



Cape Cod Canal Bridges Replacement a Public Safety & Economic Necessity

Summary

Replacement of the Sagamore and Bourne Bridges is an economic necessity and public safety imperative - to ensure safe and efficient travel to and from Cape Cod and improve evacuation routes to the mainland. The Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce supports the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) 2019 MRER assessment that the most efficient and cost effective plan for the Canal bridges is to replace existing spans. We also support the Massachusetts Department of Transportation's (MassDOT) Case 3A for the roadway network, in coordination with a timely replacement of both the Sagamore and Bourne Bridges by the USACE.

After a decade of advocacy and study, we are achieving the planning and community consensus required for the modernization of Canal area transportation infrastructure.

In August 2018, MassDOT released recommendations for key roadway and multimodal (bicycle/pedestrian, park and ride facilities) improvements in the area of the Cape Cod Canal.

In August 2019, the Baker administration released its **Act Authorizing and Accelerating Transportation Investment** which includes funding authorization in section 2A for Case 3A planning, design and implementation.

In October 2019, USACE released evaluation of the Sagamore and Bourne Bridges, recommending replacement of the bridges after careful review of 12 alternatives, including combinations of bridge repair/replacement, new tunnels, even filling in the canal and restoring highways across the site.

It is essential that this momentum be carried into the next phases of final design, federal funding and permitting, and that deliberate and expedient progress continues toward successful completion of this project.

MassDOT Case 3A

The stated purpose of the Commonwealth's *Cape Cod Canal Study*, is to "Improve transportation mobility and accessibility in the Cape Cod Canal Area and to provide reliable year-round connectivity over the Canal and between the Sagamore and Bourne Bridges."

ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS

Canal bridges:

Oldest in Army Corp inventory

Rated "structurally deficient
"or "functionally obsolete"

Narrow lanes create flow
restriction "bottlenecks"

Traffic delays cost \$30 million
in lost time during lane drops

Future repairs will include
summer lane closures

Weight restrictions could be
economically devastating

Our lifeline needs to be:

- ✓ Safe
- ✓ Dependable
- ✓ Efficient

Of the seven alternative plans evaluated in this study, Case 3A was recommended as the option that would provide the greatest long-term improvements for accessibility and mobility to Cape Cod residents, employers, and visitors. This analysis assumes that USACE will replace both the Bourne and Sagamore Bridges with new structures located immediately adjacent to the existing.

MassDOT's recommendation, named Case 3A lays out a series of improvements to Routes 6, 3, 28 and the Belmont Circle area in Buzzards Bay that along with new bridges, would help to minimize traffic congestion during non-peak flow periods. It is not the goal of this project to create restriction-free traffic for maximum summer loads, but to provide safe and reliable transportation infrastructure for off-peak transportation into the next century.

The main elements associated with Case 3A include:

- Installation of an on-ramp connecting Scenic Highway westbound to Route 25 westbound
- Relocation of the Route 6 Exit 1C interchange
- Reconstruction of Belmont Circle as a 3-leg roundabout with signalized intersection
- Addition of a new lane on Route 6 eastbound to Exit 2
- Reconstruction of Bourne Rotary as a highway interchange

In April 2018 the Chamber worked to form *The Fix*, a coalition of community organizations and individuals to develop support for a proposed Mass DOT transportation improvement plan that will alleviate congestion in the Cape Cod Canal area. The coalition includes Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce, the Cape Cod Canal Region Chamber of Commerce, the Cape's 15 local chambers, the members of the Cape & Islands state representatives and senators, and members of the community at large.

USACE Major Rehabilitation Evaluation Report (MRER)

In October, 2019 The Army Corps of Engineers, who owns and maintains both the Sagamore and Bourne Bridges, released findings of the study that evaluates the cost to continue maintaining the existing spans versus total bridge replacement. Their recommendation is to replace both bridges, as being the most effective both for cost, safety and travel improvements. They also recommend new access for pedestrians and bicyclists.

