that he had promised to ask the Hines Bridge Replacement Project team back to provide additional updates to the Whittier Working Group (WWG). He introduced Frank Suszynski from MassDOT District 4 to open the presentation. Mr. Suszynski said the team would present an advance view of the presentation that would be made at the public hearing that evening. Murthy Kolla is the project manager for the Hines Bridge project. The meeting presentation will include traffic information in addition to the general project overview. Mr. Suszynski said District 4 has advertised that the bridge will close on October 18; however, several environmental permits have not been secured yet, so the closure date will be pushed in the first half of November. Additional environmental permits were required when the project changed from one of rehabilitation to replacement. As soon as MassDOT receives permission to begin work in the water, the bridge will be closed.

Mr. Suszynski asked Mr. Kolla to update the group. Mr. Kolla said the Design/Build (D/B) team has made good progress and is at 75% design. MassDOT has provided the

communities with copies of the design documents. The D/B team has prepared traffic management plans (TMPs). The project was Design-Bid-Build when MassDOT planned to only rehabilitate the superstructure. After the barge hit the bridge and it became necessary to rebuild the substructure, MassDOT went to D/B. Three piers will be replaced and abutments retrofitted. Mr. Kolla distributed the presentation handout and discussed the schedule. He noted that in 2008 MassDOT had planned a three-year closure to replace the bridge. One of the benefits of the D/B approach is that the project schedule has been accelerated and the D/B team anticipates reopening the bridge in 18 months.

Mr. Suszynski asked Tom Jackmin from Vanasse Hangen and Brustlin (VHB) to provide further detail about construction and TMPs. Mr. Jackmin introduced Dave Greenberg, the team's local traffic expert, and Howard Goldberg from Barletta. He said the team heard the WWG's concerns loud and clear about when the traffic data had been collected. The team collected additional counts during the summer. The TMP will be resubmitted and will be more specific about ongoing monitoring activities. There will be a single point of contact for traffic issues, probably a call center. The first public hearing for the project, when it was still a Design-Bid-Build, was in October 2008. Tonight's hearing will be the third public hearing, and the first since the scope changed.

Mr. Jackmin explained that the main elements of the project are the same. The areas where the project has changed will not be noticeable to the public, since they are related to the addition of the substructure replacement. Most of the geometry was kept; however, the south abutment replacement is new. The existing cross section is 31 feet, 4 inches. It will be widened to provide wider and safer travel lanes, and to accommodate an Americans with Disabilities (ADA) compliant sidewalk. MassDOT had to balance widening the bridge with ensuring it does not impede channel traffic when it's open. The elevated control platform will be eliminated. The team is working with the Amesbury Historical Commission to replicate the look of the original historical elements in the new bridge. The piers will have granite facing over concrete. The southwest stone wall and southeast approach walls will be rehabilitated. The bridge color, lighting and railings will be coordinated with the communities. The bridge will be operated from the original tender house, which will be rehabilitated, and also from a location on the bridge. All of the electrical elements will be replaced with new systems. Mr. Jackmin explained that construction of the foundation will begin as soon as the design package is completed. Design of other elements will be ongoing as the existing bridge is demolished and piers constructed. He added that the project website address is www.hinesbridgeproject.com.

There was some discussion of construction milestone dates. Mr. Jackmin clarified that the original substructure and superstructure completion dates of February 13, 2013 are being carried on the schedule because the dates are contractual and cannot be changed. The new date of May 2012 is highlighted on the schedule. Mr. Suszynski said the new target dates are a result of coordination with the communities and legislative delegation. He reiterated that the target completion date is the bridge opening date.

Mr. Suszynski reported on progress related to the right turn lane at Route 1. A 2000 study identified the right turn lane as necessary. District 4 met with Salisbury and can accomplish the work through existing contracts. He anticipates will be completed before next summer. The north side of the sidewalk will remain intact and the utility pole on the north does not have to be relocated. MassDOT anticipates the lane addition will help alleviate some traffic problems while the bridge is closed.

