



August 2, 2023

U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren, Massachusetts
2400 JFK Federal Building
15 New Sudbury Street
Boston, MA 02203

Re: Community Impact of the Cape Cod Bridges

Dear Senator Warren:

Thank you for providing the Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce with the opportunity to share input on how the Bourne and Sagamore Bridges impact our local communities and businesses. We greatly appreciate the tremendous amount of work you have done to date to bring awareness to the aging, functionally obsolete condition of these bridges; highlight their significance as critical infrastructure for the Cape Cod region and the Commonwealth; and advocate for federal funding to urgently replace and modernize both bridges.

Please see below for responses to the questions posed in your letter, dated July 19, 2023. In an effort to accurately reflect the economic and community impacts seen across a variety of industries, business types, and business sizes, we solicited input via a brief survey of the Cape Cod Chamber's membership. Feedback from this survey was compiled, along with other data and information available to the Chamber, to complete the below responses.

1. What impact has the state of disrepair of the bridges had on your community, including the impact of previous closures of the bridges? What are the economic impacts to tourism, local workers, businesses, and community members?

The Bourne and Sagamore Bridges are an integral part of doing business on Cape Cod. Businesses on the Cape rely heavily on these two bridges for the shipment of goods and supplies, for staff commutes to and from work, for access to their clients and customer base, and much more. Cape Cod Chamber business members report that revenue, productivity, and the overall success of their businesses are directly tied to the state of the Bourne and Sagamore Bridges. Businesses recognize that, for the millions of visitors who travel to Cape Cod during the region's popular summer tourist season, the bridges are their first and last impression of our community – and this impression is often a poor one.

In April and May of 2023, the Sagamore Bridge underwent significant maintenance, requiring traffic closures down to one lane in each direction. During this time, businesses saw significant impacts to sales and customer volumes, as customers were deterred from traveling over the bridges. Businesses heard from customers who decided to "wait until the bridge work is done" to come to Cape Cod.¹ Year-to-date occupancy for lodging businesses took a downturn in April and May, as compared to the same time periods in 2022.²

While spring bridge maintenance certainly impacted business volume and visitors, it also affected payroll and the cost of doing business. Overtime wage expenses increased, as drivers and service providers lost countless hours idling in bridge traffic. Poor traffic flow and longer commute times resulted in lost wages, work time, and tardiness for staff. Businesses reported increased difficulty in attracting and retaining staff from communities off the Cape, now an essential part of doing business here due to the prohibitively high cost and minimal availability of workforce housing.¹

2. What have the impacts been to the community at large, such as supply chains and the availability and accessibility of retail goods and other items that come across the bridges? Does the state of the bridges make it more difficult or more expensive for residents to have access to everyday items?

While Cape Cod is known as a world-class tourist destination, the daily reality for the region's approximately 230,000 year-round residents can be starkly different from media portrayals and postcards. Many Cape Cod residents struggle to earn enough to afford housing and basic goods and services. Cape Cod's cost of living is higher as compared to the rest of the state, while the region's median household income of \$82,619 is lower than the statewide median of just under \$90,000.³ Nearly 20% of Cape Cod's population is located in 41 Environmental Justice census block groups, a designation from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts signifying a median household income of 65% or less of the statewide annual median income.⁴

The cost of groceries, gas, and business supplies are all notoriously more expensive on Cape Cod than in other regions of the Commonwealth, and even more costly in the harder-to-access Outer Cape communities of Eastham, Wellfleet, Truro, and Provincetown. Cape Cod's auto-dependent, sprawling pattern of development and limited public transit system contribute to residents' challenges in accessing medical and mental healthcare, education, childcare, and other essential services. Limited service options and high costs motivate many to seek resources off-Cape, across the Bourne & Sagamore Bridges. Repair work and lane closures on the bridges exacerbate these challenges, putting an already expensive, underserved region at a further disadvantage and decreasing residents' overall quality of life.

For Cape Cod's business community, the bridges have a tangible impact on the timeliness of product shipments, staff commutes to and from work, and customer access to their business. The condition of the bridges negatively impacts the ability of businesses to attract new customers and engage in business development outside of the Cape Cod region. The top three bridge-related impacts reported by Chamber business members are 1) increased commute times for staff living off-Cape; 2) increased transit times or delays for goods and supplies; and 3) reduced customer or visitor confidence in Cape Cod as a place to do business.¹

3. What are the benefits of replacing the bridges? How will replacing the bridges benefit the economy, tourism, businesses and local industries, and the community at large?

Replacing the 88-year-old, functionally obsolete Bourne and Sagamore Bridges will provide a sense of certainty for Cape Cod's regional economy, which supports nearly 10,000 businesses, a labor force of 117,797,⁵ and a \$1.5 billion tourism industry that, in 2022, generated \$181 million in state and local tax revenue - second in the state only to Greater Boston.⁶

When asked how replacement of the Bourne and Sagamore Bridges will impact their business, Chamber members expressed that the replacement project is "a matter of survival."¹ Businesses anticipate that replacement of the Bourne and Sagamore

Bridges will result in reduced frustration and aggravation for customers and staff, as well as improved customer confidence in the ability to do business on Cape Cod. With replacement of the bridges, lane sizes will be increased to accommodate modern vehicle widths, allowing for a safer and more efficient exchange of traffic, goods, and services, as well as improved emergency management and evacuation in the event of a significant disaster event.

