

**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:** October 19, 2010, 2:20 PM – 4:15 PM

**HANDOUTS:**

- *Revised* Draft Section 106 Memorandum of Agreement, Route 110 Bridge Drawing, October 5, 2010 Meeting Summary Notes

**Welcome and Introductions**

Michael O'Dowd, MassDOT Project Manager, welcomed the group. He asked participants to introduce themselves (see attached attendance list).

Mr. O'Dowd asked if there were any outstanding items the group wanted to discuss before addressing the meeting agenda. Dennis DiZoglio, Merrimack Valley Planning Commission (MVPC), said that his staff is still trying to collect bicycle and pedestrian counts of existing trails. Once received, they will compare the data and be prepared to make recommended projections of future use at the next Whittier Working Group (WWG) meeting.

Mr. O'Dowd distributed copies of the summary notes of the last WWG meeting. Some members had not yet reviewed the notes, so there were no comments.

Joseph Pavao, MassDOT, reported that Senator Baddour organized a meeting that was attended by the MassDOT Highway Division Administrator, community chief executive officers (CEOs), MVPC, Representative Costello, and himself. The meeting agenda was prepared by the community CEOs. He summarized the meeting discussion, which included (1) improvements to the intersection of Spofford Street and Merrimac Street and Route 1 Gillis Bridge at Merrimac Street, (2) traffic mitigation, (3) bridge type study, and (4) shared-use path. Mr. Pavao said that on most points there was some type of understanding. He added that some points are carried forward in the Historic Section 106 Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) and some are still open for further discussion.

- (1) *Improvements to Spofford Street/Merrimac Street intersection and at Route 1 Gillis Bridge/Merrimac Street.* Mr. Pavao reported that the Administrator committed to District 4 (D4) investigating alternate sources of funding for this work. It does not make sense to add it to the Whittier Bridge project, because it is well beyond the scope. Fred Lucey, Representative Costello's Office, said funding for the Spofford Street work was included in the 2008 TIP bond bill with a placeholder of \$750,000. Mr. DiZoglio said that MVPC and Newburyport have been working on a scheme for the location and thought the best choice was to get MassDOT involved. Andrew Port, Newburyport Planning Department, suggested it makes the most sense to construct the Spofford/Merrimac work when the Hines Bridge is closed. Mr. Pavao said that D4 will discuss the issue further with the communities. The Hines Bridge timeframe may not be practical. Mr. DiZoglio said it would be helpful in advancing the work to know the magnitude of the project in terms of cost.
  
- (2) *Traffic mitigation.* Mr. Pavao reported that traffic mitigation planning will be an ongoing process. He reminded the group that since the project is Design/Build (D/B), MassDOT does not yet know what the construction sequencing plans will be. This phase of work does not get at the level of detail needed to prepare a comprehensive mitigation plan. Construction vehicles will need access in and out of the work zone, but MassDOT has committed to maintaining the same number of lanes that are in use today. Mr. Pavao said the Administrator has committed to working with the communities to address traffic issues. The time to look more closely at traffic mitigation will be during D/B. The initial construction will be work in the water, which will give MassDOT and the WWG time to continue discussing mitigation. The team will look at first alleviating the weave issues at Route 286 and I-495, which should alleviate some of the congestion. Mr. Pavao said the Secretary has been very clear about what mitigation issues will be funded through the Whittier project. Once the project is in D/B, MassDOT will have a better idea of sequencing, which could be different than what is currently assumed.
  
- (3) *Bridge Type.* Mr. Pavao reported that MassDOT understands the network tied arch is the communities' preferred bridge type for historic mitigation reasons. The Administrator supports the network tied arch, but MassDOT staff must finalize the bridge type study. MassDOT internal review must be completed to ensure the type is justified despite the additional cost. The agency anticipates making the final decision by the next WWG meeting (which is 3 weeks out due to the election).