Jon-Eric White, Newburyport, asked for a traffic update. Mr. Kolla said the TMPs were prepared using a 65/35 split for peak period. Mr. Suszynski said a detailed traffic memo will be provided to the towns once it's finalized. It may be revised for 100% design. The Level of Service (LOS) will be included in the memo. Joe Pavao, MassDOT, said he will bring the LOS analysis to the next WWG meeting.

Neil Harrington, Salisbury Town Manager, asked MassDOT to place detour routes on the project website. The communities' and the Whittier Bridge websites should be linked to the Hines website.

Geordie Vining, Newburyport, asked about other traffic assumptions. Mr. Suszynski said the interstate traffic and other assumptions would be explained at the public hearing.

Section 106 MOA

Jeff Shrimpton, MassDOT, distributed the draft Section 106 Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), noting he prepared it based on the discussion at the previous WWG meeting. He would like the communities' comments to incorporate before sending to the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). He said the MOA is primarily a process document, leaving room for as much consultation as the parties think is necessary. He briefly reviewed the specific paragraphs of the handout.

The first paragraph states that the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and SHPO have consulted and agree that there is an adverse effect on a National Register-eligible bridge. Paragraph two defines the project area of potential effect. The third paragraph

further explains the bridge is eligible to be listed as one of three Massachusetts interstate highway system bridges of significance as accepted by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) and advertised in the Federal Register on December 19, 2006. Paragraph four explains MassDOT's determination that the bridge is deficient and obsolete and will be replaced by a new bridge in a similar alignment. The fifth paragraph states that the community Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and local historical commissions (LHCs) have participated in the consultation process and have been invited to sign the MOA as concurring signatories. Mr. Shrimpton said while FHWA has not yet invited the communities to sign, MassDOT is assuming it will.

Paragraph six of the stipulations states that MassDOT established the WWG for the purpose of providing suggestions and recommendations and serving as an information conduit between MassDOT and the local communities. The seventh paragraph states that MassDOT has participated in the consultation process and has been invited to sign the MOA as an invited signatory. Paragraph eight states that the area of potential effect is not within the ancestral homeland of any federally recognized American Indian tribe. The ninth paragraph states that FHWA has notified the ACHP of its adverse determination with specified documentation, and the Council has chosen not to participate further in the consultation process. Mr. Shrimpton noted that MassDOT has not confirmed yet if the ACHP will find the preceding the case. The Council has been kept informed and a representative met with the project team and some community members and seemed pleased with the process. The ACHP typically does not participate unless it thinks there is a need or it is invited. The final paragraph of the introductory section of the MOA states that FHWA and the SHPO agree that the project will be implemented in accordance with a number of stipulations described next.

Mr. Shrimpton explained the MOA stipulations covered in eight sections. Section I states that FHWA will ensure that MassDOT appropriately records the bridge's historic nature. A narrative report will describe the bridge and its engineering, architectural and historical significance at local, state and national levels. There are also stipulations that MassDOT shall produce archival photographic documentation, including aerial views of the bridge and exterior views of nearby local historic properties, such as Lowell's Boat Shop and the Chain Bridge. The archival photography must be completed before project construction commences. Photocopies of selected pages from the original 1951 construction plans of the bridge must also be included. The final stipulation directs MassDOT to submit one original set of photographic documentation with negatives to the SHPO, who will transmit the package to the Massachusetts State Archives. One package without negatives will also be transmitted to the LHCs for transmittal to appropriate local repositories.

Section II of the stipulations states that FHWA and MassDOT shall give the LHC, WWG and SHPO an opportunity to review and comment on the structural type and sketch plans as they are developed. Section III states that FHWA and MassDOT will ensure that certain ornamental artifacts will be salvaged for reuse on the replacement bridge or at other locations within the project area that are accessible to the public. The four porcelain state seals, four carved granite state seals, two bronze state seal medallions and two bronze builder's plaques are specifically noted. The section states that the locations will be determined by FHWA and MassDOT in consultation with the LHCs, WWG and SHPO. Other artifacts such as reuse of granite are not specifically called out in this section.

