



Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority

Robert Street Bridge Replacement Project
Design Public Meeting
Monday, April 29, 2019

BCYF Roslindale Community Center
6 Cummins Highway, Boston, MA

MBTA Attendees

Assistant General Manager Beth Larkin
Trish Foley
Mike Ryan

Project Team Attendees

Andrew Burkholder, VHB
Kelsey Munns, VHB
Robert Penfield, VHB
Kyle Olsen, Regina Villa Associates (RVA)
Sarah Paritsky, RVA

Public Attendees (from sign-in sheets)

Nuno Barbosa
Julia Barbose
Larry Bayer
Brian Cartwright
David Cavcchio
Joe Coppinger
John Covert
Ann Cushing, *Sen. Mike Rush's Office*
Michael Dimarco
Laura Dowd
Nick Eliopoulos, *St. Nectarios Church*
Marie Esposito
Mary Flaherty
David Gallogly
Mary Ellen Gambon
Peter Gianncopulos, *St. Nectarios Church*
John Griffin
David Holzman

Martin Keogh, *West Roxbury Civic & Improvement Association*
Chris Kollett
Matt Lawlor
Joan Linden, *Roslindale Green & Clean*
Gerard Lucas, *18 Robert Street*
Yevgenia D. Mackiernan
Betty Maher
Viola Monaghan
Suzanne Mrozak
Justin Murad
Thomas Papathanasiou
Sally Perry
Lauren Peter
Josef Porteleki
Shirley Ransom
Renee Rekona
Adam Rogruff

Racheal Rush
Wiki Sarros
Sharron Sawyer
Pamela Sinotte
Marshall Spriggs
Hilary Sullivan, *Roslindale Village Main Street
Design Committee*

Mark Tedrowl
Cissie Walsh
David Wen
Councilor Michelle Wu, City of Boston
Tim

Meeting Purpose

The purpose of this meeting was to introduce the Robert Street Bridge Replacement Project, explain why the current bridge needs to be replaced, give a summary of how construction will affect abutters and obtain feedback from the public.

Meeting Format

The meeting began with a presentation at 6:30 PM followed by time for public comment. After, participants were directed to write their answers to the questions, “What are you most concerned about? What do you think we should know about while planning for construction?” Transcriptions of these answers are included in Appendix A.

Materials (Available on project website)

- PowerPoint presentation
- Robert Street Bridge Replacement Project Informational Handout

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Mike Ryan, MBTA Project Manager, welcomed the public to the meeting and thanked them for coming. Mr. Ryan introduced the project team, including other MBTA staff members and consultants from VHB, the bridge designers, and RVA, the public outreach consultants.

POWERPOINT PRESENTATION

Mr. Ryan began the presentation with details about the project location and existing conditions. The Robert Street Bridge services the Needham Commuter Rail Line and directly abuts a condo building on 18 Robert Street and the St. Nectarios Greek Orthodox Church. Mr. Ryan explained that the Robert Street Bridge was originally built in 1898 and was rehabilitated in 1985, but the steel superstructure currently has a 4 out of 10 rating and is nearing the end of its fatigue life.

Mr. Ryan explained that the MBTA’s goals for this project are to restore the bridge and keep the system in a state of good repair. The MBTA will also work to minimize impacts to the abutting Roslindale neighborhood, users of Robert Street, and Commuter Rail riders. Mr. Ryan said that the MBTA is proposing a complete bridge replacement, which will be a single span. All construction will be done within the existing MBTA right-of-way. Mr. Ryan later noted that the proposed Robert Street Bridge color will be painted black, even though it is shown as blue in the graphic (for illustrative purposes).

Mr. Ryan explained the construction staging process, which will begin with the installation of drilled shafts on the west side and six-inch micropiles on the east side of Roslindale Station. During the entirety of the construction process there will be two weekend shutdowns, with Commuter Rail service ending on Friday night and resuming on Monday morning. During the first weekend shutdown, contractors will install pier caps and precast approach slabs, which will make the new bridge easier to install. After the first shutdown, the new bridge will be built alongside the existing Robert Street Bridge. During the second weekend shutdown all track from the current bridge will be removed and replaced with the new bridge and track. The last step will be to reconstruct the roadway and sidewalks directly under the bridge. Slides 13 through 21 in the presentation include graphics illustrating the construction staging process.

