



December 18, 2012

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

Through: Richard Lennox
Project Manager
WSP Sells

From: Nathaniel Curtis
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RE: Public Information Meeting
Route 9 over I-290 Bridge Rehabilitation
MassDOT project no. 604065
HSH project no. 2012127

Overview

On November 7, 2012 members of the MassDOT design team for the Belmont Street Rehabilitation project held a public information meeting at the Worcester Technical High School. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce members of the community to the project and to obtain their thoughts, questions and comments on the project prior to the 25% design public hearing.

The Belmont Street Bridge crosses I-290 just east of Lincoln Square in Worcester. The rehabilitation 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 include a detour which will temporarily restrict left turns at the two intersections abutting the bridge. In light of this, MassDOT and its project team undertook a public outreach process prior to the 25% design public hearing. The project is expected to begin construction in spring 2014 and last between 13 and 24 months depending on construction sequencing and methods.

Meeting Minutes

- C: Mike Bloukos (MB): Good evening everyone. Thank you for coming out on this wintery night. My name is Michael Bloukos, I am the MassDOT project manager. I hope everyone has taken one of the handouts.
- C: Nathaniel Cabral-Curtis (NCC): And if I may, Mike, I want to thank Rich Rydant from CMRPC. He's in the audience this evening and he's agreed to let us put materials related to this project on the CMRPC website¹ We'll have this document, and the materials generated for our October meeting with CMRPC available there. Once this meeting is done, the materials we've developed for tonight will also be made available through this website.

¹ Project materials can be reviewed at <http://www.cmrpc.org/belmont-street-bridge-over-i-290-rehabilitation-project-information-page>.

C: MB: O.K. thank you Nate. I want to thank all of you for being here tonight. We'd like to present Belmont Street Bridge Rehabilitation project to you. This is the bridge which crosses I-290 just outside Lincoln Square. I'd like to take a moment to introduce the project team members who are here tonight. Joining us from our engineering consultant WSP Sells are John Wicks and Andy Benkert. They will be telling you tonight about the technical aspects of the job, specifically the traffic management. From Howard/Stein-Hudson is Nate Curtis who is helping us with public involvement.

To help you understand the project, we have put together a brief PowerPoint presentation. Much of it is self-explanatory, but the driving factor behind the job is that the superstructure of the Belmont Street Bridge has reached the end of its useful lifespan and needs to be replaced. Replacing it will also necessitate some work to the bridge's center pier. We have a small crowd tonight so I'll skip over the introduction. We have tonight's meeting and the next time we'll see you will be sometime in January to share our progress with you. With that, I'll let Nate start the presentation.

C: NCC: Thank you Mike. Tonight, we'll go over the project team, the scope, the issues associated with the job, the timeline of the project and then we'll have time for Q&A. So here is our project site. Belmont Street runs from side to side through the aerial photograph with I-290 going up and down. The orange oval shows you the bridge itself. The project team, as Mike alluded to, is composed of WSP Sells, the engineering consultant, and Howard/Stein-Hudson (HSH) for public involvement, all under the direction of MassDOT who owns the Belmont Street Bridge.

The project goal is the rehabilitation of the Belmont Street Bridge. That will involve full replacement of the superstructure, that's the part that vehicles ride on when crossing the bridge and a partial replacement of the substructure. The project team's scope includes designing the changes to the bridge, developing management plans to keep traffic moving during construction, coordinating with local officials, abutters and residents and ensuring public safety throughout the job. The approximate project cost is \$9.7 million, but bear in mind that could change. We're not even up to 25% design yet, so that number is really just an approximation to give you a sense of what this will most likely cost.

Richard Lennox from WSP Sells is going to go into this next part of the presentation in some deeper detail, but I wanted to set his part of the presentation up by explaining that during the construction phase, the bridge is going to be reduced to one lane in each direction. That's why we need to limit left turns at the abutting intersection since traffic would be unable to move if anyone tried taking a left. This is where the detour to accommodate left turns comes in and that's why we wanted to involve all of you. Now, the good news is that as a byproduct of the construction staging, the bridge will get wider, wide enough in fact to accommodate a left-turn lane. So, when the job is done, traffic is going to flow better than it does today.

