

November 15, 2017

Kevin J. Murphy
City Manager
Michael McGovern
Assistant City Manager

Mayor Edward J. Kennedy, Jr.
and
Members of the City Council

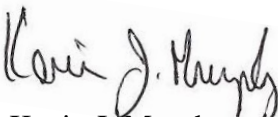
Reference: **8.4 10/17/17 C. Elliott** - Req. City Mgr. provide update regarding progress at the Rourke Bridge.
9.8 1/31/2017 M. Kennedy-Req. City Mgr. provide a report regarding efforts to secure funding for an environmental impact study of the new Rourke Bridge.
8.4 2016/315 5/10/16 C. Samaras/C. Belanger - Req. City Mgr. prepare a report/request to MDOT to prioritize the need for the Rourke Bridge replacement.

Dear Mayor Kennedy and Members of the City Council:

Attached, please find a letter from MassDOT regarding the above motions made by the Council. The letter addresses the need for environmental review, permitting, design advancement, and right of way acquisition. The initial Corridor Study and Feasibility Analysis identified several alternative alignments. Those alternative options undergo a more detailed analysis through the required state and federal environmental review processes; once completed, a preferred alternative is identified and advanced to preliminary design. When funding availability is determined to conduct the next analysis phases, MassDOT will begin the steps to secure a consultant to perform the tasks in an effort to minimize any potential delays.

We will continue to work with the state delegation, MassDOT, and the Northern Middlesex Planning Organization, and NMCOG to drive this project. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions regarding this or any other matter.

Sincerely,


Kevin J. Murphy
City Manager



Charles D. Baker, Governor
Karyn E. Polito, Lieutenant Governor
Stephanie Pollack, MassDOT Secretary & CEO

massDOT
Massachusetts Department of Transportation

October 29, 2017

The Honorable Eileen M. Donoghue
Massachusetts Senate
State House
24 Beacon Street, Room 405
Boston, MA 02133-1053

Dear Senator Donoghue:

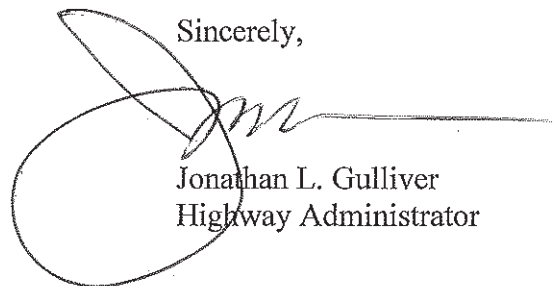
Further to your inquiry directed to Secretary Pollack regarding the Rourke Bridge carrying the Wood Street Extension over the Merrimack River and the B&M Railroad in Lowell, the replacement of the bridge replacement is considered a major infrastructure project that requires significant environmental review and permitting as well as design advancement and right-of-way acquisition. MassDOT is responsible for developing this documentation.

As a follow up to the Corridor Study and Feasibility Analysis that identified several alternative alignments to replace the temporary structure, the next step is to conduct a more detailed analysis of those alternatives through the required state and federal environmental review processes (MEPA/NEPA) to identify a preferred alternative that can be advanced through preliminary design. MassDOT is determining the availability of funding to support this effort. While this occurs, MassDOT staff will commence the preparation of the necessary documentation to secure a consultant to perform these tasks.

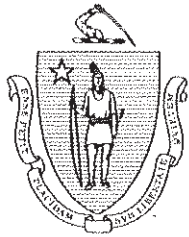
The project will require a commitment of state and federal funding for the construction. MassDOT will work with the Northern Middlesex Metropolitan Planning Organization (NMMPO) to provide them with updates in anticipation of the project's future programming in the region's Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) and will solicit their input during the development of the environmental documents.

I appreciate your continued interest in and support for this regionally significant project. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me directly.

Sincerely,



Jonathan L. Gulliver
Highway Administrator



COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
THE GENERAL COURT
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133 1053

May 25, 2017

Secretary Stephanie Pollack
Massachusetts Department of Transportation
10 Park Plaza, Suite 4160
Boston, MA 02116

Re: Rourke Bridge/Wood Street Improvement Project

Dear Secretary Pollack:

Thank you sincerely for all of your work coordinating the meeting with MassDOT staff that was held on May 3 at the State House. We represent a number of concerned constituents and appreciate the opportunity to relay our concerns regarding the need for a new bridge over the Merrimack River in Lowell.

The existing Rourke Bridge is a serious public safety problem for Lowell and its surrounding communities. It provides direct access to Lowell General Hospital, the regional trauma center, but due to severe traffic congestion and the antiquated, functionally and obsolete design of the bridge—including the absence of shoulders and the relatively narrow width—queued vehicles cannot pull over to allow emergency vehicles to pass. As a result, emergency vehicles are often unable to cross the bridge without significant delay. Such a delay can mean the difference between life and death for a patient in immediate need of medical attention. The police superintendent and fire chief also spoke at length regarding the challenges they face in providing public safety services and responses to the neighborhoods on both sides of the bridge.

Furthermore, moving forward with this project is worthwhile from a financial perspective. Maintenance costs for the existing temporary bridge are quite high, as the manufacturer no longer provides replacement parts and all necessary components must be custom ordered. In 2007, MassDOT spent \$3.5 million to rehabilitate the superstructure and a portion of the substructure. Additional, less costly projects have been required over the past several years, including: repairing scouring on the piers, regularly tightening and replacing bolts, and periodically reapplying the epoxy coating on the bridge deck.

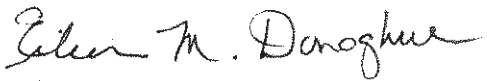
As you are aware, the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG), in partnership with MassDOT and the communities of Lowell, Chelmsford, Dracut and Tyngsborough, completed the *Rourke Bridge, Wood Street, Westford Street, and Drum Hill Road Corridor Study and Feasibility Analysis* in November of 2013. The study was funded through a \$500,000 federal Highway Priority Project earmark. Based on the bridge alignment alternatives examined, three alternative alignments emerged as viable from an operational, environmental, and land use perspective. Those alternatives will be carried forward into the NEPA and MEPA processes.

During the feasibility study process, there were 19 public meetings at which community members voiced their overwhelming support for the replacement project and expressed their concerns relative to the state of the current bridge. We regularly hear from constituents who remain concerned about traffic congestion on the bridge, the structural condition of the bridge, and the unsafe and uncomfortable nature of the cage-like sidewalk that crosses the bridge. This "temporary" span has been in operation for 32 years, and a permanent structure is long overdue.

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Given the time that has elapsed since the completion of the feasibility study, we are very concerned the report will become outdated. We urge you to commence this project in the very near future so we do not waste taxpayer dollars that have already been devoted to it. More importantly, we urge a speedy commencement of the project in order to guarantee the safety and well-being of our constituents. We thank you for your time and look forward to working with MassDOT to advance this important project.

Sincerely,



Eileen M. Donoghue

State Senator.

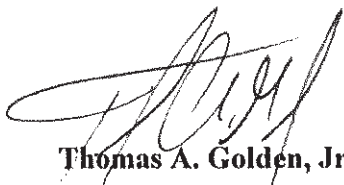
First Middlesex District



David M. Nangle

State Representative

Seventeenth Middlesex District



Thomas A. Golden, Jr.

State Representative

Sixteenth Middlesex District



Rady M6m

State Representative

Eighteenth Middlesex District