



October 19, 2012

To: Mike Bloukos  
Project Manager – Route 9/I-290  
MassDOT Highway Division

Through: Richard Lennox  
Project Manager  
WSP Sells

From: Nathaniel Curtis  
Howard/Stein-Hudson  
Public Involvement Specialist

RE: Public Involvement Plan  
Route 9 over I-290 Bridge Rehabilitation  
MassDOT project no. 604065  
HSH project no. 2012127

## Overview

On October 10, 2012 members of the design team for the Belmont Street Bridge Rehabilitation Project met with key institutional stakeholders in the downtown Worcester at the offices of the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Council (CMRPC). The purpose of this meeting was to introduce the project to these major downtown stakeholders and get their thoughts, questions, and comments on the project while it is still in its early stages.

The Belmont Street Bridge crosses I-290 just east of Lincoln Square in Worcester. The project includes replacement of the bridge's superstructure and parts of the substructure. While the work is not particularly challenging from an engineering and construction perspective, the job will involve a detour which will temporarily restrict left turns at the two abutting intersections at either end of the bridge. In light of this, MassDOT and its project team will be undertaking a public outreach effort including the meeting summarized herein, two public information meetings and a 25% design public hearing over the next several months.

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## Meeting Minutes

C: Mike Bloukos (MB): Good morning everyone. I think it's time to get started. Welcome. I am Mike Bloukos, the project manager for the Belmont Street Bridge Rehabilitation Project. This meeting is about rebuilding the bridge and the outreach process that will accompany that effort. We will discuss the bridge and impacts during construction and we wanted to give you first hand notice about the project. I don't want to take too much of your time, but I do want to bring to your attention our consultant team from WSP Sells, Arthur Frost from MassDOT District 3 who will oversee the project and Donny Dailey from MassDOT public affairs who can answer your questions and concerns. Please feel free to ask questions as we go along. I'd also like to recognize the hard work of Howard/Stein-Hudson in organizing our public involvement program. With that, here's Arthur Frost to go over the project a bit more.

- C: Arthur Frost (AF): Good morning. I'm the project development engineer for MassDOT Highway Division District 3. This is a project to replace the superstructure of the bridge carrying Belmont Street, or Route 9 as the department thinks of it, over I-290 just outside Lincoln Square. There will be a detour associated with the reconstruction. We're a small group today even though we invited quite a few more people. We are going to have two more public information meetings before the 25% design public hearing, but this is important because the project will impact the area both directly through the work and indirectly through the detour. Today, we want to show you the project and get your input and feedback. Now, I'll hand this over to Donny to discuss the public outreach aspect.
- C: Donny Dailey (DD): Good morning. I'm Donny Dailey, I'm with MassDOT Government Affairs. We're starting this project by reaching out to all the major downtown institutional stakeholders: government, business, hospitals etc. I'm also working on the Fore River Bridge Replacement Project with Nate Curtis from Howard/Stein-Hudson and we just had a similar meeting for officials of Quincy and Weymouth which was quite successful. The intent of today's meeting is to bring in all of the institutional folks who are going to feel the biggest impacts from the job. Anything you're worried about or have questions about, there's really nothing too small, we'll try to contain any issues to the greatest extent that we can, but these projects do have impacts: they have traffic and noise, but we will do our best to contain it and answer your questions and provide you with a clear, consistent message about the job and its benefits. Mike, Arthur, and the rest of the guys from the district will all help answer your questions, feel free to call me any time. We also have the full MassDOT communications staff that will help us field media inquiries which I'm sure we'll eventually get on this project. That's basically it.
- C: AF: O.K. Thank you. Next is Nate Curtis from Howard/Stein-Hudson.
- C: Nathaniel Curtis (NC): Good morning everyone, thank you for coming. I'm with Howard/Stein-Hudson and we're helping out with the public involvement on this project and the Kenneth F. Burns Memorial Bridge replacement down the road. It's nice to see some familiar faces from the Burns project here today.