C: Richard Lennox (RL): Thank you, Nate. I'm Rich Lennox with WSP Sells. Tonight I want to focus mainly on the traffic management. This is a fairly straightforward bridge from an engineering perspective: it's a 2-span steel bridge over an interstate and that's a fairly standard type. The challenge in the project comes from the site. We're proposing to do the job in 2 phases and during both phases the bridge would go from 4 lanes down to 2. In the first phase, the two open lanes are on the north side of the bridge while we work on the south side and in the second phase we would flip that. During both phases we would restrict the northbound left-turn from the I-290 exit ramp and also the westbound left-turn onto I-290 from Belmont Street. We would maintain the left-turn onto Fountain Street so there could be access to the church. During all times, throughout construction, we'll maintain 1 eastbound lane, 1 westbound lane, and 1 pedestrian sidewalk. We would configure the work zone so that emergency vehicles could make left-turns if it was needed.

Q: Joe Borbone (JB): So there are no left turns from the northbound off-ramp. Would you allow eastbound lefts into Converse Street and what about exiting Converse or Oak Street?

A: RL: O.K. so one thing we are considering is to reverse the 1-way direction of Converse Street and directing the traffic up to Hooper Street. Drivers would loop around and be able to access Oak Street

that way. So we would think about making Converse Street and one-way in as opposed to a one-way out like it is today. We're really trying to restrict the opportunity for someone to be stuck in or immediately adjacent to the work zone.

Q: Gio Dellostritto (GD): So you don't consider going off the end of the I-290 ramp and into Converse Street as a straight shot? That would be barricaded off?

A: RL: We would allow emergency vehicles to make that turn and we will try to incorporate that into our plans as best we can, but they would be the only ones with the opportunity to make that turn. Police details on-site during construction could also help to facilitate the passage of emergency vehicles and regulate traffic.

Q: GD: But if there's an emergency somewhere on Converse Street, will that have an emergency vehicle going the wrong way up Converse Street? Would you expect there to be an officer at the end of the ramp around the clock?

A: MB: This isn't an around the clock job, but the faster we can get things done, the better. We are currently looking at accelerated construction techniques to keep the disruption down to a minimum. Hopefully, there will be some things we can build off-line. The pier for example can be built off to the side to allow for a shorter duration with traffic impacts on Belmont Street. The goal is the shortest construction period we can achieve. At this point we're only looking at standard hours for the job site. We are considering various other ways to minimize construction duration. Extended work days are an option, but not necessarily the most palatable.

Q: RL: I think that was something we had hoped would come up tonight. Does the City even see extended work hours as a viable option? Is a 10-hour day or a 6-day work week something that the locals and the City might support with the idea of shortening the construction time frame?

Q: NCC: There isn't too much residential area around the bridge, mostly the senior high-rise facility and the hospital, but is 10 hours too long a day? Can it be considered or would people just say no?

A: JB: If you were going to be reopening lanes at the end of the shift that would be one thing, but the redirection and detour are set, so I think noise is really the only consideration for extended work hours. I'd guess we'd prefer not to see extended hours but it's an option to consider if there's an associated benefit.

C: RL: We can look into minimizing noise. All right, let me get into the second phase. It's really just a mirror of the first phase, but the open lanes are moved to the south side of the bridge to let us work on the north side. It's the same restrictions, just on the reverse side. I also want to mention that we expect some minimal impacts on I-290 itself when we're working on the center pier and the abutments. We don't expect lane reductions, but we would be dropping the 4th lane somewhere up and downstream of the bridge. The result would be no breakdown lane for a short stretch of highway.

Our goal will be to encourage the use of alternate routes during the period when the left turns are restricted.

Q: GD: Would you have them get off at Exit 16?

A: RL: Yes, motorists would be encouraged to leave the highway one exit sooner and divert to alternate routes. This will help to reduce traffic. If they were coming from the Shrewsbury side, they would use MLK Boulevard. From the Worcester side, they would use Major Taylor Boulevard.

C: MB: So I'll wrap up our presentation by going over the timeline. It's an approximate schedule, but we expect to have our 25% design public hearing sometime towards the end of January. Construction would start in spring 2014 and last between 13 and 24 months. I'd also like to note that this meeting

was advertised in three local newspapers and we were hoping for a larger crowd, but I'd guess the weather has depressed the turnout.