Mr. Ryan described the anticipated impacts to Robert Street during construction. Approximately 18 on-street parking spots will be lost to allow for construction. The contractors will generally maintain two lanes of traffic during construction, but will shift lanes within the existing curb lines. Occasionally, contractors will need to alternate two directions of traffic in one lane. During the two weekend shutdowns, full detours will be in effect for MBTA buses, vehicles, and pedestrians. A map of the detour routes is provided on slide 23 of the presentation.

Mr. Ryan explained that the project team submitted 60% of the design in January 2019, and is scheduled to submit 100% of the design by June 2019. At that point advertising will begin for the project. The project will take approximately 13 months to construct and will cost roughly \$11 million.

Mr. Ryan then explained the public outreach performed for this project, including recent meetings with City of Boston and State Officials. The project team distributed flyers to abutters of the Robert Street Bridge on April 22. During construction, the project team will send advisories to the project email list and will maintain the project website appropriately. There will be proactive and adequate notice before detours and closures. Mr. Ryan invited attendees to email him (mryan@mbta.com) with questions and to sign up for project email notifications. He shared the website link for more information: www.mbta.com/RobertSt.

PUBLIC COMMENTS & QUESTIONS

Martin Keough, West Roxbury Civic Association, asked how long traffic will be detoured during the two weekend shutdowns. Mr. Ryan explained that there will be full detours during the two weekend closures plus the occasional day or shift closure. Mr. Martin also asked what the plan B would be if the contractors don't complete the full weekend closure work on time and Commuter Rail service is shut down during the week. Mr. Ryan explained that there would be bus shuttling if construction goes over the Monday morning deadline along with huge penalties to the contractor.

An abutter at the 18 Robert Street condo building asked if access to their driveway will be obstructed during construction. Mr. Ryan explained that it will not be fully obstructed but there will be some occasions where the Robert Street driveway entrance will be slightly impacted.

Another abutter explained that he understands the two weekend shutdowns will require disruptive night work, but was concerned about other, unexpected night work. Mr. Ryan explained that as it is planned now, the only overnight operations will be during the two weekend shutdowns, but the contractors may work on some Sundays from 7 AM to 3:30 PM.

A participant explained that a group of residents maintains trees planted on MBTA property on the hillside of the Roslindale Station parking lot, and wanted to know if the planned construction would impact their trees. Mr. Ryan explained that there shouldn't be any major impacts to the trees on the hillside, but if there was, they would be restored. The participant then asked if the stairway at the station will be permanently removed, to which Mr. Ryan responded, only temporarily during construction.

In response to Mr. Ryan's answer about the trees, another participant asked if there will be extensive staging areas on the hillside. Mr. Ryan said that 8 to 9 Roslindale Station parking lot spaces will be used as the staging area, and the hillside is not an ideal location for storage or staging.

A participant explained that the 51 bus runs on Robert Street and has a stop underneath the Robert Street Bridge. She asked if the stop will be relocated during construction. Mr. Ryan explained that the stop would be moved during construction.

Another participant asked for clarification about the potential staging area and said she is extremely concerned about the trees being damaged and mentioned that some hold sentimental value. She requested that the project team mark the trees and avoid harming them during construction. Mr. Ryan explained that the project team and contractors will try to find ways to mitigate damage to the trees, and that he would be happy to meet the group and discuss in more detail. Mr. Ryan did emphasize that most staging decisions will be in the hands of the contractor.

A participant asked if the project team and contractors have decided where the staging areas would be at this point in the project. Mr. Ryan explained that all staging areas will be on MBTA property and in the MBTA right-of-way, to which the participant reiterated concerns about damage to nearby trees.

Another participant concerned about trees requested that Mr. Ryan take a walk around the area with the residents involved to talk about why they are important. Mr. Ryan emphasized that all attendees can find his contact email on the meeting flyer and can meet with them anytime.

A participant explained that he didn't understand why it will take 13 months to complete the project. Robert Penfield, VHB, explained that the 13 month period includes time at the beginning for the contractor to develop shop drawings and fabricate pieces. The contractor likely will not be on site during the full 13 month period.