Mr. Lucey asked if the Administrator plans to announce the decision on the shared-use path before the election. Mr. O'Dowd said she does plan to announce it, but did not provide a date. Mr. DiZoglio reported that he had seen coverage of a GreenDOT event where the Administrator commented positively about the path.

- (4) *Shared-Use Path*. Mr. Pavao reported on several points that were discussed related to the path.
- a. The termination points will be the Newburyport Park-and-Ride in the south over the Pine Hill Bridge to the southwest handicapped ramp at the intersection at the Route 110 connection in the north. D4 will enlarge the three ramps, widen the crosswalks and add five-foot bike lanes. MassDOT will need to file a Request for Determination of Applicability (RDA) and PB is preparing documentation for D4 to file. Mr. Bertoulin reported that the documents will be ready to submit for the next Conservation Commission meeting in two weeks. Mr. Pavao reminded the group that the communities' help in advancing the RDA is necessary. D4 is ready to start work in that location, but a short delay is acceptable in order to file the necessary documents. Michelle Rowden, Salisbury, confirmed that a new RDA is required.
  - b. The trail heads will be located where MassDOT has indicated previously (i.e., Old Merrill Street). More detail has been included in the MOA, but MassDOT will not include the number of signs and other displays or their exact locations in the document. Mr. Pavao said the Administrator has committed to continuing to work with the communities on the details. Mr. DiZoglio asked if the MOA is not the appropriate vehicle for detailing the path agreements, what is the appropriate vehicle to memorialize them? Jeffrey Shrimpton, MassDOT, said the path is included in the MOA as a statement of fact and it will be included in the environmental process documentation.
  - c. The Pine Hill/Ferry Road Bridge will be used for an east-west connection between Moseley Woods and Maudsley Park. Five-foot shoulders will be incorporated into the new bridge to accommodate a future bike lane and sidewalks for the connection. There will not be a shoreline east-west connection. The Newburyport water line maintenance road can serve as another east-west connection.
  - d. The Ghost Trail connection is not feasible because right-of-way (ROW) and permitting issues will cause delays. The Route 110 project will facilitate future connection to the regional trail network by the communities. The towns can pursue design and construction funding for

a 2016 opening to coincide with the opening of the MassDOT constructed path.

- e. Shared-use path maintenance is the responsibility of the communities. MassDOT will be responsible for capital improvements or repairs.
  - f. Mayor Kezer's request to include stairs to Amesbury's Visitor Center will not be part of the Whittier Bridge project because an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) waiver is required. The Town should apply for an ADA waiver and pursue design and construction of the stairs. MassDOT will support the project by allowing connection to its facility. Mr. Port asked if the Pine Hill/Ferry Road path connection would be part of the Whittier Project. Mr. Bertoulin said the touchdown area would be on the opposite side from the trail head. He added that it raises the scope issue. Mr. Port asked if MassDOT would provide design funding and the towns be left to permit and construct the connection. Mr. Pavao reminded the group that the Administrator will not agree to providing money for design of a facility that is not part of the Whittier Bridge project. She said MassDOT will support the towns in looking for alternate sources of funding. The WWG members stated that the connection would provide another option to access Pine Hill Road for those who do not need to use a ramp. Mr. Pavao said the issue may be the same as the stairs with regard to ADA compliance, but MassDOT will review the request. Geordie Vining, Newburyport, suggested the Amesbury side would not require much money or time for ADA issues.
- (5) *Noise Mitigation.* WWG members understand that there are no neighborhoods along the project corridor that meet MassDOT's noise mitigation policy according to the Cost-Effectiveness Index (CEI). The group continues to discuss potential noise mitigation measures such as non-engineered solutions, where feasible. The CEOs will provide the addresses of residents who have requested barriers for MassDOT to investigate further. One property that is outside the project area will be investigated by D4.

## **Historic Section 106 MOA**

Mr. Shrimpton said the communities' comments have been incorporated into the draft MOA to the extent possible. It reflects agreements and commitments without the type of detail that is usually not included in an MOA. It is ready to submit to FHWA.

