



Whittier Bridge/I-95 Improvement Project

Fall 2013

The Project

The replacement of the Whittier Bridge over the Merrimack River is the centerpiece of a project to improve a four-mile section of Interstate 95 (I-95) through the towns of Newburyport, Salisbury and Amesbury. Built in 1951, the Whittier Bridge is a critical link in the regional transportation infrastructure for residents, commuters, businesses and tourists. It is used by skiers heading to the mountain slopes in the winter and by beach-goers heading to the coast in the summer. The regional economy is also dependent on the bridge as the major north/south truck route to deliver goods between Canada and the U.S. This project, which includes the repair or replacement of four adjacent bridges along I-95, is one of the largest in the Patrick Administration's \$3 billion Accelerated Bridge Program.

Led by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT), the project will improve safety by bringing the Whittier Bridge up to current standards and improving the geometry of several I-95 exit ramps; improve capacity and traffic flow by adding travel and breakdown lanes on the Whittier Bridge and widening I-95 north and south of the bridge; improve stormwater management; and support multimodal travel and recreation with the addition of the first shared-use path along a Massachusetts interstate.

The new Whittier Bridge will resemble the distinctive existing bridge using a network tied arch structure. Two parallel structures will each carry four travel lanes, a high speed shoulder and a breakdown lane. A shared-use path, with pedestrian overlooks across the Merrimack River, will be constructed on the northbound side to facilitate connections to nearby trails and attractions.

Start of Construction Marks Design/Build Phase

On February 27, 2013, MassDOT's Board of Directors awarded a design/build (D/B) contract to the joint venture of Walsh-McCourt JV to rehabilitate the Whittier Bridge. During D/B, final design and construction will occur simultaneously, allowing construction work to begin on some critical elements, while other portions of the final design are still being approved by MassDOT. Preliminary work began in May 2013. The work consists of test borings, surveying, soil testing, preliminary excavation and grading and shrub and tree clearing in the right-of-way. Major construction began in fall 2013 and anticipated project completion is in October 2016.

In addition to preliminary work, the D/B team has been completing 75 percent design for the highway elements and shared-use path, as well as finalizing the design of the bridges that are to be constructed in the early stages. Updates on project progress will be presented to the public at periodic meetings.



The current bridge is deteriorating and needs to be replaced to maintain a critical regional transportation link.





The project will improve safety and capacity by adding lanes on the Whittier Bridge (left image – new bridge layout; right image – current bridge).

Construction Staging

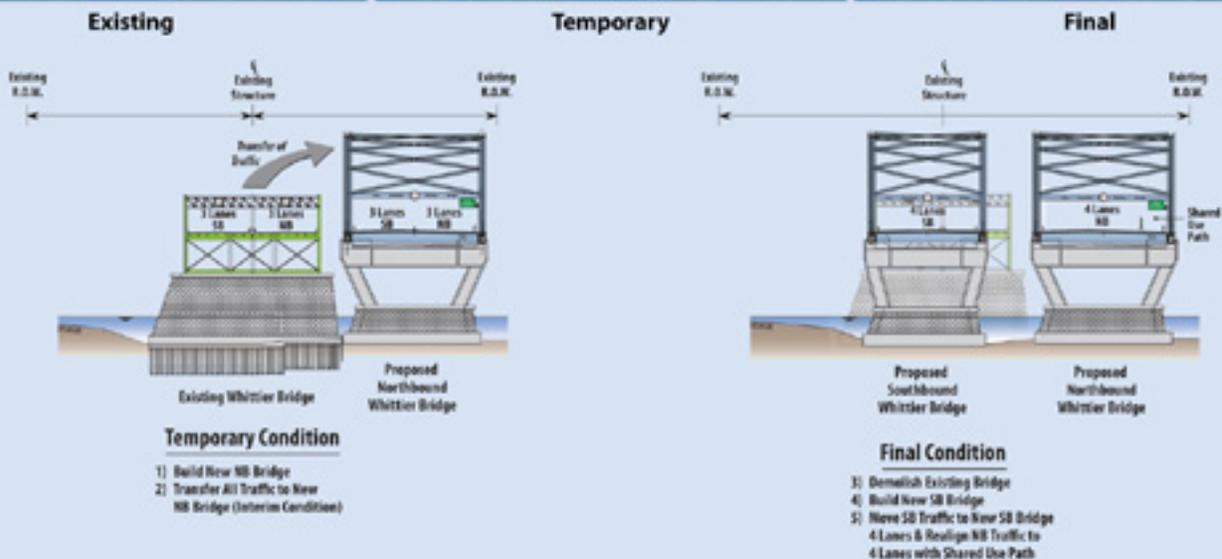
Construction of the new Whittier Bridge will take place in phases. MassDOT has implemented a traffic information program to ensure local residents and businesses and regional travelers are aware of current or upcoming traffic diversions or lane closures. Travel lanes will shift between bridge spans as work progresses. The new shared-use path across the bridge will not be available for use until construction is completed in 2016.