Some business owners conveyed skepticism and anxiety regarding the bridge replacement plans, citing the need for more innovative, “smart” bridge design and parallel investment in alternative transit options (i.e., rail, ferry) to alleviate vehicle congestion and environmental impacts.¹

4. What would the future impacts be on your community if the bridges do not get replaced, and they continue to deteriorate?

The Bourne and Sagamore Bridges, built in 1933 and now 88 years old, were designed for a useful life of just 50 years. Should the bridges not be replaced in the immediate future, Cape Cod’s business community anticipates that the impacts would be, “simply put – disastrous.” As they continue to degrade and age, significant rehabilitation work will soon be required to keep the Cape Cod Bridges safe and operational. According to officials from the Cape Cod Commission, Cape Cod’s regional planning agency, this would result in full bridge closures for months at a time, as well as construction and lane closures that could last an estimated **three and a half years or more**.⁷

Because there are no alternate vehicle access points or detour options to get to or from Cape Cod, bridge closures of any length of time would create an unprecedented economic disruption for the entire region. The neighboring islands of Martha’s Vineyard and Nantucket, which rely on ferry and air service from Cape Cod for access, would also see significant impacts. We can envision that many businesses would be forced to close their doors, thousands of jobs would be lost, and the cost of goods, services, and housing – already among the highest in the nation - would skyrocket to untenable levels.

Businesses on Cape Cod expect increased bridge maintenance and closures to inflict an overall loss of productivity, efficiency, and staff resources. Anticipated impacts include:

- Higher payroll and overtime costs for staff time spent in traffic;
- Increased commute times for staff, with some employees ultimately opting to leave their jobs and/or not accept work opportunities on Cape Cod;
- Issues with customer scheduling and timeliness of service, resulting in customer dissatisfaction;
- Weight restrictions for trucks carrying essential materials and supplies, leading to supply chain disruptions, increased freight charges, and loss of revenue;
- Cost increases and supply shortages affecting every project on Cape Cod, including planned sewer and wastewater infrastructure, local transportation investments, and other municipal and county projects;
- Reduced confidence in Cape Cod as a destination and place to do business, with significantly fewer visitors, customers, and business expansion opportunities.

5. What are the job creation and economic benefits of the bridge replacement project to your community?

For the countless Cape Cod businesses that depend on essential employees living off-Cape, replacement of the bridges will leave them better equipped to recruit and retain staff. Businesses and developers will see Cape Cod as a sound investment

opportunity, increasing resident access to goods, services, and housing options. Critical municipal and state investments in water quality, wastewater, and transportation will stand a fighting chance of being completed on time and on budget, creating a positive ripple effect for business and quality of life as our region works to modernize its antiquated and deteriorating infrastructure.

The long-term viability of Cape Cod as a place to live, work, and visit is inextricably linked to the state of the Bourne and Sagamore Bridges. As described throughout this letter, both year-round and seasonal businesses on Cape Cod are already feeling the effects of disruptive maintenance work, traffic congestion, and media sensationalism related to the aging condition of these bridges. A fully funded, timely, and well-coordinated bridge replacement effort will restore confidence in Cape Cod's economic future, while securing the safety and quality of life for hundreds of thousands of residents, workers, and businesses.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to share the perspective of the Cape Cod Chamber and the regional business community, in regard to the critically needed replacement of the Bourne and Sagamore Bridges. The Cape Cod Chamber considers the state of these bridges to be one of the biggest threats, and the biggest opportunities, our region faces today. We stand ready to work with you and the rest of the federal and state delegation to ensure that Cape Cod's infrastructure is equipped to meet the economic, community, and safety needs of the region and the Commonwealth for years to come.

Sincerely,



Paul Niedzwiecki, CEO

¹ Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce, Canal Bridges Member Survey, July/August 2023

² Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism (MOTT), Monthly Travel & Tourism Reports, [Massachusetts Tourism statistics \(visitma.com\)](https://visitma.com/massachusetts-tourism-statistics)

³ United States Census Bureau, 2022, [U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Barnstable County, Massachusetts](https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/barnstable-county-ma)

⁴ Environmental Justice Populations in Massachusetts, 2022, [Environmental Justice Populations in Massachusetts | Mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/environmental-justice-populations-in-massachusetts)

⁵ Massachusetts Department of Economic Research, 2023, [Labor Market Information | Mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/labor-market-information)

⁶ Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism (MOTT), Economic Impact Report, 2022, [Massachusetts Tourism statistics \(visitma.com\)](https://visitma.com/massachusetts-tourism-statistics)

⁷ The Cape Cod Chronicle, "Too Soon To Plan For Bridge Replacements, Lower Cape Officials Say," Ryan Bray, March 1, 2023, <https://capecodchronicle.com/en/5809/orleans/10014/Too-Soon-To-Plan-For-Bridge-Replacements-Lower-Cape-Officials-Say-Bridges-Roads-highways-and-transportation-cape-cod-commission-Massachusetts-Department-of-Transportation-transportation.htm>