Mr. Shrimpton summarized the changes:

- The path is specifically called out as a statement of fact, which allows access to historic elements. This allows MassDOT to commit to planning signage as part

of Section 106 mitigation. Signage themes are specified. Artifacts and signage are distributed along the path, but locations aren't specified but are assumed to be at the three trail heads and three overlooks. The agency can't commit to other details until the path is further into design, which won't occur until after the MOA is signed. MassDOT is committed to continue the process.

- MassDOT can't commit to bridge type in the MOA, because further consultation with the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) is required, and this cannot occur until the MOA is signed.

There was discussion about the dispute resolution process. The communities expressed concern about what recourse they have if MassDOT does not live up to its commitments whether included in the MOA or as part of WWG discussions. Mr. Shrimpton said that only the signing parties [MassDOT, MHC, FHWA and FHWA's Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP)] have standing for dispute resolution. A party cannot have standing if it does not have responsibilities. This is standard language in the document. MassDOT prepares the document for FHWA and the agency cannot modify standard language in another agency's document. Mr. Shrimpton said that MassDOT intends to live up to its commitments, but if the communities have concerns they would have to bring them to the attention of one of the signatories. With similar interests, MHC or ACHP would be the most appropriate signatories to notify to act as advocates for the communities' interests. Mr. Port asked about the process if a dispute occurs after the MOA is signed. Mr. Shrimpton said if the MOA is terminated by a signatory, FHWA must either execute a new MOA or take comments into account and respond to them. The language is standard from ACHP. Mr. O'Dowd pointed out that the project cannot be bid without an MOA.

The group discussed the bridge type. The members were not comfortable with the MOA without the type being specified. Mr. Vining asked MassDOT to explain the internal review of the Bridge Type Study Report. He wants to understand the risk of change. Mr. O'Dowd said engineering is a critical aspect of the report. Eight bridge types were evaluated. MassDOT can't be arbitrary in its selection of a type. The type must be recommended based on its merits, design and feasibility. He said he must have full confidence that the recommended bridge type is the best choice when fairly evaluated alongside other alternatives. This is the same process that MassDOT follows for all projects. Mr. Shrimpton said that if MassDOT commits to the bridge type during MOA draft review, it can be added at that time by MHC.

Mr. Vining said he would like an opportunity to take the document back to Mayor Holaday for her final review. The team reiterated that the MOA must be finalized before any further work occurs. Diane Madden, MassDOT, described the National

Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process and stressed the urgency of finalizing the MOA. She said MassDOT is nearing completion of the Draft Environmental Assessment (DEA) and it cannot be submitted to FHWA without a signed MOA. The MOA is currently a draft and MHC, FHWA and ACHP have not seen it yet, so they will need time to review the document before signing it. The review and approval process can take several weeks. The DEA must be published in the Federal Register and time provided for public review and comment, which can take up to two months. The schedule cannot be delayed any further. The project has a critical window to meet for the National Marine Fisheries Service requirements for work in water to avoid impacts to endangered species. If it misses the window, the entire project sequencing and schedule are in jeopardy. MassDOT asked for final comments by Friday, October 22, 2010. If the communities have comments after that date, they can submit them to FHWA and MHC during their draft review period, which will last about a month.

### **Interpretive Panel Discussion**

Kelly Carr, William Warner Architects (WWA), presented a sample of an interpretive panel. The panel is a urethane foam core with a one-eighth inch fiberglass/polyurethane resin coating and UV inhibitors. The graphics are sandwiched between two layers of fiber and the piece is screwed into an aluminum frame. The specifications outline the pounds per square inch strength required. The towns were pleased with the materials used. She explained that WWA can use pieces of the old bridge structure for interpretive display panel structures. For instance, granite can be reused for posts or benches. Mr. Bertoulin added that pieces of the piers and capstones could also be worked into the panel structure. Panels can be recessed in an abutment or in a piece of granite that rests on pylons to evoke the history and environment they're in. Some panels would be low so viewers can read the panel, then look up for an unobstructed view of the area being described.

