

## Multi-signatory public comment response

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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 multi-modal facility on the Bourne South Quadrant presents significant safety and usage issues. Happily there is a straightforward opportunity for improvement: Replace the planned long, graded descent with a light-use overpass over the canal access road. As our public comment, we're highlighting the issues in more depth, and proposing a design modification.

## ISSUES

The Draft Environmental Impact Report Section 4.3.2 illustrates and describes the Bourne South Quadrant's shared use facility, summarized 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 multimodal path with **an at-grade crossing of the Canal Service Road (Sandwich Road)** controlled only by a flashing beacon. See Figure 1.

This poses a variety of functional and safety problems. The at-grade crossing constitutes a high-risk hazard for multi-modal users, and represents a (potential) missed opportunity to provide for residents & visitors.

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



The current design creates a number of problems:

- **Event-scale impact.** 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 vehicle traffic.
- **Future everyday use is likely underestimated.** Currently, only the most confident walkers and riders cross the Bourne bridge by bike or on foot. But usage will certainly

rise sharply once robust lanes exist on the bridge, adding further pressure to the crossing conflict.

- **Canal bikeway destination requires at-grade crossing every time.** In the summer nearly all of these users - hundreds per day - will primarily be heading to the southern Cape Cod Canal Bikeway - so nearly all these users will be forced to cross Sandwich Road during peak traffic hours. The result is a predictable, repeated crossing conflict at exactly the busiest time of year.
- **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.
- **Downhill approach hazards.** Riders descending toward the now-planned at-grade crossing be braking on a descent; the inexperienced must count on well-functioning brakes and be on-the-ball to avoid roll-out into the road crossing; the accident risk is real. Riders riding downhill in group events risk crashing into others waiting to cross.

Literally 10s of thousands of cyclists already cross the existing Bourne bridge annually in organized events. Combined with a reasonably-expected usage surge the currently proposed crossing does not provide adequate protection or functional provision.

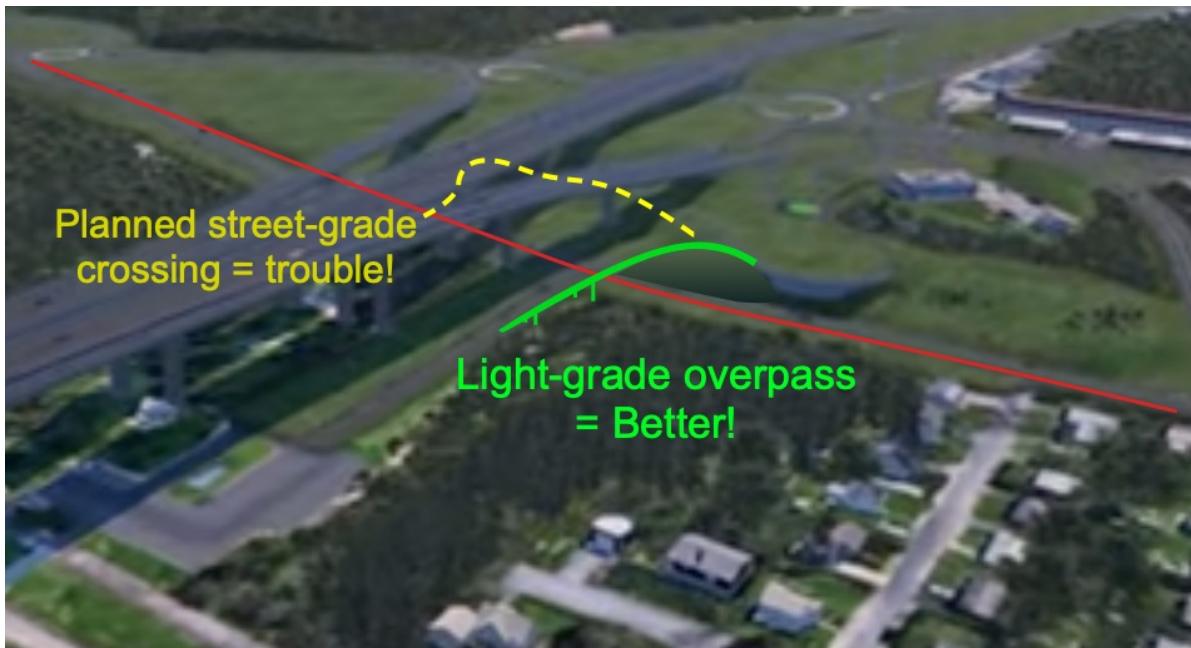
## SOLUTION

There is a simple, cost-effective alternative. Rather than constructing the path's long descent to road grade, the design could leverage the existing elevation and the now-planned retaining wall to create a light, ramped, grade-separated multimodal overpass, **eliminating the issue entirely**. Figure 2 illustrates this.

