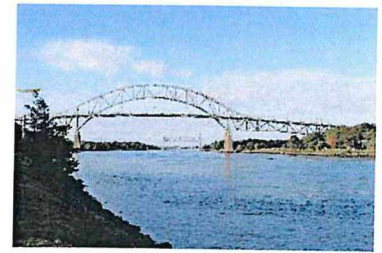


TOWN OF BOURNE

Select Board

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August 2, 2023

Senator Elizabeth Warren
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510-2105

Re: Cape Cod Bridge Replacement Project

Dear Senator Warren:

Thank you for your letter of July 19, 2023 requesting comments about the impacts the aging bridges have on our community.

It is critical to understand that the Town of Bourne is divided by a canal that can only be crossed by these two bridges. All vehicle, bicycle and pedestrian traffic that goes to Cape Cod goes through the Town of Bourne. These same two bridges knit the community together and are traversed multiple times a day by our citizens, employees, school busses, fire engines, and public works trucks. We are completely dependent on the bridges to provide basic municipal services to our people.

In 2023, both of the Cape Cod Canal bridges are individually scheduled for lane closures for at least two months per bridge for maintenance. In the spring the Sagamore Bridge abutments were rehabilitated and in the fall, the Bourne Bridge will be restricted after Labor Day. The gridlock was near continuous for both the morning and evening commutes during the Sagamore project, and it is expected to be even worse this fall for the Bourne project.

In 2023, the residents, visitors and commuters will be subjected to 4-months of gridlock that is so severe that people are literally getting out of their cars and screaming at each other in the streets. This is in addition to the summer season when the bridges routinely operate at a failed level-of-service. The bridges in its current capacity are obsolete, dangerous, and they both must be replaced. In answer to your specific questions, we would like to offer the following insights for your consideration.

What impact has the state of disrepair of the bridges had on your community to date, including the impact of previous closures of the bridges?

- **Educational Impacts:** Students waste inordinate amounts of time on the school bus, exceeding state mandated limits, which results in less time on learning, stress and anxiety. The elementary school is on the north side of the canal, while the intermediate, middle, and high

schools are on the south side. It's not fair to expect kindergarteners to suffer in excess an hour on the bus each way. Our families and school staff need to be able to travel back and forth seamlessly. We owe our children better.

- **Work Force Impacts:** Employees spend more time getting to work and less time being productive. People arrive at work late and in fear of losing their jobs because they can't get across the bridge in a timely manner. A working parent who has to safely see their children off to school in the morning has no hope of reporting to their job on time, and the same holds for the evening commute, and children are often picked up late, straining school resources. Employees who have appointments or commitments after work have to leave their jobs early to build in excessive travel times. In addition, the cost of housing on Cape Cod is so prohibitive for most people that much of the workforce must be imported. Those employees who rely on the bridges for their daily commutes are being caused financial and professional harm due to the unreliable condition of the bridges.

It is widely reported that at least 50% of the workforce that serves Cape Cod must commute over the bridges on a daily basis.

- **Business Impacts:** Customers cancel appointments because of traffic delays resulting in lost revenue and customers for our businesses. When the bridge traffic adds multiple hours to every trip it hinders our local commercial businesses in providing consistent services, and makes it difficult for customers to access those services. That delay or prohibition severs relationships over time and jeopardizes our community's ability to be a viable location for small businesses to thrive.
- **Residential Impacts:** Residents who live near the bridges have severe difficulties getting out of their driveway due to the gridlock; effectively being trapped in their homes and limiting the community's ability to have a fair and functioning society. Our citizens cancel plans and social visits, and worry about when they will be able to get to the grocery stores, pharmacies and other quality of life services without having to sit in traffic for multiple hours.
- **Public Safety Impacts:** The gridlock caused by bridge congestion adds a dangerous amount of time to the Town's ability to respond to emergencies. Our ambulances are routinely dispatched over the bridge responding to people in distress. Traffic congestion surrounding the bridges has add up to 15-minutes to the average response time. In addition to the increased response time, the traffic creates additional risks to our first responders by forcing them to drive on the "wrong side" of the road for long stretches to bypass gridlock.
- **Community Service Impacts:** Our public library is on the south side of the canal and the community building, housing the Veterans Agent, and Recreation and Council on Aging programs, is on the north side. Our residents have trouble accessing these importantly vital community supporting resources. After multiple years of isolation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, we are still not able to come together as a community and participate fully in social and civic life because of the burden of bridge congestion. The challenges created by the Bridges only compounds those negative experiences.

What are the benefits of replacing the bridges?

- Unfortunately, we have recently seen a significant increase in deaths by suicide completed by people jumping from the bridges to either the roadways or water below. Replacing the bridges with a safe and modern suicide-prevention system would be an enormous help to our first

responders. Our resources are stretched thin and organizing a search takes an enormous financial, emotional and mental toll on our resources. Although addressing our nation's mental health crisis is outside of the scope of the bridge project, anything we can do to comprehensively work together to prevent and treat the underlying cause of suicide is effort well spent.

- Cape Cod is a valued summer vacation destination and large driver of tourism dollars in the Commonwealth. The bridges cause enormous difficulties in those who are arriving and departing the region for vacations and recreation. Expanding the bridge's vehicle capacity while enhancing the infrastructure for pedestrian, ADA accessibility and bicycle travel options will offer alternative options for traveling to and enjoying the Cape.
- The current bridges are functionally obsolete and dangerous. Including countless other reasons, below are several key highlights as to current bridge's inability to inclusively support the region and way of life in the 21st century:
 - Ten-foot-wide lanes too narrow to safely accommodate many vehicles.
 - There is no median, or other barrier separating oncoming traffic. Head-on accidents result in severe damage, and are often fatal.
 - Pedestrian and Bike access is limited, inconvenient and unsafe.
 - Little to no ADA-compliance
 - The current bridges are over 90 years old, are functionally obsolete, and routinely operate at a "failed" level of service.

The exact financial impact is difficult to project, however more importantly the impact on lives is impossible to comprehensively quantify yet very real. It has been and is taking a toll on our entire community. The residents, businesses and visiting guests for the Town of Bourne and all of Cape Cod are impacted regularly by the bridges. We continually have to adjust our way of life from season to season based upon bridge maintenance schedules and the chain-reaction of traffic gridlock.

Considering these bridges were built in 1935 to provide better access to the mainland for 26,000 Cape Cod residents, the staggering increase of over 215,000 residents in 2023 are solely dependent on these bridges for access to the mainland and requires serious and proactive attention on a regional and national level by immediately aligning our efforts and working together on solutions that will support this region, the State and all of our visitors from beyond towards the next 100 years.

Thank you for working with us to address this critical issue.

Sincerely,



Mary Jane Mastrangelo
Chairman, Bourne Select Board

CC: Buzzards Bay Chamber of Commerce
Cape Cod Commission