

Public comment response

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January 2, 2026

Luisa Paiewonsky
Executive Director of the Megaprojects Delivery Office
Massachusetts Department of Transportation
10 Park Plaza
Suite 7410
Boston, MA 02116

Re: Project File #608020 Cape Cod Bridges Project

Ms. Paiewonsky:

First, please accept our appreciation for the exceptional work supporting pedestrian and cycling users done by massDOT for the above-referenced project. The project design is thoughtful, ambitious, and visionary. When complete, the new bridges will stand among the most magnificent, multi-generational public works projects in the Commonwealth.

However, the current design for the multimodal facility on the Bourne South Quadrant presents significant unaddressed impacts to the human and natural environment. This comment highlights the issues and proposes a design modification, and requests a preliminary design & cost estimate (capital & operating) Thafor it.

AT ISSUE

The Draft Environmental Impact Report Section 4.3.2 illustrates and describes the Bourne South Quadrant's shared use facility as follows:

The shared use facility would transition to a 12-foot-wide SUP at the mixing zone and would provide desired connections to the Canal Service Road at the northern end of the Project Limits....

This design terminates the shared use path with **an at-grade crossing of the Canal Service Road (Sandwich Road)** controlled only by a flashing beacon. See Figure 1.

The Draft EIR does not adequately evaluate the impacts of the following known and predictable factors:

- **New everyday use is unexamined.** Only the most confident walkers and riders cross the Bourne Bridge by bike or on foot today. Increased usage is a reasonably

Figure 1 - Currently-planned (problematic) at-grade crossing



foreseeable effect once robust lanes exist on the bridge, triggering frequent traffic stoppage at the road crossing.

- **Event-scale usage.**¹ More than a dozen existing organized bike rides cross the Bourne Bridge each year, each with continuous crossings for many hours. The Pan-Mass Challenge: 3,700 riders; The Best Buddies Ride: 1,000+. The burden of police traffic control will weigh heavily on any organized ride.
- **Canal bikeway destination requires at-grade crossing every time.** Nearly all will be heading to the southern Cape Cod Canal Bikeway. The planned at-grade crossing will trigger near-constant vehicle stoppage for every crossing.

¹ Other events: Save the Bay (Buzzards Bay Coalition), Muscular Dystrophy Ride, and more.

- **Youth access risks.** The plan explicitly connects the school and ice rink to the bridge crossing, but then requires youth to cross a complex, fast-moving roadway upon exiting the downward ramp.
- **Flashing beacon mismatch.** The plan assumes users will use the signal to stop traffic. But - rightly or wrongly - cyclists will have downhill momentum, and it is predictable that some riders will continue across without stopping to trigger the light - increasing risk for everybody.

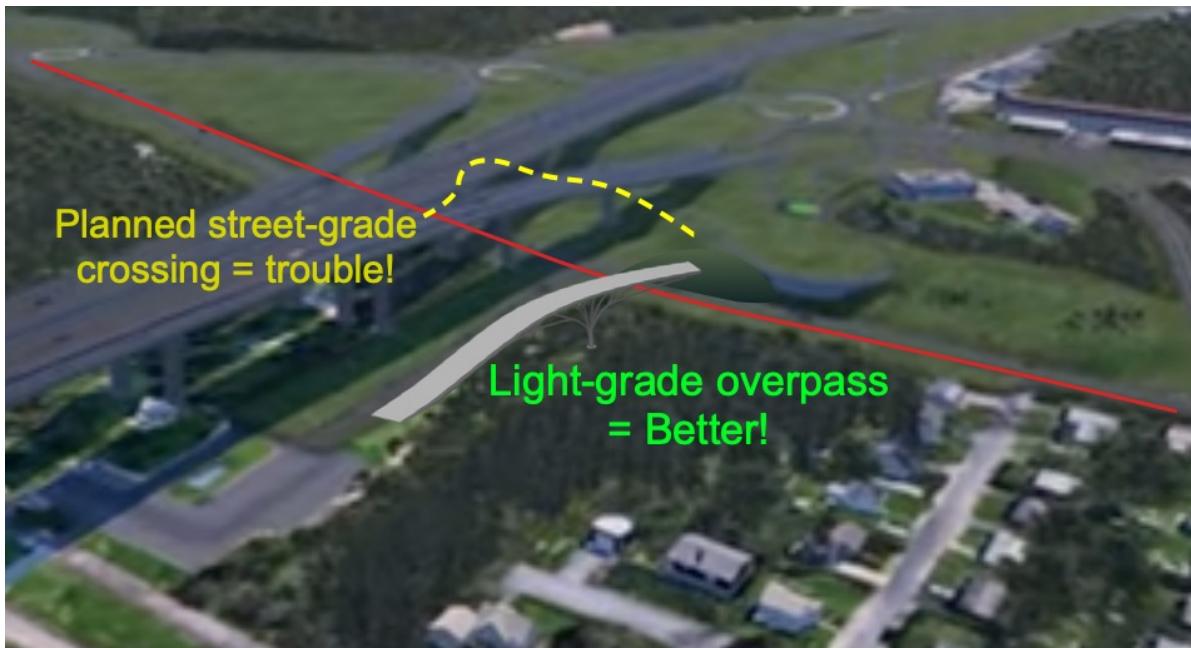
These functional problems exist alongside environmental problems:

- **Water runoff management.** The path presents substantial paved surface requiring rainwater management along the descent and disposal at the bottom.
- **Erosion control.** The path must be newly cut into a hillside, removing existing mature trees. This implies structures and shaping to stabilize the soil and prevent erosion.
- **Automobile emissions increase.** While minor, vehicle start/stop implies an increase in CO2 emissions as vehicles continually accelerate to resume speed.

SOLUTION

A light, ramped, grade-separated bike & walker overpass is a simple cost-effective solution that **eliminates the problems entirely**. An overpass can leverage existing site elevation and the already-planned retaining wall to descend towards the canal into the Bourne Recreational Area. Figure 2 illustrates this.²

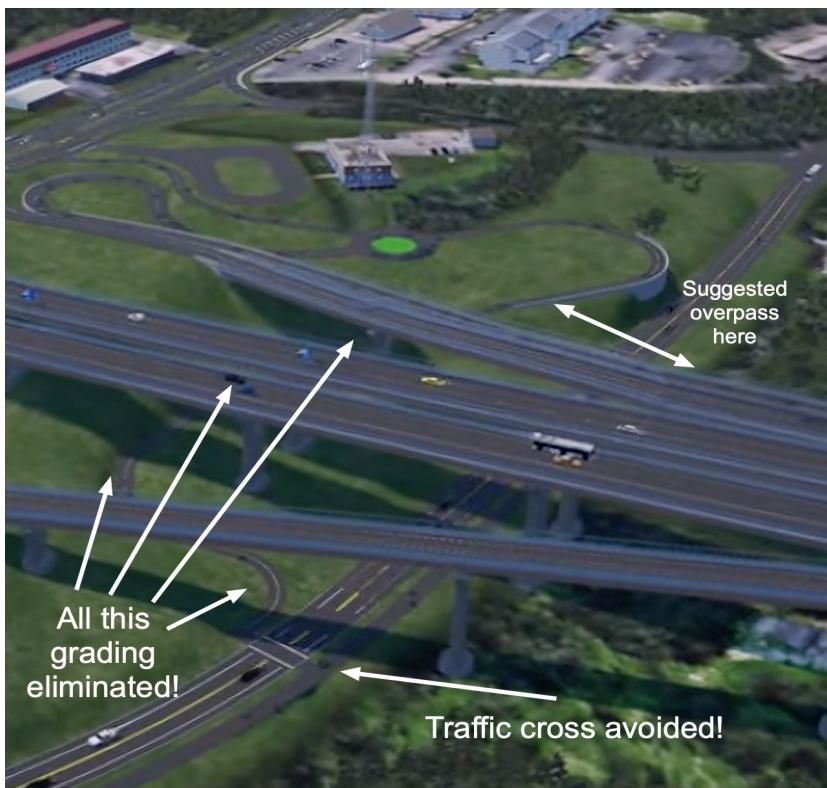
Figure 2 - Location of proposed overpass versus existing path plan



This overpass constitutes a reasonable design alternative that meets the project's purpose and need while reducing adverse effects on both the human and natural environment. The benefits are clear:

- **Improves safety unequivocally.** The overpass entirely removes the interaction between bikes, walkers and drivers.
- **Further encourages usage.** Eliminating fear of car collisions makes all users happier, resulting in increased year-round use by locals and visitors.
- **Better supports event surges.** Large-scale events can proceed without closing the Canal Service Road or requiring law enforcement control. Smaller events won't cause frequent traffic stops.
- **Improves site impact.** Utilizing existing right-of-way maintains land alignment, leverages the descending elevation, and eliminates extra berms and erosion control.
- **Simplifies canal bike path connection.** The overpass can safely exit near most users' destination - the bike path.