Work will begin on the northbound structure with the construction of approach spans for arch erection, followed by the construction of the arch deck and ribs. North and southbound traffic will be shifted to the new structure,

which can accommodate three travel lanes in each direction, and the existing bridge will be demolished. The southbound bridge span will be constructed in its place following the same process.

Construction hours are generally 7 AM to 5 PM, Monday through Saturday. Some nighttime work will be necessary and those hours are typically 8 PM to 5 AM. The project team will coordinate construction schedules with other contractors in the area to avoid or minimize any more potential traffic impacts. Sign up for email traffic advisories and construction updates by visiting the project website at www.mass.gov/massdot/whittierbridge.

Traffic staging during construction and upon project completion.



Sequencing and Traffic Management

MassDOT understands the importance of minimizing construction impacts and managing traffic, especially during peak travel times and summer weekends. Traffic will be maintained in both directions on I-95 throughout the project. Signage and information about traffic patterns related to the project will be posted locally and regionally using variable message boards, static signs and Real Time Traffic Management signs. Traffic will be closely monitored on local roadways and signal timings will be modified, when necessary, to avoid congestion that could impact the local communities and businesses.

The work will require day and night lane closures on I-95 northbound and southbound throughout the project limits. Daytime closures will be limited to single lanes. Nighttime closures may be single or multiple lanes, depending on the location and nature of the work to be performed. Some work may occur on weekends. Individualized traffic management plans will be in place for work on the Route 110, Evans Place, Pine Hill and railroad bridges and associated roadways.

There are currently no holiday closures planned. In the event of the need for a holiday closure, MassDOT would be required to get approval from Amesbury and Newburyport, and the public would be notified.

MassDOT will work with the U.S. Coast Guard to avoid or minimize impacts related to the navigation channels and maintain boating access in the Merrimack River throughout construction.

What's New to the Project

Five new elements have been added to the project since the last public and Whittier Working Group meetings in the preliminary design phase:

Cameras on shared-use path - At the request of local police departments, nine closed circuit television cameras will be installed on light poles on the shared-use path for added security and public safety.

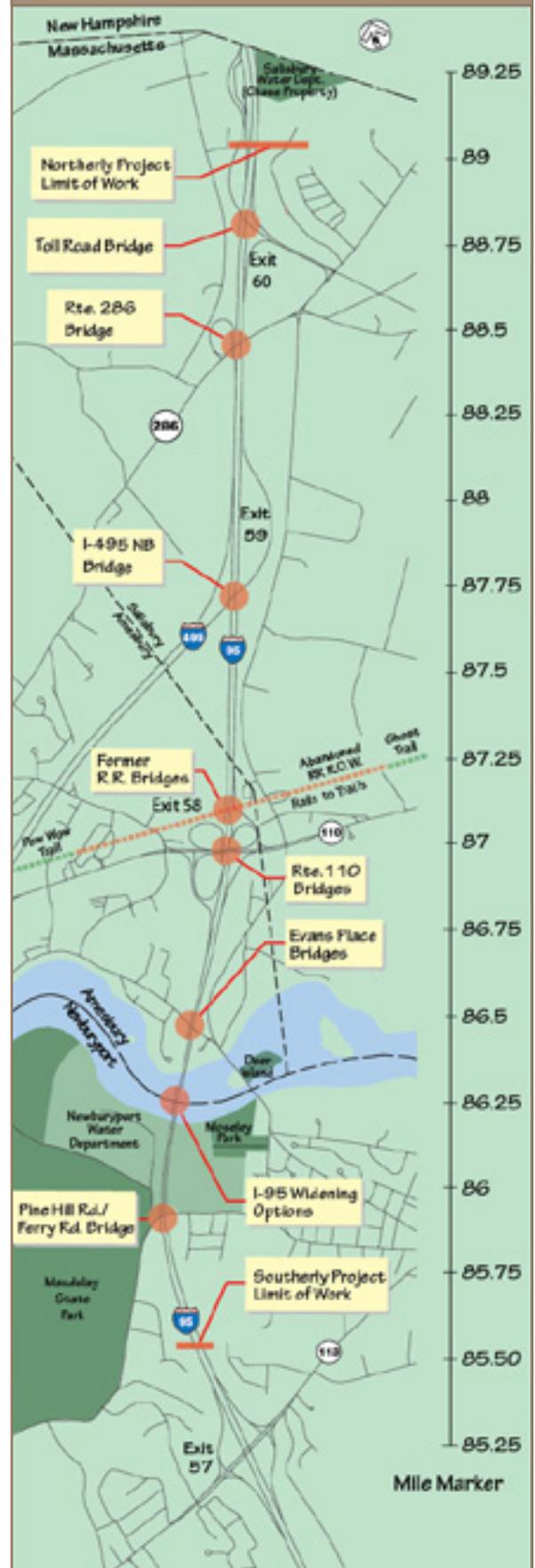
Evans Place Bridge alternative superstructure - The bridge span has been shortened. The smaller structure will be built more quickly, have more clearance over the roadway and require less maintenance.