An MRER consists of four major components: (1) structural engineering, to understand alternatives (this includes major rehabilitation and/or replacement options); (2) cost engineering of the developed alternatives; (3) economic justification of the developed alternatives; and (4) environmental analysis of the developed alternatives. USACE launched this evaluation for the two bridges since the structures are both 84 years old and USACE cannot assume that they will be able to rehabilitate them in perpetuity.

Recommendation

Once the USACE has finalized the MRER in November 2019 and its long-term plan for the bridges, MassDOT will initiate and prioritize the project development process for the capital projects recommended in the Cape Cod Canal Transportation Study's Final Report.

USACE and MassDOT have signed an agreement to work together and align the construction of these two projects in order to minimize impacts on the public and to maximize efficiency and minimize construction time.

The Cape Cod Chamber's mission is to support the region's economy, while being responsible stewards and preserving the sustainability and increasing the resiliency of the Cape. To that end, we strongly support the decisions to replace both the Sagamore and Bourne Bridges with new adjacent structures, and the implementation of Case 3A to improve roadway and multimodal transportation in the Canal region.

We urge the Commonwealth's legislature to approve Governor Baker's **Act Authorizing and Accelerating Transportation Investment** which includes funding authorization in section 2A for the state's portion of the roadway planning, design and implementation. And we urge Congress to develop and implement an aggressive timeline to secure funding. Finally we urge the USACE and MassDOT to quickly complete permitting and begin construction by 2022.

The Issue

- The Sagamore and Bourne bridges are over 84 years old - some of the oldest in the Army Corps inventory.
- They are rated either "structurally deficient" or "functionally obsolete" and qualify for replacement under federal guidelines. They have no modern safety features such as lane separation, shoulders, and pedestrian or bicycle separations.
- The travel lanes are two feet narrower than modern design standards and cannot accommodate the same vehicle capacity as the adjoining roadways – creating bottlenecks.
- Increasing maintenance needs result in regular traffic flow restrictions. This is no longer a summer problem - Cape area residents are sitting in Canal area gridlock year-around.
- Cape residents and businesses depend on predictable and efficient travel over the Canal for their economic wellbeing, and safety during medical emergencies or natural disasters.
- Delays are hurting our residents and businesses through missed appointments, aggravation, pollution from auto emissions, and can cost an estimated \$30 million a year in lost time during repairs that require lane closures.
- Traffic backups spill over onto secondary roadways making getting around canal area towns difficult.

"It's not about getting more cars on Cape. It's about getting the people that live and work here and the goods and services that they require, safely and efficiently". –Wendy Northcross, Chamber CEO

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- “Posting” weight restrictions, when implemented, will impact the flow and cost of goods and services to cape residents and businesses.

Background

- Sagamore and Bourne bridges built between 1933-1935 through the National Industrial Recovery Act, to replace a smaller drawbridge built in 1912, which also impeded marine traffic in the canal.
- Decades of seasonal and year around traffic volume increases add wear and tear. Exposure to salt and chemicals leads to deterioration of the concrete deck and some steel members of the bridges. As a result, increased maintenance and major rehab projects become more frequent.
- During 2009, in the face of massive public outcry over multi-hour, off-season backups during construction work, the Canal Area Regional Traffic Task Force was created to build consensus on transportation needs related to ongoing traffic congestion at the two canal bridges. The Cape Cod Chamber was an original member.
- The 2011 Cape Cod Regional Transportation Plan proposes a study to focus on the future of canal crossing.
- In 2014, MassDOT created the Working Group for the Cape Cod Canal Transportation Study, of which the Chamber is a member. Funds and commissions transportation study
- 2016, Army Corps begins analysis of the bridges
- 2018, MASSDOT releases roadway and multimodal recommendations
- 2019, MASS DOT includes the Canal Area Transportation Study in the Capital Improvement Plan; Baker administration releases its transportation bond bill including in Section 2A authorization for the Canal Area plan.
- 2019, Cape Cod MPO includes the study in its Regional Transportation Plan;
- 2019, USACE releases their Major Rehabilitation Evaluation Report (MRER) recommending replacement of both Bourne and Sagamore bridges, and enters into public comment period for finalization of the MRER.

Contact

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