

## Public comment response

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December 17, 2025

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 YouTube video produced 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 environmental, safety and usage issues. Fortunately there is a straightforward path for resolution: Replace the planned long, graded descent with a lightweight overpass over the canal access road. As our public comment, we're highlighting the issues and proposing a design modification, and requesting a preliminary design & cost (capital & operating) cost estimate for this modification.

### 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.

Environmentally, this means scraping away an entire hillside of mature woods in order to unsafely deposit users at a busy roadside. The plan lacks any examination of the environmental and functional impacts of the following:

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



- **Event-scale usage.** More than a dozen large organized bike rides already cross the existing Bourne Bridge each year, each constituting continuous crossings over many hours. The Pan-Mass Challenge, the largest and best-known of these, alone involves 3,700 riders crossing the Bourne Bridge throughout the day causing conflict at the at-grade crossing. The Best Buddies Challenge brings several thousand more. These are only the largest; other charity and non-charity rides similarly create a steady stream of cyclists that must cross the canal access road, causing conflict with and interruptions of vehicle traffic.<sup>1</sup>
- **Future everyday use is likely underestimated.** Currently, only the most confident walkers and riders cross the Bourne Bridge by bike or on foot. Usage will certainly rise once robust lanes exist on the bridge, adding further conflict at the crossing.

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<sup>1</sup> Other events: Save the Bay (Buzzards Bay Coalition), Muscular Dystrophy Ride, P2P (Plymouth-Provincetown), and more.

- **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 creates constant user/vehicle conflict, particularly during the busy summer season.
- **Flashing beacon mismatch.** This signal type is particularly inappropriate for the volume and varied abilities of users forced to interact with high traffic speeds and volumes. But the technically correct HAWK signal is a significant mismatch for vehicle traffic.
- **Downhill approach hazards.** Riders descending toward the now-planned at-grade crossing must brake on a descent; the inexperienced must be on-the-ball to avoid rolling out into the road crossing; the accident risk is real. Riders riding downhill in group events risk crashing into others waiting to cross.
- **Youth access risks.** The planned extension of paved walkway to the ice rink from the bridge approach will encourage younger, less experienced riders to ride safely across the bridge - but then require them to cross a complex, fast-moving roadway upon exit.

These functional problems also exist along several environmental issues:

- **Automobile emissions increase.** Frequent vehicle start/stop implies a substantial increase in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions as vehicles must accelerate to resume speed.
- **Unnecessary land impact.** The current design requires expensive removal of mature forest, and the creation of berms and grade features to facilitate the long descent.
- **Weather runoff erosion.** The entire path will experience long-term erosion as rains wash down the steeply graded hillsides & path edges, requiring renourishment.

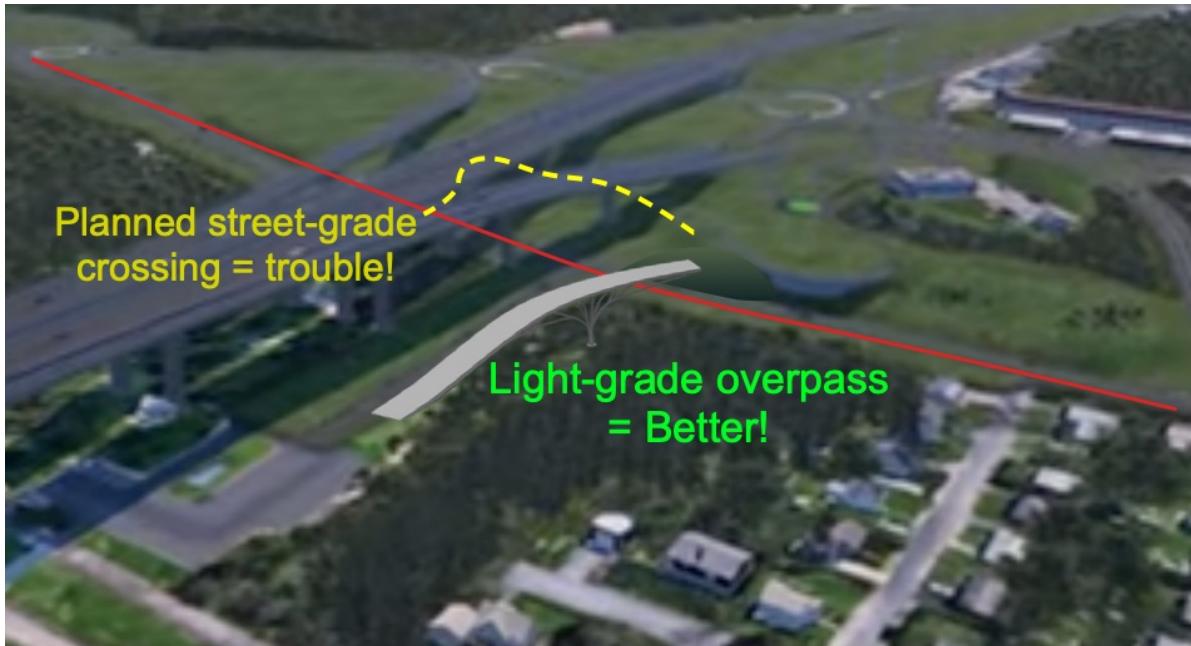
## SOLUTION

A light, ramped, grade-separated bike & walker overpass is a simple cost-effective solution that **eliminates the issue entirely** by leveraging the existing site elevation, the already-planned retaining wall, and already-available land. Figure 2 illustrates this.