Ms. Carr displayed some views of panels used for a Providence, RI project. She said some panels have been on display for 15 years and are still in good shape. The panels are usually produced double-sided, so if one side is damaged, the panel can be flipped over and the other side displayed. She said she would take pictures of some existing panels and check to see if any have had to be flipped over yet. She asked the communities to be thinking about the topics, locations and types of structures they would like to use for the panels. Ms. Carr said she would bring sketches the next time she attends a WWG meeting. She displayed several slides showing how elements were used in Providence. A slide showed a panel mounted on posts that mimicked piers located nearby. Some panels are double-sided and mounted in an upright structure that makes viewing either side possible. Another slide showed a panel mounted in a

pipe structure. She pointed out that the top of each panel shows a map of the entire walkway with sign locations indicated on it. Mr. Bertoulin said the team needs to take the design to the next level, and community input is necessary now to do this.

Mr. Port asked where Ms. Carr envisioned panels along the linear park. She said the two trail heads, three overlooks and in the middle where the stairs would be located are the anticipated locations. The panel locations can also be resting spots with benches. Mr. Vining asked about the process for developing the panel content and graphics. Ms. Carr said WWA has worked with community groups to develop panel text and has worked with consultants who develop the text. Mr. Bertoulin said the 25% design level will show panel locations. The themes are set now, but panel sizes and type of content can be conceptual until final design when the text would be finalized. It would be better; however, if the text were completed earlier in the process. The communities should start developing ideas to support the three themes. Mr. Vining asked if the local historical commissions (LHCs) would prepare a list of signs, or would PB start the list. Mr. Shrimpton said MassDOT won't ask the communities to write the text, but it would be helpful if the LHCs collect the information and graphics. Mr. Bertoulin said the process would be iterative over the next six months. Ms. Carr said the graphics could be inserted at the end of the process, but WWA needs a concept now with some information up front, such as if a particular panel will be viewed as a one-sided or two-sided structure. Mr. Shrimpton added that there must be a Native American component. Mr. Vining suggested the LHCs generate the initial information and WWA generate the initial designs for community input.

## **Newburyport Water Line**

Mr. Bertoulin displayed a revised sketch of the water line incorporating the community's requests. The 18-inch line will split off into two parallel 12-inch lines at Ferry Road. It will be constructed five feet off the ROW. The team looked at the grades and it's workable in this location; however, some grades are 10%. There will be a 10-foot path for a service road from the water station at Pine Hill. The changes required moving a drainage basin, so it isn't located on top of the relocated 18-inch line. Mr. Port asked about the shape of the basin. Mr. Bertoulin said the scheme design is not final yet. Jon-Eric White, Newburyport, asked if the slope would be affected near the abutment at the river southbound where the grade is steep and the highway wing wall is located. Mr. Bertoulin said more information will be available when the design is further developed. Mr. White said the town appreciates MassDOT's help with the water line. He asked about the timeframe for approvals and drafting access easements. Mr. O'Dowd said these issues would be addressed when the permits are prepared; immediately after the EA. Ms. Madden pointed out that the town should submit a

letter approving the water line during the public comment period. Mr. Bertoulin reported that for D/B phase, preliminary design and ROW issues are dealt with by 25% design. The permits should be in hand during the first quarter of 2011. Details will come out of these processes. Mr. White pointed out that the Water Division can't guarantee conservation commission approval, but the area should be acceptable for Zone 1. Mr. Bertoulin said the drainage basin will be on the down slope and subterranean to the river. The treated flow will be discharged to the river, not an infiltration bed for attenuation. Ms. Madden said the town should submit a letter stating its preference that no infiltration be used for the drainage basin. She said MassDOT made a commitment in the EIS in the 1970s to keep the highway drainage in the corridor in a closed system. Mr. O'Dowd said MassDOT will file with each town conservation commission and is limited to a 5,000 square foot threshold in each community. Mr. Bertoulin said that specific requirements for each community are okay, but MassDOT is hoping the communities will work together to create consistent general orders of conditions with similar treatment protocols, etc.

