



## Cape Cod Canal Bridges Replacement an Economic Necessity

### Summary

Replacement of the Sagamore and Bourne Bridges is an economic necessity to ensure safe and efficient travel to and from Cape Cod for area residents, workers, and visitors. The Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce supports the recommendations of Massachusetts Department of Transportation's (MassDOT) Case 3A in coordination with a timely replacement of both the Sagamore and Bourne Bridges by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE).

After a decade of advocacy and study, we are reaching a pivotal point toward 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 around the Cape Cod Canal. In October 2019, USACE released their draft conclusions in the evaluation of the Sagamore and Bourne Bridges, and after the public comment period, announced on April 3, 2020 the need to replace both bridges. On July 7, 2020, USACE and the Commonwealth of Mass. signed a memorandum of understanding whereby the USACE will continue to own, operate and maintain the existing Bourne and Sagamore Bridges and MassDOT will serve as the lead project delivery agency with responsibility to construct and subsequently own, operate and maintain two new bridges. <https://www.mass.gov/news/memorandum-of-understanding-reached-between-massdot-and-the-us-army-corps-of-engineers>. The parties agree funding for new bridges is a federal responsibility and USACE, U.S. Department of the Army and the Commonwealth will work together to develop a funding plan and seek Congressional acceptance.

It is essential that community support for this process continues, as we enter the critical phase of deciding site, size and design.

### 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." <https://www.mass.gov/cape-cod-canal-transportation-study>

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,

### 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 would be economically devastating

Our lifeline needs to be:

- ✓ Safe
- ✓ Dependable
- ✓ Efficient

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 SmarterCape Partnership.

## USACE Major Rehabilitation Evaluation Report (MRER)

The Army Corps of Engineers, who owns and maintains both the Sagamore and Bourne Bridges completed a study that evaluates the cost to continue maintain the existing spans versus total bridge replacement.

<https://www.nae.usace.army.mil/Missions/Projects-Topics/Cape-Cod-Canal-Bridges-Major-Rehabilitation-Study/>

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 85 years old and USACE cannot assume that they will be able to rehabilitate them in perpetuity. The final MRER will detail major rehabilitation milestones over the next 50 years for the bridges or recommend the replacement of one or both structures.

## Recommendation

USACE has decided the full replacement of both bridges is warranted, based on the cost of continued maintenance and the need to invest in a major rehab within 7 years. The long-term investment for the bridges is best made in replacement that will also extend lifespan. MassDOT has initiated and prioritized the project development costs and process for the capital projects in Governor Baker's Transportation Bond Bill. Further, both the House and Senate have approved \$350 million in funding for the roadways and improvements next to the two new bridges in their transportation bills as of July 2020.

MassDOT will align the construction of these two projects 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 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 to continue the timeline to complete permitting and clear the way for construction to begin by 2023.

Lastly, we thank both MassDOT and the Army Corps who worked swiftly and cooperatively toward implementing the Canal area plan.

## The Issue

- The Sagamore and Bourne bridges are over 80 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, back and forth safely and efficiently". – Wendy Northcross, Chamber CEO*

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

## Background

- 1933-35 Sagamore and Bourne bridges built through the National Industrial Recovery Act, to replace a smaller drawbridge built in 1912.
- 76 years of 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, USACE 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; Cape Cod MPO includes the study in its Regional Transportation Plan; USACE released draft results of its bridge analysis announcing the need for replacement of both bridges, and commenced a three month public comment period. Gov. Baker includes funding for the state’s roadwork and amenities abutting the bridges in his Transportation Bond Bill.
- 2020, USACE announces final MRER decision to replace both bridges. The House & Senate include funding mirroring the Governor’s plan in their Transportation bills. USACE and MassDOT / Commonwealth of MA signed an MOU outlining ownership, operation, maintenance and construction of new bridges.

## Contact

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