Section IV discusses interpretive signage. It states that FHWA and MassDOT will ensure that interpretive signage will be prepared, designed, fabricated and installed at locations within the project area that are accessible to the public. At minimum the signs will address three themes – (1) the life and works of John Greenleaf Whittier, (2) the history of the crossing and design of the existing bridge, and (3) the natural heritage of the crossing including indigenous wildlife. The section states that additional details such as number of signs and precise locations will be determined by FHWA and MassDOT in consultation with the LHCs, WWG and SHPO. Section V states that FHWA and MassDOT will choose an appropriate paint color for the structural steel in consultation with the LHCs, WWG and SHPO.

Mr. Shrimpton said that Section VI stipulates that the MOA will be null and void if its terms aren't carried out within six years from date of execution. FHWA may consult with other signatories prior to that time to reconsider the terms of and amend it. Mr. Shrimpton noted that Section VII includes standard dispute resolution language and Section VIII outlines MOA termination procedures.

Mr. Vining asked for an electronic copy of the MOA to review with Mayor Donna Holaday. Mr. Shrimpton said he will provide it. He asked for WWG comments before the next meeting. Mr. Vining said that while the basic notion of the shared-use path is integrated into the MOA with language referring to public access, he does not see it specifically addressed in the document. Jerry Klima, Salisbury Selectman, said he would like more detail on locations included, such as entry points and overlooks. Mr. O'Dowd said the language was intentionally kept generic, because if it's too specific any changes would require a formal Notice of Project Change filing with the state. He added that William Warner, Warner Architects, is attending this meeting to discuss design concepts with the group. Mr. Klima said he agrees that it's best not to tie down too much detail, but he said the concept of the path must be included. Safe, convenient access is an integral part of the historic component of the project. The document could

be more specific while still allowing flexibility. Mr. White said at minimum the three overlooks, three trail heads and start and end points (north and south) should be included. Mr. O'Dowd said this feedback is good.

Mr. Vining said he would like more language about reaching consensus included in the MOA. He understands the delicacy of dealing with decision making, but consultation is not enough. Mr. Shrimpton stated that FHWA makes the ultimate decisions. The WWG may never come to consensus: there could even be a situation where not all three communities agree. MassDOT has committed to serious consultation. Mr. Vining said the language should acknowledge an attempt to reach consensus. He said he would try to frame what he is suggesting and submit with his other comments.

Mr. O'Dowd said that once the communities' feedback is received, the team will discuss and consider it internally. He said that in the meantime, he will discuss with FHWA some of the comments already received. He said that while he makes recommendations to the Administrator, Secretary and Chief Engineer, FHWA will make the final decisions. He is prepared to make recommendations within the limitations of the scope and budget.

Shared-Use Path

Mr. Bertoulin introduced Bill Warner and Kelly Carr from Warner Architects. He asked Mr. Warner to share his firm's experience on other bridge and path projects, so the group can get a sense of what might be possible for this project.

Mr. Warner described some features of the shared-use path elements he designed for the Rhode Island Interstate 195 (I-195) bridge and river relocation project. The path was part of an historic harborfront walking tour. There were approximately 42 interpretive panels of varying sizes on the 4 to 5-mile path. One panel he displayed described the area 200 years before rails-to-trails; the theme was sails-to-rails illustrating the transition from the use of sailing vessels to trains to move goods. The panel included a map of the entire harborfront walk at the top showing locations of other signs and a "you are here" locus indicator. Another panel described the opening of the China Trade and was placed on the path in the vicinity of India Point, which was named for a China Trade ship called India Man. Mr. Warner noted that it is important to talk about artifacts, but it is even better to include visual representations, which become markers.