## **Additional Updates**

### *Route 110 Drainage*

Mr. Bertoulin addressed the communities' concerns about the Whittier project exacerbating Route 110 interchange flooding issues. He said the project will not add any stormwater flows. It will in fact remove some stormwater flows that are currently being directed to Amesbury's outfall from the ramps and highway. This information will be shown in the Notice of Intent submitted in each community. Mr. Fahey asked if the southbound side near the Golden Triangle will be affected by the project. Mr. O'Dowd said the stormwater flows from that area will also decrease.

### *Route 110 Widening*

Mr. Bertoulin said the MassDOT team looked at Mayor Kezer's request to widen Route 110 under Interstate 95 (I-95). He said it is possible and the Whittier project will not preclude future widening by the towns. Mr. Bertoulin distributed a sketch plan. It showed that the current slope could be removed without undermining the abutment footing and vehicle lanes added. This would raise the sidewalk, but it's a common retrofit for an existing bridge. A retaining wall could be installed to protect the abutment leading edge and Styrofoam installed to deal with freeze/thaw action. D4 plans to reconstruct the sidewalks along Route 110 from Elm Street to Merrill Street, but there won't be any curb changes. Mr. Bertoulin said he would confirm with D4 sidewalk modifications at intersections for ADA compliance. Mr. Lucey asked if the north sidewalk would be continuous to Elm Street. Mr. Bertoulin said the sidewalk is

currently continuous but in disrepair. The south sidewalk will stop at the Rabbit Road intersection.

### *Hines Bridge Project Update*

The bridge closing will be pushed out to mid-November. D4 expects Army Corps of Engineers and US Coast Guard permits within the next two to three weeks. The cross-section design is moving forward. MassDOT is including five-foot shoulders for bike lanes and sidewalks to facilitate future connections that will not be part of the Hines project.

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting on November 9, 2010 will be a van tour of the project area for community CEOs, state elected officials and MVPC with a brief presentation prior to it at 1:00 PM. Stephanie Boundy, MassDOT, will be in touch with participants to confirm attendance. Mr. Vining said conceptual plans made available during the tour or at the pre-tour briefing would be helpful. Mr. O'Dowd said MassDOT would like to set November 16, 2010 as the date for resolving outstanding comments, so pre-filing activities can begin. The next public information meeting will be scheduled in mid-November and held in Amesbury.

There were no further questions or discussion. The meeting adjourned at 4:15 P.M.

### **Action Items**

- MassDOT/PB to coordinate van tour.
- MassDOT will bring the Pine Hill/Ferry Road Bridge cross section to the next meeting.
- WWA will attend another meeting in about a month to review the next iteration of the interpretive panel concepts.

**Whittier Bridge /I-95 Improvement Project  
Whittier Working Group Meeting  
October 19, 2010  
ATTENDANCE**

**Name:**

**Affiliation:**

*Working Group Members/MassDOT Staff*

Jim Cerbone	MassDOT
Jennifer Crawford	Representative Costello's Office
Dennis DiZoglio	MVPC
Joe Fahey	City of Amesbury
Neil Harrington	Town Manager, Salisbury
Fred Lucey	Representative Costello's Office
Diane Madden	MassDOT
Mike O'Dowd	MassDOT
Joe Pavao	MassDOT
Andrew Port	Newburyport Planning Department
Michelle Rowden	Salisbury Conservation Commission
Jeffrey Shrimpton	MassDOT
Geordie Vining	Newburyport Planning Department
Jon-Eric White	Newburyport Water Department

*Public Attendees*

John McQueen	TAC/RTAC/WalkBoston
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*Consultants*

Kate Barrett	Regina Villa Associates
Mike Bertoulin	Parsons Brinckerhoff
Kelly Carr	William Warner Architects