

FRANKLIN LINE



DEDHAM East Street Bridge Replacement

Dedham East Street Bridge Replacement Project Virtual Public Meeting Thursday, December 9, 2021

MBTA Team Attendees

Omar Alchaar, Project Manager
Karl Eckstrom, Senior Director of Bridges and Structures
Trish Foley, Government & Public Affairs Liaison
Brad Nicoll, Deputy Chief of Bridge and Structures
Kathryn Zazzera, Manager of Stakeholder Engagement

Project Team Attendees

Kate Barrett, Regina Villa Associates (RVA)
Benny D'Artista, HNTB
Kyle Olsen, RVA
Amanda Poggenburg, RVA

Public Attendees (see [Appendix A: Public Attendance](#))

Meeting Purpose

The purpose of this meeting was to introduce the Dedham East Street Bridge Replacement Project, explain why the current bridge needs to be replaced, and answer questions from the public.

Meeting Format

The meeting was hosted via Zoom and began with a presentation at 6:00 PM followed by time for public questions and comments.

Materials (Available on project website prior to the meeting)

- [PowerPoint presentation](#)
- [Meeting flyer](#)

Welcome & Introductions

Kate Barrett, RVA, welcomed attendees to the Dedham East Street Bridge Replacement Project public meeting. Ms. Barrett outlined the public meeting process via Zoom. All participants could send written questions at any time through the Q&A feature or could virtually raise their hand, signaling they want to verbally submit a question or comment to the project team, during the question-and-answer session following the presentation. She also reviewed how attendees could access closed captioning.

PowerPoint Presentation

Brad Nicoll, MBTA, provided an overview of the project, which will replace the bridge that carries Franklin Line Commuter Rail service over East Street in Dedham, between Endicott and Dedham Corporate Center stations.

The bridge, which was built in 1904, has a substandard vertical clearance of 12'3", which leaves it prone to truck collisions. The MBTA's goals for this project are to restore the State of Good Repair by raising the height of the bridge to avoid truck strikes, ensuring the safety of MBTA riders and infrastructure, and widen the roadway beneath the bridge to include sidewalks and reduce the traffic bottleneck. The estimated project cost, with design and construction, is \$18 million.

Mr. Nicoll explained that the current roadway beneath the bridge is comprised of two, 11'6" wide travel lanes with no shoulders or sidewalks. A graphic of the proposed roadway improvements showed a 5' width increase of East Street under the bridge. Lowering East Street under the bridge by 1'9" will also be necessary to increase the vertical clearance to avoid grade impacts at the track level.

A second graphic focused on proposed improvements to the bridge. Mr. Nicoll explained the capacity of the bridge will be increased through the design. A 14' minimum vertical clearance is necessary to meet MBTA and federal standards, The MBTA does not have jurisdiction over local road travel management, so the Town of Dedham would have to post signage and implement other measures to manage truck traffic.

To elaborate on the substandard clearance issue, Mr. Nicoll explained that between July 2019 and November 2020, Keolis responded to 8 major truck collisions with the East Street Bridge. Raising the vertical clearance to 14' will reduce the potential for over-height collisions that could result in severe infrastructure damage, allow the safe passage of emergency vehicles under the bridge and protect public safety on and below the bridge.

The East Street Bridge Replacement Project will utilize an accelerated bridge construction technique, where the new bridge superstructure will be constructed adjacent to the current bridge. This allows the existing bridge to remain in service while the new bridge is being constructed, which will minimize impacts to East Street traffic and Commuter Rail riders. During

construction, there will be a number of weekend outages that will require a detour of East Street and an MBTA service diversion.

Mr. Nicoll reviewed the project timeline. The project team is currently moving forward with the design process and estimates completion by spring 2022. This is a design-bid-build project, which means the project will go to bid around summer 2022. Once bidding is completed, it is expected that construction will begin in early 2023 through late 2024.

Ms. Barrett thanked everyone for their participation and encouraged attendees to check the project website (www.mbta.com/EastStBridge) for updates or to sign up for email notifications. She also reminded attendees that they could email the project team (EastStBridge@mbta.com) with any additional questions or comments.

Ms. Barrett then opened the meeting to questions and comments. See Question & Answer Summary for a summary of verbal responses to verbal and written questions and comments.

Question & Answer Summary

Ms. Barrett reviewed the question-and-answer process and opened the meeting to questions and comments, first to elected officials and then to all meeting attendees.

Verbal Question & Answer Summary

Senator Michael Rush thanked the MBTA for providing the citizens of Dedham an update on this important project and for working with his team and the Dedham Select Board.

Brian Keaney urged the project team to not raise the bridge, expressing concern that it will prompt trucks to use East Street as a detour to Route 1. He asked if it was possible to not raise the bridge height. Mr. Nicoll explained the MBTA is open to traffic calming options and wants to be a good neighbor to abutters but noted the severe safety issues that could persist if the bridge height is not increased.