Figure 3 - Descent grade eliminated

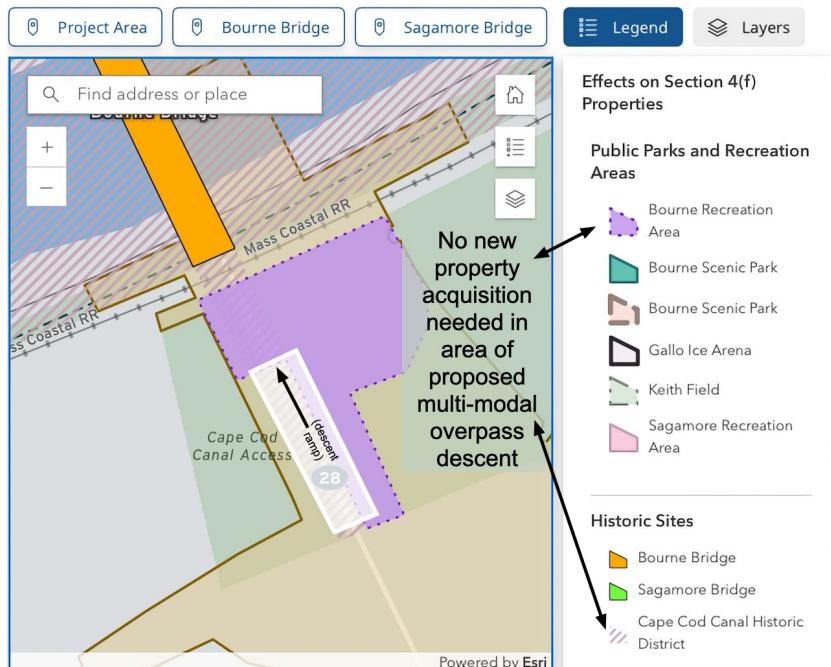


FEASIBILITY

- **The change leverages planned structures.** A structural berm and major path descent are already included in the current plan; these elements can be reworked to form the southerly approach to the overpass. The northerly descent can be accommodated by a light, non-vehicular structure. Note: A U-shaped ramp might be required due to the elevation descent required.

- **No new property required.** The northern side of the overpass, which constitutes the descent over grade, can descend into the existing Bourne Recreation Area and Cape Cod Canal District property. No property taking is required. See rough placement illustrated in Figures 3 & 4.

Figure 4 - Descent Ramp into Bourne Recreation Area



This easy adjustment would enhance safety, operational flow, and the project's long-term legacy – a bridge design that truly reflects the Commonwealth's commitment to all users. Residents, visitors, and the thousands who ride each year for charity and community would forever be grateful descending over the traffic - instead of generations seeing this as a sore spot, wondering why an overpass wasn't provided as part of this incredibly thoughtful project.

ACTION REQUESTED

To support informed decision-making under NEPA, we respectfully request that **massDOT prepare a preliminary design and comparative cost estimate** (capital and operating) for the proposed lightweight overpass, sufficient to evaluate it as a **reasonable alternative** to the planned at-grade crossing. This assessment would allow massDOT to determine whether the overpass better meets the project's purpose and need while reducing reasonably foreseeable adverse effects on the human and natural environment.

Very truly yours,

Jay Batson, Bourne Resident / Homeowner, and all the undersigned on the attached
(from the Google form at <https://forms.gle/dGsKvWduZc4rpL7U9>)

ADDITIONAL EXHIBITS

Photo 1: Location of current at-grade exit



Photo 2: Location of proposed upper-end of light-grade overpass



Photo 3: Available overpass descent area