The benefits are clear:

- **Better supports event surges.** Pan-Mass, Best Buddies and more can proceed without closing the Canal Service Road or requiring law enforcement control (which adds operational costs to rides, reducing charitable net-proceeds).
- **Further encourages usage.** Encourages increased year-round use by locals and visitors by eliminating vehicle fear.
- **Simplifies canal bike path connection.** The overpass can safely exit near most users' destination - the bike path.
- **Improves site interaction.** Utilizing existing right-of-way means land alignment and leveraging the already-descending elevation simplifies overpass design.
- **Eliminates vehicle-human conflict.** Period. The overpass entirely avoids the interaction between cyclists/pedestrians, and eliminates driver interference.

Figure 2 - Location of proposed overpass versus existing path plan



## FEASIBILITY

**The change can leverage planned-structures, and may be cost effective.** There is already a structural berm planned; this can be reworked into the southerly approach to the proposed overpass. The northerly descent can be a light, multi-modal (not vehicular) grade structure. Some / all of the overpass cost can be covered by reallocation of the costs for the descent path and supporting structures required in the current design.<sup>1</sup>

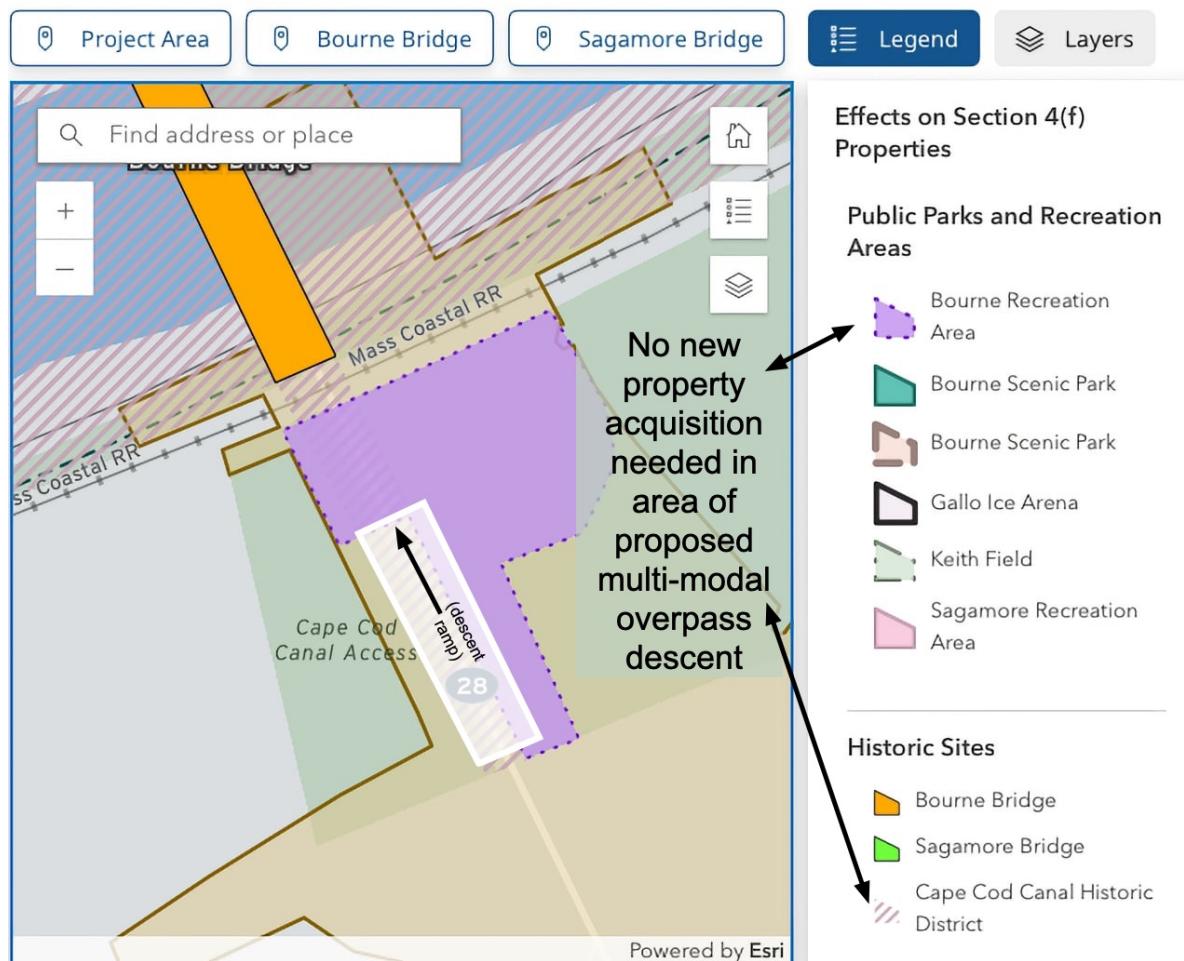
**No new property required.** The northern side of the overpass, which constitutes the descent over grade, can descend into the existing Bourne Recreation Area and adjoining Cape Cod Canal District property; no property taking is required. See rough placement illustrated in Figure 3.

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>1</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



## SUMMARY

For all its achievements, omitting this overpass would represent a big 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.

Despite the lateness of our proposed design change, we hope the very purpose of your public comment period is to obtain just this kind of feedback - we hope not merely to pronounce that "what is done is done".

We respectfully request that you incorporate our proposal into the final design.

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