Justin Murad, District 5 City Council Candidate, explained that the construction area is already congested as is, especially during rush hour. He asked if there will be planned rerouting and how they are planning to move traffic through. Mr. Ryan explained that there would be signage going down Bellevue Station and police details will direct traffic. Mr. Ryan referred participants back to the detour map.

A participant asked if the bridge would be able to accommodate two tracks in the future. Mr. Ryan explained that the bridge will be a single track but is designed to have the capacity to carry a second, future track. The participant then explained that his children's school bus travels beneath the Robert Street Bridge, and asked if there has been communication between the project team and the public schools in the area. Mr. Ryan explained that part of the development of the project includes giving notifications to all stakeholders, and that the MBTA will announce the two weekend shutdowns three weeks in advance.

An abutter explained that she lives on South Street at the end of the MBTA parking lot, and asked if the noise and vibrations could impact an old house. Mr. Ryan explained that the noise and vibrations will be under the City of Boston's ordinance, excluding during the weekend shutdowns. The MBTA has been in communication with 18 Robert Street residents and St. Nectarios Church to conduct pre-construction audits. The participant also expressed concern about the pedestrian tunnel and asked if it was structurally sound, to which Mr. Ryan explained tunnels, culverts, and bridges are inspected annually on a cycle. The participant asked if residents of South Street can use the MBTA parking lot to compensate for lost spaces during construction. Mr. Ryan explained that he would investigate.

A participant asked if starting in the winter would make parking for residents more complicated. Mr. Ryan explained that residents will most likely not see direct construction impacts until Spring 2020.

David Holzman, a longtime resident of Roslindale and member of the tree organization wanted to emphasize the effort residents have put into the trees and explained that it's important that they know what's happening to them.

Hillary Sullivan, board member of the Roslindale Village Main Street Design Committee, explained that the board has been trying to make the entrances to Roslindale Village more welcoming to help people understand that the area is robust and vibrant. Her first request was if there was any opportunity to install more lighting and signage at the new Robert Street Bridge. Mr. Ryan explained that the bridge span and width doesn't fall under ordinance to require lighting, so there are no current plans to add lighting. He also explained that it is no longer standard practice to hang signs off bridges. Ms. Sullivan then asked if there were any efforts to revitalize Alexander the Great Park. Mr. Ryan explained that Alexander the Great Park is on MBTA property, but the MBTA doesn't maintain it. The park will not be impacted by this project.

A participant from St. Nectarios Church asked when the dates for the two weekend shutdowns would be identified. Mr. Ryan explained that when the contractor is awarded the work they will

have 90 days to submit a baseline schedule, which will include the weekend shutdown dates. The participant expressed concern about contractors working on Sundays, explaining that apart from routine Sunday Service people also have weddings and baptisms that are planned months in advance. Mr. Ryan explained that they can work together, and Andrew Burkholder, project team member, explained they will ask the contractor to avoid working on Columbus Day Weekend as it's a big weekend for the Church.

Councilor Michelle Wu asked how long the project team anticipates the new bridge will last, to which Mr. Ryan explained it has a projected lifespan of 75 years. Given that projected lifespan, Councilor Wu asked what would be needed to add a second track for the extension of the Orange line or more frequent Commuter Rail service. Mr. Ryan shared a slide with diagrams of a proposed future second track and explained that construction of a second track would require reconstructing the station and completing track work in both directions. There was a conversation of what work would be required on the bridge to support a second track. The design does not preclude widening the bridge for a second track. Mr. Ryan was uncertain if a second bridge would be required for more frequent service, but would need to consult with MBTA Operations.

A direct abutter explained that when he met with the project team in the fall, they discussed assembling the bridge in the Roslindale Station parking lot. Mr. Ryan explained that it will no longer be built in the parking lot. Mr. Ryan explained that the two main girders (sides), six floor beams, and deck plate units will be constructed adjacent to the current Robert Street Bridge in the street.

A participant said he expects graffiti artists will tag the side of the proposed bridge that has a safety walk (facing Roslindale Village), and asked if the MBTA could find professional artists. Mr. Ryan said the MBTA does not plan to hire artists to paint the bridge.

A participant asked if the sidewalks under the Robert Street Bridge can be used during construction. Mr. Ryan explained that there will always be access to one of the sidewalks under the bridge, except during the two weekend shutdowns.