Mr. Bertoulin said that now that Mr. Warner knows the themes the communities want to highlight, he can start detailing and come to a future meeting to share ideas. Once the communities see his initial ideas, they can provide feedback and Mr. Warner will

refine and build out the path elements to 25% design. The next six months are critical to the concepts that the team can move forward on. Mr. Warner said he works with the LHCs in designing the architectural elements. For instance, for the I-195 path, he worked with the Providence Preservation Society, Rhode Island Historical Society and others. Mr. Bertoulin mentioned that Mayor Kezer will provide contact information for the Whittier Home and also a person who attended the ribbon cutting ceremony who had some interesting artifacts from the event that might be used.

Ms. Carr pointed out that the size of the panels varies, as does the structure they rest on. They can be independent structures built on a table top or some other base, or they can be built into a path component such as a concrete or brick wall. The Providence panels were typically 60 inches by 36 inches. Mr. White asked about materials used. Mr. Warner said the panels are usually constructed of UV resistant material and are either covered by a high pressure laminate or are fiber glass embedded. The material is transparent and resists graffiti. Some of the I-195 panels have been in place for 20 years.

Mr. O'Dowd asked how many panels might be constructed for the Whittier Bridge project, and their size. Mr. Warner said the number of panels depends on the purpose of the path. The one in Providence was a self-guided walking tour. Panel sizes will depend on what works in a particular location. Mr. Bertoulin noted that the cost would depend on two factors – (1) the process cost to design the elements and (2) the cost for materials and construction. He added that the porcelain enameled steel panels constructed in Green Line and Red Line MBTA stations would be problematic outside where they would be exposed to the elements and possible damage by vandals. Mr. Klima said he would like to see an example of the fiber glass and laminate materials, noting that sharp objects can penetrate laminate. Mr. Warner said he will bring samples and supplier information to the next meeting.

Mr. Vining asked if the process for repairing or replacing damaged path elements could be included in the MOA. Mr. Shrimpton said that MassDOT is not responsible for maintenance of items it provides as enhancements. Mr. O'Dowd added that the communities would be responsible for maintenance and replacement. The issue is the same as the one discussed previously regarding overall path maintenance, Mr. Bertoulin said. Electronic images of the panels will be stored by MassDOT in a repository, which the communities can use when panels need to be replaced. Dennis DiZoglio, Merrimack Valley Planning Commission (MVPC) asked if materials could be referenced in the MOA. Mr. Bertoulin cautioned against being too specific in locking in materials for something that will be built three or four years out. Performance criteria change and advances are made in materials. By being specific about materials, the communities risk being committed to using outdated materials. Mr. Vining said he

agrees, but thinks the MOA can avoid specificity by including language about materials used will be durable and vandal proof. He said he doesn't think the cost would be excessive, but wants to be sure the communities aren't left to deal with materials failure or errors in construction. The communities will think about how to capture this concept in the MOA. Mr. Shrimpton said these details are not standard procedure for an MOA, but MassDOT will take them under consideration. Mr. O'Dowd stressed that MassDOT will not agree to maintain the path or elements. Mr. Bertoulin said the maintenance issues will not be dealt with in the Section 106 MOA. There is typically a second MOA for maintenance and operations. The MOA will outline who keeps what documents and will include details of a turnover package that MassDOT will provide the communities. Mr. Warner pointed out that the actual specifications are the same as those he produced 20 years ago. The difference is in the reproduction and deliverables for graphic images such as maps and photographs. These have advanced from camera-ready to electronic. There was no further discussion on architectural issues.