The benefits are clear:

- **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 otherwise-likely traffic backups.
- **Further encourages usage.** Encourages increased year-round use by locals and visitors by eliminating fear of car collisions.
- **Improves site impact.** Utilizing existing right-of-way maintains land alignment, leverages the descending elevation, and eliminates extra berms and erosion control.

Figure 2 - Location of proposed overpass versus existing path plan



- **Simplifies canal bike path connection.** The overpass can safely exit near most users' destination - the bike path.
- **Eliminates vehicle-human conflict.** Period. The overpass entirely avoids the interaction between bikes & walkers, and eliminates driver interference.

## FEASIBILITY

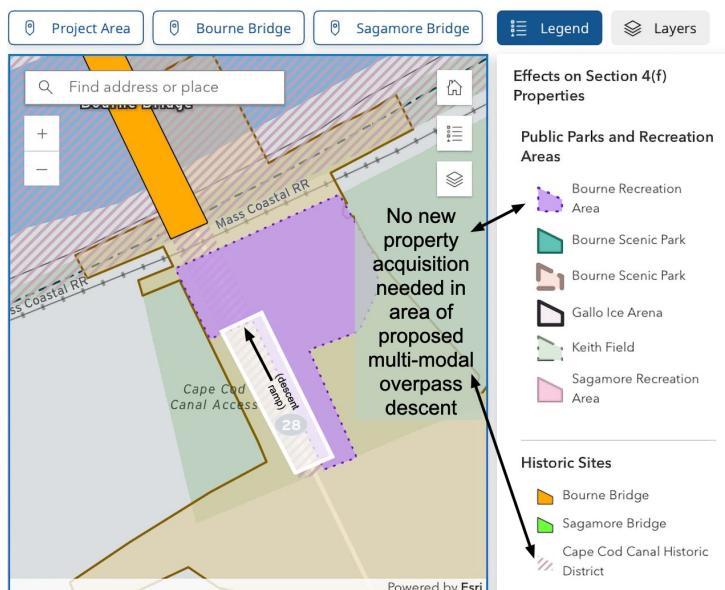
- **The change leverages planned structures.** A structural berm and major path descent are already included in the current plan; these elements can be reworked to form the southerly approach to the overpass. The northerly descent can be accommodated by a light, non-vehicular structure. A preliminary examination by project engineers indicates that replacing the planned path with an overpass is feasible.<sup>2</sup>
- **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.

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.

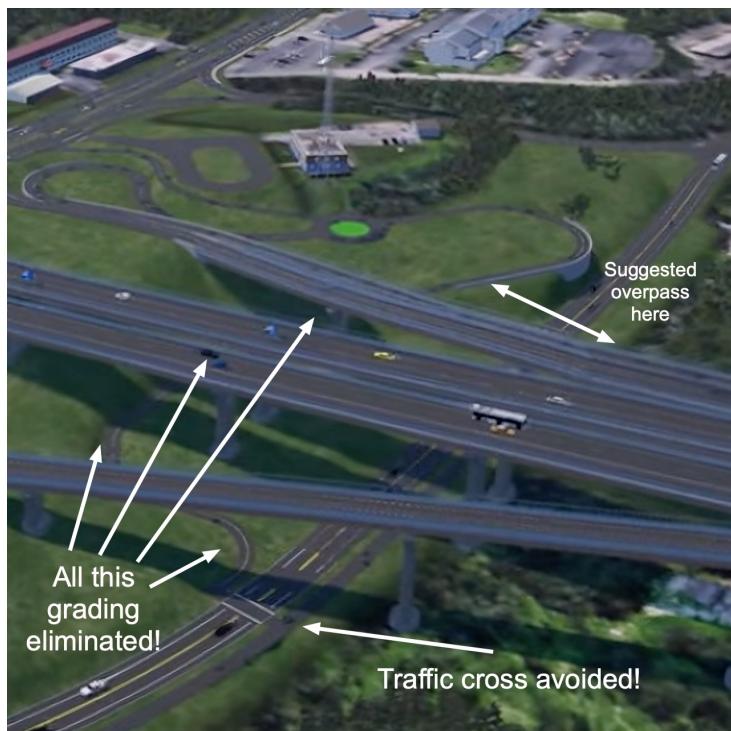
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<sup>2</sup> Mr. Batson discussed this concept with James Barnack, Project Manager at HNTB; his (informal / unofficial) observation was that the idea of leveraging the existing planned berm and elevation is technically feasible - and reasonable, with modest engineering requirements and positive expected benefit.

**Figure 3 - Descent Ramp into existing public property**



**Figure 4: Descent grade eliminated**



## ACTION REQUESTED

To support this, we respectfully request MassDOT **prepare a preliminary design and cost estimate (capital & operating) for this proposed lightweight overpass**. To assess its feasibility, we also request this be compared to the cost of the path with a HAWK signal, which is the only appropriate signal for the at-grade crossing.

For all its achievements, omitting this overpass would represent a material impact on the natural environment, the human environment, and a missed opportunity to add a loved and lasting feature to this marquee project - while instead creating a persistent sore spot for all who are forced to use the at-grade crossing.

Very truly yours,

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Jay Batson, Bourne Resident / Homeowner

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Glynn Hawley, Director of Operations, PanMass-Challenge

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Richard Fries, Event Manager, BestBuddies Challenge

## 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