While this job isn't particularly challenging from an engineering or construction standpoint, it's right on the edge of Lincoln Square and there is the detour that Arthur mentioned so we wanted to come to you early and get your input. This meeting is the start of a process that will include two widely advertised public information meetings and a 25% design public hearing. To give you a sense of the timing, we expect to have the 25% design public hearing in the early spring of next year, and our first public information meeting right after the election. Today, we want to hear from you, get your thoughts particularly on things like people or groups who should definitely be added to the stakeholder database. I'll be working closely with Donny and the rest of the project team to make sure we get answers to your questions. Thank you for your time and I look forward to making this a good project.

- C: MB: Thank you, Nate, now I'd like to ask Rich Lennox from Sells to come up and talk about the technical piece of the work.
- C: Richard Lennox (RL): I'm just going to take a few minutes to describe the broad scope of work. The handouts that you have are smaller versions of what's on these boards. The reason we're here today is because the bridge carrying Belmont Street over I-290 is structurally deficient. Our limits of work are the ¼ mile of Belmont Street around the bridge and the bridge itself. Our scope is to replace the superstructure. We're going to replace the center pier, but reuse the existing abutments. The new bridge will look a lot like the current one: a two span steel bridge. The challenge is building it and that's the focus of what's on the boards. The bridge itself is pretty straight ahead, but to build it, we're going to need to widen it slightly to maintain a travel lane in each direction during construction. During construction we'll be going from the 4 lanes you have today down to 2.

During the first phase of construction we'll reduce down to 2 lanes which will be on the south side of the bridge. We'll keep at least one sidewalk open at all times throughout construction. During the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase, we'll flip that, pushing the open lanes to the bridge's north side. It's that reduction to 2 lanes

which requires the detour. To make 2 lane operation work, we can't let people take a left at either end of the bridge because anyone making a left would bring the travel lane to a complete stop. That will mean no westbound left turn onto I-290 and no eastbound left-turn either. The last board is our proposed detour route. We'll use VMS boards to advise people of alternate routes with the best ways for them to go.

Q: Geoffrey Gardell (GG): So when do you think you would start work on this? About how much do you think it will cost?

A: RL: There is some additional design work to be completed. I would say that you won't see any construction until the spring of 2014.

A: AF: These are tentative dates right now because of when the job will be bid and then if there are any delays during the bidding process like bidder questions.

A: MB: This is a federal aid job and we're thinking this will cost somewhere around a million dollars. We're really not sure of the cost right now, but we'll know better soon and bring the information back to you.

C: AF: Right now we have a construction duration of about 2 years and we want to try to pull that back. Tom Emerick is our utility constructability engineer and he met with Verizon 2 years ago when we first starting looking at this project. There's a big duct bank for Verizon over the bridge and to speed up construction we'll be looking at hold-in-place utilities. That's going to make the job cost more, but go faster. If we did this traditionally, we'd be looking at a fairly long lead-time for Verizon to splice their cables. We're also looking at precast components to reduce curing times for the new bridge. These are all things we're looking at right now and will have more information on as we go.

C: MB: I think we're looking at 13 to 24 months of construction; realistically we're somewhere in that window. We're trying to figure out constructability and how we can both speed up the project and contain costs.

C: AF: So for now, think about 2 years and we'll be telling you more as we go.

Q: Danielle Meehan (DM): What will happen to the sidewalks? My tenants use them to go from our facility to the hospital or the local businesses and they don't like crossing the street.

A: RL: For safety, we are going to have to shut down one sidewalk, north or south, depending on phase, so in phase one when it's just the north sidewalk open, they will need to use the crosswalk, but with the left turns taken out of play, the signals will only function for pedestrian calls, giving an extra measure of protection, but yes, during that first phase, they will have to use the crosswalk.

A: AF: And, during construction we won't allow westbound left turns on Belmont Street so it will be safer and in some senses, traffic may flow more smoothly. Joe, feel free to correct me if I misspoke there.

Q: John Wicks (JW): Arthur, isn't the south sidewalk closed now because of damage?

A: AF: Yes, it is closed.

A: DM: They walk across it anyway; it's not like Burns where you can't even go near it.

C: AF: So we hope you'll go back to the groups you represent and tell other people about this. If you have some major event taking place, please tell us about it now so that we can try to avoid having major construction changes on the day of your big event. The timeframe is roughly spring, 2014 to 2016. Within that time period we want to accommodate you the best we can.