C: NCC: One of the reasons we wanted to share the detour with all of you is the role the bridge plays in getting people to the colleges and universities of Worcester. We've looked at some of their websites and they do tell people to use this bridge. I would note that as we go into construction, we will encourage people to post the detour on their website so that we don't wind up directing visiting prospective students and their families through the work. We want everyone who uses this bridge to give us their advice on the detour and to tell us who should be contacted with regard to it. We have 30-40 names in the stakeholder database now, but we're always happy to get more.

Q: GD: Does the state have a good way of reaching out to the manufacturers of GPS systems?

A: MB: Not at this point. We usually refer questions like that to the district offices as we don't have the capabilities. We are able to utilize social media through our communications department, and we'll pass this on to them for further review.

Q: GD: What about to website like Google or Yahoo directions?

A: NCC: I don't know the mechanism for reaching out to those websites, but there should be some way to contact them with regard to traffic issues. I've made note of the question and will follow it up.

A: RL: There will be a lot of those variable message sign boards alerting people as they get close to the site, including on I-290, but it would certainly be helpful to have the information passed to GPS manufacturers and Google Earth.

Q: Alfredo DiMaura (AD): How much of the project will the turning restriction be in effect?

A: RL: Almost the whole time, definitely during the 1st two phases.

A: MB: This will be advertised next year. The contract will be awarded and after that construction would begin, but the exact dates for those things are all variable right now. That's why we have some ambiguous dates here.

C: AD: Speaking for WPI and knowing Assumption College, April and May are the two biggest visiting months of the year. Being able to start in June as opposed to before would be a big plus for the project.

A: MB: Once the job is advertised, it will take some months before construction start so it is likely that we'll be able to work around one April/May block, but the following year we'd have to work through it and find you some kind of alternative.

C: Rich Rydant (RR): When the I-290 viaduct was worked on, it dropped to two lanes and everyone was very active. There was a diversion plan and on day one, MassDOT was out observing to see what if changes were appropriate to make in the traffic patterns. So, we'll be looking forward to working on refinements with the staff of District 3. With regard to public outreach, we really appreciated the emails and telephone calls. That's an excellent method though there's not much you can do about the weather. I know that Steve O'Neil at WRTA offered a shuttle for Plumley Village. Did you hear anything about that?

A: NCC: I spoke with Mickey Splaine and he had been in communication with Steve, but I haven't heard from either of them this evening. It's possible they cancelled the trip.

C: RR: I'd also note that the project team came to a meeting at our offices at Union Station for stakeholders and we explained that the area around the bridge is home to an environmental justice population in terms of language and median income. It behooves us to continue to reach out to this community. I

know that Steve is willing to provide shuttle service to future meetings. Incidentally, Steve thought Union Station would be a great meeting spot though we'd prefer to keep it in the neighborhood. This school too is also a good location regardless of tonight's weather. It's definitely on us to carry on the public process.

- A: MB: Union Station is a good location, though we really like this space because it's modern, well-situated and has easy parking. I know Arthur Frost wanted to attend tonight, but couldn't make it because of another meeting.
- C: JB: The City of Worcester would like to sit down, off-line outside of a public meeting, and talk about what's going to happen along the detour routes in terms of the signals, retiming them, controlling them and so forth. The Worcester DPW can help to facilitate that meeting. We could invite the hospitals and the EMS as well. We definitely appreciate all you've done so far.
- A: MB: All right everyone, if that's everything, the team will stick around a little longer and we can discuss anything we didn't cover. Other than that, get home safe.

Next Steps

The next milestone in the public involvement process will be the 25% design public hearing. In addition to advertising the meeting in accordance with MassDOT procedures, members of the stakeholder database assembled for this project will be directly invited by either telephone call or email and encouraged to attend the hearing. This hearing is currently anticipated to take place on January 31st, 2013 at the Worcester Technical High School. The Technical High School is located at 1 Skyline Drive. A snow date of February 7th has also been established for this meeting.

Appendix 1: Meeting Attendees

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation
Galen	Allis	Howard/Stein-Hudson
Andy	Benkert	WSP Sells
Michael	Bloukos	MassDOT
Joe	Borbone	City of Worcester
Nathaniel	Cabral-Curtis	Howard/Stein-Hudson
Gio	Dellostritto	UMass Memorial
Alfredo	DiMauro	WPI
Richard	Lennox	WSP Sells
Richard	Rydant	CMRPC
John	Wicks	WSP Sells