Richard McGowan echoed Mr. Keaney's traffic concerns. He noted that the MBTA recently replaced a Commuter Rail bridge on East Street in Westwood, which was not raised to 14'. He asked if the Westwood bridge has been struck since being replaced. Mr. Nicoll clarified that the Westwood bridge was designed to be higher than is posted. Some underground utilities below the Westwood East Street bridge precluded the lowering of East Street under the bridge, but his understanding was the project was still able to raise the bridge height above 13'6" allowing trucks to pass freely.

Stephen Relyea echoed previous traffic concerns and asked if a study had been completed on the traffic impacts of raising the bridge. Additionally, Mr. Relyea asked if other solutions have been considered to reduce collisions. Mr. Nicoll explained that the Town of Dedham can implement traffic calming and control measures, such as cameras or signing the bridge as being lower than it actually is. Benny D'Artista, HNTB, explained that a traffic study has not been completed but traffic counts and historical data were considered. The traffic flow and patterns are outside the purview of the MBTA.

Maurine McDermott asked if traffic would be detoured up Cedar Street during road closures relating to construction. Mr. Nicoll explained that the project is currently at 30% design and details such as detour routes have not been confirmed.

Vasso "Bessie" Hinoporos explained she is an abutter of the bridge and expressed concern that construction will affect her property and a convenience store next door. She asked if there is a contact at the MBTA that businesses and abutters can speak to regarding their concerns. Mr. Nicoll explained that the MBTA's goal is to be as minimally invasive as possible and encouraged all meeting attendees to sign up for email alerts on the project website and email the project inbox with questions. Ms. Barrett explained that the project team will reach out to abutting businesses as the design progresses.

Dennis Teehan, Dedham Select Board Member, thanked the MBTA and constituents in attendance. He noted that he has not seen much dialogue or studies from the MBTA on the affects raising the East Street Bridge could have on the neighborhood. Additionally, he suggested adding a crumple zone, or another solution that would appease both parties. Studies related to traffic flow below the bridge are not in the MBTA purview.

Ann Mercer echoed previous concerns over raising the bridge height. She explained that the current bottleneck can be considered a traffic calming measure, and that fixing the bottleneck will not do much to change traffic in the area as the East Street rotary generally dictates local traffic. She expressed frustration over the MBTA's stance and asked why they were hosting a meeting if it seems they already made up their mind on raising the bridge. Mr. Nicoll clarified that the MBTA did not comment on if improvements to the bottleneck will reduce traffic, but rather that it would help with pedestrian safety. He flagged that there are many traffic calming measures the Town of Dedham could make, like adding speed bumps before the bridge, but anything outside of the project limits is up to the Town.

Michael Marks expressed concern that the number of trucks using East Street will rise exponentially if the bridge is raised. Additionally, he noticed an increase in freight trains utilizing the tracks since the pandemic and asked if the increased infrastructure capacity will allow for larger freight trains to run more frequently. Mr. Nicoll explained the new bridge will be able to handle all freight traffic. Mr. Nicoll did not have an answer on the increased freight traffic but explained he would flag the question within the MBTA to find an answer. Mr. Nicoll also deferred that even-though this bridge would be brought up to the standard of care, adjacent bridges on the line may not be so it may not directly correlate to ability to run additional freight traffic.

Keith Hampe asked if the height of 14' is necessary for federal funding. Mr. Nicoll explained that it is not and that the project is already fully funded for construction through state bond funds, however, the project team will apply for future federal grants. The recommendation of 14' is strictly a public safety concern.

Cheryl Highers expressed frustration about the impacts that various construction projects in the area have on traffic in her neighborhood, specifically along Elmwood Avenue. Mr. Nicoll explained he is sympathetic to how construction affects abutters but reminded the group that raising the bridge height is a necessary safety measure.

Brad Lombardi echoed the feedback of neighbors, noting that East Street is already used as a cut through to Route 1 when traffic is high. Speaking to a previous question, he asked if a crumple zone is possible. Mr. Nicoll explained that there are not currently any sort of crumple zones devise used or in service on the MBTA system, but they would need to be collaborated by the Town. The current goal is to raise the structure to avoid bridge collisions. A crumple zone would not alleviate the situation where trucks would get stuck and emergency personnel would need to be mobilized.

Dimitria Sullivan, Dedham Select Board member, noted that the Town will host a meeting to discuss the East Street Bridge replacement and will continue to listen to community feedback on the project.

Written Question & Answer Summary (Verbal Responses to Questions Submitted in the Q&A Feature)

Kathleen Stratford asked who is paying for the bridge reconstruction and how long the work is estimated to take. Mr. Nicoll explained that the project is currently state bond funded with the ability to receive future federal funding. Construction is expected to last 18 months to two years, beginning in early 2023 through late 2024.

David Phillips asked what steps would be taken to avoid flooding if East Street is lowered. Mr. D'Artista explained that as the project design progresses the team will look at drainage characteristics, such as lowering catch basins.