A participant expressed concern over the proposed Robert Street Bridge design aesthetic, and requested that there be more designs to choose from, especially if it has a projected lifespan of 75 years. The participant then asked if the bridge could accommodate the extension of the multi-use path from Forest Hills to Roslindale Village. Mr. Ryan said this would require altering the station, but the design would not preclude this. Mr. Ryan agreed to follow up with his colleagues about this request.

An abutter asked if during construction there will be access for people on wheelchairs travelling under the Robert Street Bridge. Mr. Ryan explained that the pedestrian access will be ADA compliant.

A participant asked about drainage, particularly expressing concern about stormwater spilling onto the sidewalks. Mr. Ryan explained that water will collect in the stone ballast gutters and will not spill onto the sidewalks. Mr. Ryan confirmed water will move towards the station, not the Church.

A participant asked if pedestrians could walk around the drill shown in the construction staging phase 1 slide in addition to the one sidewalk that will remain open to pedestrians during construction. Mr. Ryan emphasized that the degree of taking might not be as large as it's depicted in the presentation and confirmed there will only be sidewalk open to pedestrians. Mr. Ryan explained that allowing pedestrians to walk around the drill would require a permanent barrier that would further impact vehicular traffic. The participant emphasized that he doesn't want pedestrians to be an afterthought.

A participant asked if there would be work done to the granite abutments to make them more aesthetically pleasing. Mr. Ryan explained that the micropiles will be drilled through the abutments. Part of the existing eastern abutment will be covered by new concrete and the existing granite will be washed and repointed. Another participant later said she finds the current granite abutments beautiful.

A participant asked how many days the MBTA expects there to be rerouting, and how long there will be between the two weekend shutdowns. Mr. Ryan explained that there will be a few months in between the first and second shutdown while the bridge is being assembled.

A participant asked if the pedestrian tunnel will be obstructed, if it will be safe, and when it was last inspected. Mr. Ryan explained that it will not be obstructed, it is safe, and is inspected annually when required by Federal Transit Administration standards, but he doesn't know the exact date of inspection. The participant then asked if the project will go on longer than the planned 13 months. Mr. Ryan said no.

A participant asked about the \$11 million budget and where the money was coming from. Mr. Ryan explained that the money will not come out of the operating budget. The intent is to get the project federally reimbursed.

A participant requested that another meeting be held once a contractor was awarded the project. Mr. Ryan said the MBTA could set another meeting.

A participant asked if fencing will be in place during construction to keep people from trespassing. Mr. Ryan explained that the fencing will be updated and increased during construction.

A participant explained that the St. Nectarios Church is used for voting, and that Roslindale is a part of three precincts and has primaries. He requested the MBTA offer free parking at Roslindale station for residents voting at the Church. Mr. Ryan explained that the question is not in his realm of expertise, but agreed to follow up on the request. The participant then asked if

using black as the bridge color will cause thermal expansion. Mr. Ryan said that it would, to which the participant questioned why they would choose black instead of another color to avoid the problem. Mr. Ryan explained that black would hold up better than other colors due to the added pigments.

Mr. Ryan encouraged participants to email him with additional comments or questions, and closed the meeting.

Appendix A – Written Comments from Participants

Question	Comments
<p>“What are you most concerned about? What do you think we should know while planning for construction?”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This new bridge will enable the T to make Roslindale/West Roxbury zone 1 instead of 1A • Some of us are very concerned about the small trees, planted and cared for by volunteers, being damaged or destroyed • 5 abandoned tires on ROW and by parking lot – remove from site • There is a major storm/waste pipe under Robert Street (Read underground piped river)

Comment Forms

1. Thanks for this up-front info. Please hold another meeting when plans solidify, and please look into opening MBTA parking lot to Roslindale residents to make up for the lost spaces (we live across the street and will be directly impacted by more cars on South Street)
2. Re relocation of #51 bus stop during construction. You said the stop would be relocated up Robert Street (away from the square). Would it be possible, for the duration of construction (whatever period traffic on Robert is relocated) to have the #51 bus stop at the Cowinith and Belgrade stops also?

Also, I strongly support making a serious attempt to avoid adverse impacts to the landscaping adjacent to the station.