Whittier Bridge construction - Construction will be staged from I-95, rather than from barges on the Merrimack River, to avoid risks associated with barge-mounted cranes, improve construction performance and reduce impacts to the U.S. Coast Guard channels.

Whittier Bridge piers - The preliminary design called for piers with vertical columns and an arch supported on a cantilevered cap beam. The revised design consists of piers with sloping columns to provide support directly beneath the arches.

Transparent barrier northbound Whittier Bridge - Installation of a transparent barrier separating I-95 vehicle traffic from the shared-use path on the Whittier Bridge.

Corridor Map





Design/Build Schedule

April 16, 2013

- Notice to proceed

May – October 2013

- Preliminary work (test borings, tree clearing, surveying, soil testing, cofferdam construction, micro-pile installation, utility work)

Fall 2013

- 100% design for northbound Whittier, northbound Evans Place, Pine Hill, I-95/Route 110 and I-95/abandoned RR bridges
- 100% design for highway and shared-use path
- Start of major construction

Winter 2014

- 100% design for southbound Whittier and southbound Evans Place bridges, and I-95 northbound on-ramp/abandoned RR bridge

Fall 2016

- Construction completed

Environmental and Historic Resources

MassDOT's environmental permitting program ensures that measures are in place to protect the Merrimack River and other natural resources, including adjacent open space/parkland, public water supplies and threatened and endangered species, throughout construction. Stormwater will be collected from the bridge and highway and pretreated prior to discharge to protect water quality in the river and community water supplies.

The project team also will continue coordinating with federal, state and local historic preservation staff to ensure compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. This includes meeting commitments to incorporate historic elements into the bridge and shared-use path design. MassDOT regularly works with the U.S. Coast Guard to identify and manage any potential impacts to navigation, endangered species and their habitats and wetlands. Work in the water is subject to restrictions to avoid impacting the endangered Atlantic Sturgeon during spawning season.

Public Involvement and Outreach

During the previous phase of the project, MassDOT's public involvement program gathered input from the public and the Whittier Working Group on bridge design, aesthetics and the shared-use path. Comments were carefully considered during preliminary design and MassDOT is committed to continuing a robust public involvement and communications program for final design and construction.

The outreach program includes providing updates to abutters, boaters, historic and environmental interest groups, bicycle and pedestrian groups, local businesses and the traveling public so they can plan ahead and minimize inconvenience. A project website, public and stakeholder group meetings, press outreach, fact sheets and construction updates and e-blast and social media advisories will keep the public up to date on progress and upcoming plans. Public meetings will be held prior to major construction milestones and traffic shifts.

Contact Us

Visit the Project Website:

To sign up for email advisories, updates and notices, please visit the project website at www.mass.gov/massdot/whittierbridge.



Scan this code to access the project website on your mobile device.

For more information about the project or to submit questions, comments or concerns, please contact:

Stephanie Boundy, Public Outreach Coordinator
MassDOT
10 Park Plaza, Suite 4160
Boston, MA 02116
Tel: 857-368-8904
Email: stephanie.boundy@state.ma.us

Stay connected to MassDOT for transportation news and updates!



www.mass.gov/massdot



blog.mass.gov/transportation/



www.twitter.com/massdot



www.facebook.com/massdotinfo