Mr. DiZoglio said the communities would like to continue the discussion about the northern terminus at Old Merrill Road. They met with MVPC and arrived at two ideas to improve the connection to the regional network. The first would be to widen the sidewalk on Merrill Street to make the area from Merrill to Rabbit Road, Route 110 and the trail network more inviting. The second and the communities' preferred option is to connect the shared-use path at Route 110 in the vicinity of the 110, Merrill Street and Rabbit Road intersection. The intersection needs controls and modernization. MVPC has already reached out to D4 to find out more on the Route 110 widening project that is underway. Mr. DiZoglio said the communities were pleased to hear from D4 that the current 110 project includes signalization, pedestrian and bike accommodations and a series of sidewalks. He acknowledged MassDOT's concern about exceeding the threshold for wetlands variances. He suggested instead that the communities would be willing to propose the connection, with PB technical assistance. The permitting would be the same, but would not trigger the need for a variance because the project would be a separate effort by Amesbury and Salisbury. If the project team could provide a design that meets the requirements, the communities would advance the proposal and if it's granted the variance could be used for the connection. This separate but parallel process wouldn't affect the project schedule. It would give the communities a chance to try for the variance, and if they don't succeed then the connection would be as currently proposed by MassDOT.

Mr. O'Dowd was surprised to learn that the D4 Route 110 widening project would make the improvements at the intersection. He had not seen the design for the area. A different version was sent earlier in a package to PB for use by the Whittier team. Mr. DiZoglio said the D4 work would be completed in 1 to 1 ½ years. He reiterated that the

towns would apply for the permit, but would need PB support. He doesn't think the approach would trigger concerns about segmentation, because it would be a separate project, which would make the connection the communities are seeking.

The group discussed the wetlands limits in the area. Joe Freeman, Tetra Tech Rizzo, said the specific concern for the state and the project is Bordering Vegetated Wetlands (BVW). The threshold is 5,000 square feet (SF) per community. The shared-use path adds 2,600 SF of impact to Amesbury (temporary and permanent), but the project is still under 5,000 SF in that community. The area around Old Merrill includes about 300 SF of BVW. North of Old Merrill there are would be no BVW impacts. Mr. O'Dowd added that the communities wouldn't need a variance, because the impacts of the connection work would be small. Mr. Freeman said that there are really two wetlands areas of concern – behind the Amesbury Visitor Center and along the northbound I-95 lanes. Mr. O'Dowd noted that these areas may put MassDOT over the threshold and are why the agency does not want to pursue the alternative northern connection. Mr. Freeman pointed out that there are no wetlands from Old Merrill to Route 110. Mr. Klima suggested an access point could be constructed without a trail head.

Mr. Vining said he does not understand why MassDOT is not recommending the connection to Route 110. Mr. O'Dowd said that to make the connection would enlarge the corridor scope. It would be beyond the Accelerated Bridge Program (ABP) scope and funding. MassDOT wants to provide accommodations for future linkages and the Whittier project can't preclude expansion. MassDOT is concerned about safety issues in providing access near an interstate highway and also about the potential for delays and cost increases. The agency realized that if it proceeded with the bridge project as originally planned, without a path along the highway corridor, it would likely never happen. It agreed to provide a base path that would be the communities' responsibility to expand. Mr. O'Dowd pointed out that MassDOT is construction the most important connection – the bridge crossing. He added that the Park-and-Ride to the south is a logical connection and consistent with MassDOT's policies. Access provided across the river by MassDOT is consistent with the communities' vision. MassDOT is agreeing to provide a path north of the river within the main line of I-95 and the corridor that ends at a logical terminus point where a trail head would provide parking and safe access and be attractively designed. The path MassDOT has agreed to will be the center piece – the framework – for future trail development. Mr. O'Dowd said that while he was unaware of D4's plans at Route 110, it does not change the Whittier Bridge project. Mr. DiZoglio asked Mr. O'Dowd if he would be willing to consider a more logical terminus with the new information about 110. Mr. O'Dowd said the team would look at the D4 plans and get back to the group.

Mr. Klima pointed out that a 5-foot wide sidewalk on Rabbit Road will be constructed as part of the 110 project. Mr. Vining noted that the Rabbit Road sidewalk and Old Merrill trail head would be only 200 feet apart. He said he continues to be concerned about the out-of-the-way location of the Old Merrill trail head and thinks the risk of underutilization that might result is an important issue. Mr. Vining said the context is important. The communities' goal is not to add more work or cost to the project, but instead to have a good facility that is interconnected, not limited access.