Q: Cheryl Martin (CM): Our intent is to go back and share this information. We'd be interested in attending the public information meetings as well. We'll need to restructure our campus website with directions. Am I right that traffic to our campus from the west would use the Shrewsbury Street exit and then from the east it would be Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard?

A: MB: Yes, that's right.

A: RL: Right, folks from Belmont Street would go down Shrewsbury Street and down to Lincoln Square to come back around. And if you wanted to go west, you would need to get off one exit earlier.

A: AF: If you get us your current directions we can look at them and see how they might be modified. We're aware of the potential impacts on college tours so please do share this with your peers.

C: NC: Right now the detour plan is preliminary, but once it's finalized we could easily give you a PDF of it to put on your website.

C: Richard Rydant (RR): I'm the project manager with CMRPC, your host today, and we're happy to have you with us at Union Station today. I'm joined by Yahaira Graxirena and Sujatha Mohanakrishna. As part of our planning for the area we've done studies of safety, congestion and environmental justice with regard to the human and natural environment. I've already shared some aspects of that work with Nate to help inform the outreach part of the project. On your chairs, I placed an image of the impacted area with the Worcester Housing Authority, Plumley Village and Belmont Tower. We're pleased to host your meetings if there is not an appropriate location in the area. Not everyone owns a vehicle so there will be some folks who need to walk or take a bus to your meetings.

Also on your chairs is a study of the bottlenecks and choke points. This is an urban location and the difficulties you might encounter are pretty self-explanatory. We have another listing which we'll share with you regarding the human environment around the bridge. We have maps produced by our staff showing that it's an environmental justice area based on the definition of census block groups with minority residency equal to or greater than 25% and a median household income that's less than 65% of the statewide median. That blankets this whole area. We've also heard about the pedestrian paths and its going to be important to maintain those during construction. During that first phase, we appreciate that the signals will be a help to pedestrians and help them get to the hospital and businesses. The planning work on this should be multimodal and access for all modes considered. Perhaps there are traffic calming or parking management approaches that may emerge and help refine your approach. I've provided a map showing areas of environmental concern, local institutions and the WRTA bus stops. We have crash diagrams as well. We have a map of the languages spoken in the area and as I've told Nate, we'd like to have Spanish and Vietnamese translation available at the public information meetings.

C: Sujatha Mohanakrishna (SM): With regard to safety, we know this is a high crash area for all modes. We're looking to perform a road safety audit with District 3 with all the groups to look at the intersections and make recommendations that you could incorporate into your design such as improved crosswalks. We'll be looking to hold that RSA before you finalize your design.

A: MB: These are all good issues that we'll try to address to the extent possible. This is the right time to coordinate and see what we can do. I know some people need to leave so at this point, I will close the meeting though the team will stay to discuss things further if you wish. Our goal is to let the community and City know that this is coming up in the near future. We want to give you a heads up and informing you is the best solution. Thank you.

## Next Steps

The next milestone in the public involvement process will be the initial public information meeting for a large, general audience. The key stakeholders invited to the meeting summarized herein will be encouraged to attend this meeting as well. The first public information meeting will take place on November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2012 at 6:30 p.m. at the Worcester Technical High School. The Technical High School is located at 1 Skyline Drive.

## Appendix 1: Meeting Attendees

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation
Andy	Benkert	WSP Sells
Michael	Bloukos	MassDOT
Nathaniel	Curtis	Howard/Stein-Hudson
Donny	Dailey	MassDOT
Dan	Daniska	CMRPC
Mike	Ellsworth	WPI
Thomas	Emerick	MassDOT
Joe	Frawley	MassDOT
Arthur	Frost	MassDOT
Geoffry	Gardell	Worcester Fire Department
Yahaira	Graxirena	CMRPC
Rich	Lennox	WSP Sells
Cheryl	Martin	WPI
Danielle	Meehan	Worcester Housing Authority
Sujatha	Mohanakrishna	CMRPC
Richard	Rydant	CMRPC
Mickey	Splaine	MassDOT
John	Wicks	WSP Sells