D K asked how daily traffic flow will be impacted during construction and what the hours of construction will be. Mr. Nicoll explained the project team is too early in the design process to answer these questions, but from a holistic standpoint the accelerated bridge construction will allow for better traffic flow throughout the project. Most work will be completed during the normal workday shift plus occasional weekend work.

David Phillips asked what will be done to help businesses affected by construction. Mr. Nicoll emphasized that the project team is in the early stages of planning but will provide opportunities for abutting businesses to express their concerns and will work throughout the project to maintain access to businesses.

Michael Marks asked if there will be lighting on the new bridge. Mr. Nicoll explained that lighting is currently not planned for the new bridge.

D K asked if parking will be impacted during or after construction. Mr. Nicoll explained that street parking will not be impacted but parking near Endicott Station may be impacted.

Jessica Porter asked how many people were in attendance. Ms. Barrett noted there were 72 public attendees.

Dimitri Kapalis asked which side of the existing bridge the new superstructure will be built. Mr. Nicoll did not have a definitive answer but expects it to be built on the Grant Avenue side of the bridge.

Christine Smith requested additional details on how the bottleneck under the East Street bridge will be improved. Using a photo of East Street under the bridge as a reference, Mr. Nicoll showed where the roadway pinches at the entrance and exit of the bridge, creating a bottleneck.

Sarah B. expressed concern over the danger that increased traffic could bring to her neighborhood and asked if there is a maximum truck height. Mr. Nicoll explained that the maximum truck height is 13'6". The Massachusetts legal truck height is 13'6".

Lawrence Johnson asked if explosive materials will be used during construction. Mr. Nicoll did not believe explosives equipment would be used for this project.

Sarah MacDonald asked why this bridge replacement will be higher than the Westwood East Street bridge replacement. Mr. Nicoll clarified that he believes the as installed Westwood East Street bridge measures at or above 13'6" but is signed as lower than 13'6" at the direction of the Town.

David Phillips asked if Commuter Rail traffic and schedules would be impacted by construction. Mr. Nicoll explained the only Commuter Rail impacts will be during a full weekend closure.

D K asked if there will be vibration monitoring during construction. Mr. Nicoll explained that there will be noise monitoring but can include pre and post construction vibration monitoring.

Jo asked if foot traffic will be allowed during construction. Mr. Nicoll explained that it depends on the specific activity, but if the roadway is open for vehicular traffic, it will be open for pedestrian traffic as well.

Jessica Porter asked if bike lanes could be included with this project. Mr. Nicoll explained that bike lanes are not currently included in the project design as they would affect the structure span length and depth.

Benjamin Eppinger asked if it would be possible to host a joint meeting with the MBTA and Town of Dedham to address height signage and enforcement issues. Additionally, he asked if the project team has considered alternatives to weekend work. Mr. Nicoll clarified that only 4 – 5 weekend closures will be necessary throughout the project as they are the best way to minimize daily construction impacts.

Appendix A: Public Attendance¹

A total of x people attended: 94 signed in and 3 called in.

Carol Aiello	Scott Heald	Carole Moore
Sarah B.	Cheryl Highers	Jeff Needham
Molly Belden	Vasso "Bessie" Hinoporos	Brian OConnor
Vicky Berg	Lydia Iantosca	Andrew Pepoli
Robert Blaha	Cheryl Jeff	David Phillips
Jayne Blake	Roberta Johnnene	Kathleen Podolski
Steve Brayton	Lawrence Johnston	Jessica Porter
Elissa Brown	D K	Robert Quinn
Barbara Carter	Dmitri Kapalis	Stephen Relyea
Michele Cotter	Brian Keaney	Senator Michael Rush
Joan Cummins	Paul King	Sokha Saing
Ann Cushing	Sharon Lane	Lisa Seibert
Andrés De Arco	Ariel Langevin	Jodi Shair
Robert Deardorff	Robert Lexander	Christine Sims
Michael Dentremont	Brad Lombardi	John Sisson
Chris Dooley	Stacy M	Christine Smith
Alan Earls	Pete M	William Spillane
Benjamin Eppinger	Katharine M Savage	Jeff Stevens
Chris Fadden	Jim MacDonald	Katie Stowell
Dana Farley	Sarah Macdonald	Kathleen Stratford
Joseph Flanagan	Patrick Magee	Dimitria Sullivan
Danielle Flanagan	Jason Mammone	Neil Sullivan
Christos Gianasmidis	Michael Marks	Dennis Teehan
Joe Gioioso	Lise Marx	Lee Toma
Leon Goodwin	M. McAllister	Douglas Walters
Michael Gorman	Paul McCabe	Ronald Willey
Donna Greer	Margaret McCarthy	Barbara Wilson Arboleda
Andrea Griffin	Maurine McDermott	B. A. Wolfson
Allison Grimes	Richard McGowan	Stefan Wuensch
Paul Grimes	Devin McKeon	Christine
Keith Hampe	Michael McShea	Jo
Ginny Hardy	Ann Mercer	

¹ Names are listed as provided in Zoom.