Mr. O'Dowd said he would get in touch with D4 and would reconsider the terminus point. He asked where a Rabbit Road trail head would be proposed. Mr. Klima noted that on the west side of Rabbit Road the town owns a 66-foot wide easement and a 200-foot abandoned railroad right-of-way (ROW) with potential for parking. There is also a potential area at the intersection of Rabbit and Old Merrill, but this area would need a link.

Mr. Bertoulin said no one disagrees with the linkage concept. The concern is scope creep. An intersection would cost about \$750,000. The question becomes where does it stop and how are sequencing issues dealt with. Mr. Harrington said a logical terminus is town-owned land with access to the three communities from one point.

Mr. Klima noted there is a lot of land in the vicinity of Evans Place and Main Street between the highway and the MassDOT ROW at the base of the Evans and Main bridge. The slope isn't bad. Why couldn't the area be used for a connection? Mr. Bertoulin said the highway is within a couple of feet of the fence. A land taking would be required to make the area part of the path system. For ADA compliance the slope has to be less than 5%. In that area, the closest the slope could get to the requirement would be 6%. Mr. Vining asked about stairs to connect in that location. Mr. O'Dowd said stairs would not meet ADA standards. Mr. Vining said a waiver could be secured. Mr. O'Dowd pointed out that waivers are typically only given if there is another ADA-compliant connection close by. In this case, the closest ADA-compliant connection would be 2,000 feet away. When Mr. Vining suggested Amesbury could build the stairway, Mr. Bertoulin noted that with the retaining wall, there is less than a foot of land available and six feet would be necessary. A land taking would still be necessary, which the town could pursue.

Additional Discussion

Discussion of the Newburyport water line and Draft Environmental Impact Report Traffic and Safety chapter was postponed to the October 5, 2010 meeting.

Mr. Harrington asked if further consideration had been given to noise barriers. He is still getting calls. Complaints have also been received from residents near the southbound rest stop. Mr. Bertoulin pointed out that the rest stop is outside of the project area, so would not be impacted by it. He said that Rabbit Road is currently impacted, but will not be impacted further by the project because the widening will be to the inside. Five condominiums at Whittier Place will be newly impacted, because they will be closer to the roadway. The rest of the corridor will not be impacted due to inside widening. Mr. O'Dowd reported that if the project were to clear wide swaths of land, the area would be restored with trees and shrubs, but the project is leaving the areas on the outside of the highway undisturbed.

There were no further questions or discussion. The meeting adjourned at 4:30 P.M.

Action Items

- MassDOT will provide the Hines Bridge LOS analysis at the October 5 meeting.
- MassDOT will provide an electronic version of the draft Section 106 MOA.
- WWG members will provide comments on the MOA before the next meeting.
- Project team will bring panel material samples and supplier information to the next meeting.

**Whittier Bridge /I-95 Improvement Project
Whittier Working Group Meeting
ATTENDANCE**

Name:

Affiliation:

Working Group Members/MassDOT Staff

Jim Cerbone	MassDOT
Dennis DiZoglio	MVPC
Betsy Goodrich	MVPC
Neil Harrington	Town Manager, Town of Salisbury
Jerry Klima	Board of Selectman, Town of Salisbury
Donald Levesque	DPW, Town of Salisbury
Michael O'Dowd	MassDOT
Joe Pavao	MassDOT
Michelle Rowden	Salisbury Conservation Commission
Jeffrey Shrimpton	MassDOT
Geordie Vining	Newburyport Planning Department
Jon-Eric White	Newburyport

Consultants

Kate Barrett	Regina Villa Associates
Michael Bertoulin	Parsons Brinckerhoff
Kelly Carr	Warner Architects
Joe Freeman	Tetra Tech Rizzo
William Warner	Warner Architects