

July 19, 2023

Greetings,

I am writing regarding the impacts of the crumbling Cape Cod bridges on your community, businesses, and residents, and the economic and quality of life benefits that replacing those bridges would have on your community.

The Bourne and the Sagamore Bridges, which are owned by the federal government, were built in 1933, and fundamentally “changed the relationship between the Cape and the rest of Massachusetts.”¹ The bridges are the sole access point for the more than 35 million vehicles that cross the canal each year, and serve as the gateway to Cape Cod for more than 260,000 Cape and Islands residents and roughly 5 million visitors annually.² They are vital assets for the Cape Cod economy and surrounding communities,³ and also serve as essential routes for general transportation, tourism, and evacuations in case of an emergency. However, the current bridges are nearly 90 years old, functionally obsolete, and require increasingly costly and disruptive maintenance.⁴ The bridges’ structural deficiencies present an ongoing risk to the accessibility and economic stability of the Cape Cod region.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT), and other stakeholders are working to replace both the Bourne and Sagamore Bridges and the highway approaches to the bridges.⁵ The project will ultimately result

¹ Massachusetts Department of Transportation, “History of the canal and bridges,” <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/history-of-the-canal-and-bridges>.

² Cape Cod Times, “Sagamore, Bourne bridges have brought prosperity, loyalty and now worries to Cape Cod,” Asad Jung, May 27, 2022, <https://www.capecodtimes.com/story/news/2022/05/27/cape-cod-canal-bridges-brought-prosperity-loyalty-worries/9688301002/>; WGBH, “Federal funding for Cape Cod bridges project denied a second time,” Bob Seay, January 5, 2023, <https://www.wgbh.org/news/local-news/2023/01/05/federal-funding-for-cape-cod-bridges-project-denied-a-second-time>.

³ Cape Cod Times, “Sagamore, Bourne bridges have brought prosperity, loyalty and now worries to Cape Cod,” Asad Jung, May 27, 2022, <https://www.capecodtimes.com/story/news/2022/05/27/cape-cod-canal-bridges-brought-prosperity-loyalty-worries/9688301002/>; WGBH, “Federal funding for Cape Cod bridges project denied a second time,” Bob Seay, January 5, 2023, <https://www.wgbh.org/news/local-news/2023/01/05/federal-funding-for-cape-cod-bridges-project-denied-a-second-time>.

⁴ U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, “Cape Cod Canal Highway Bridges Bourne, Massachusetts, Major Rehabilitation Evaluation Report,” November 9, 2018, <https://www.nae.usace.army.mil/Portals/74/docs/Topics/Cape%20Cod%20Canal%20Bridges/Reports/MRERAppendixF.pdf>; WGBH, “Federal funding for Cape Cod bridges project denied a second time,” Bob Seay, January 5, 2023, <https://www.wgbh.org/news/local-news/2023/01/05/federal-funding-for-cape-cod-bridges-project-denied-a-second-time>.

⁵ Massachusetts Department of Transportation, “Memorandum of Understanding Reached Between MassDOT and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Regarding Bourne and Sagamore Bridges,” July 7, 2020,

in new bridges that vastly improve travel conditions, meet modern safety standards for vehicle and pedestrian traffic, and provide significantly improved multimodal travel.

I have been advocating for federal funding for this project since taking office in 2013, and have worked to bring federal agencies to the table to ensure collaboration. The urgency of replacing the Cape Cod bridges was one of the reasons I supported the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* (the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law). This legislation provided USACE with \$17.1 billion in new funding – including \$11.6 billion for new construction – and more than \$9 billion in formula funds for Massachusetts.⁶ In the 14 months since the bill was signed into law by President Biden, I have advocated with the White House, the federal Department of Transportation (USDOT), and other federal agencies to ensure the Cape Cod bridges project is a priority.

Largely due to the efforts of the Massachusetts delegation, the Biden administration in December 2022 awarded Massachusetts a \$1.6 million planning grant for the bridges project, signaling their strong commitment to this critical infrastructure need.⁷ The Biden Administration also included a \$350 million down payment toward a \$600 million allocation in the President’s FY2024 budget for the Army Corps.⁸ I am working hard to ensure I secure the rest of the funding necessary to replace these bridges.

Given the bridges’ vital role as “passageways to the rest of the world, and an integral part of the economy,”⁹ full funding to replace these bridges is essential. The “economic vitality of Cape Cod and the quality of life for people who live, work, and visit these communities is dependent on these bridges.”¹⁰ Local leaders have continually highlighted the impact of current

<https://www.mass.gov/news/memorandum-of-understanding-reached-between-massdot-and-the-us-army-corps-of-engineers-regarding-bourne-and-sagamore-bridges>.

⁶ U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, “Additional Army Civil Works Studies, Projects and Programs to Be Accomplished with Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Funding,” March 30, 2022, <https://www.usace.army.mil/Media/News/NewsSearch/Article/2982769/additional-army-civil-works-studies-projects-and-programs-to-be-accomplished-wi/>; Boston Globe, “Massachusetts is poised to receive \$9 billion from Biden’s infrastructure bill. Here’s where it’s going,” Neya Thanikachalam and Taylor Dolven, November 15, 2021, <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2021/11/15/nation/infrastructure-bill-signed-by-biden-allocates-least-9-billion-massachusetts-transportation-advocates-have-ideas-how-spend-it/>.

⁷ U.S. Department of Transportation, “Biden-Harris Administration Announces \$2.1 Billion to Improve Four Nationally Significant Bridges Through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law’s First Large Bridge Grants,” press release, January 4, 2023, <https://www.transportation.gov/briefing-room/biden-harris-administration-announces-21-billion-improve-four-nationally-significant>.

⁸ The White House Office of Management and Budget, “Budget of the U.S. Government Fiscal Year 2024,” p. 119, https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/budget_fy2024.pdf; Boston Globe, “Biden budget includes some funding for Cape Cod bridges — but a long path awaits in Congress,” Emma Platoff, March 9, 2023, <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2023/03/09/nation/biden-budget-includes-some-funding-cape-cod-bridges-long-path-awaits-congress/>; Boston.com, “Here’s what Biden’s proposed budget would mean for the replacement of the Cape bridges,” Christopher Gavin, March 10, 2023, <https://www.boston.com/news/politics/2023/03/10/biden-budget-cape-cod-bridges/>.

⁹ Cape Cod Times, “Sagamore, Bourne bridges have brought prosperity, loyalty and now worries to Cape Cod,” Asad Jung, May 27, 2022, <https://www.capecodtimes.com/story/news/2022/05/27/cape-cod-canal-bridges-brought-prosperity-loyalty-worries/9688301002/>.

¹⁰ The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, “About the Cape Cod Bridges Program,” <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/about-the-cape-cod-bridges-program>.

bridge repair closures, and future impacts if the bridges are not replaced. Deputy Director of the Cape Cod Commission Steven Tupper warned that “residents, visitors and local officials can count on more intensive traffic impacts if the replacement project doesn't come to pass...[and that] continued maintenance of the existing bridges would lead to intense cycles of ongoing repair work, some on the order of three to five years in length.”¹¹ Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce CEO Paul Niedzwiecki said that the bridges “affect every single part of the Cape’s economy,”¹² and that “the Bourne and Sagamore bridges provide the economic link between Cape Cod and [the] rest of the Commonwealth.... [T]he reliability of the bridges directly impacts the long-term viability of [the] region’s economy and the ability of local businesses to survive and thrive.”¹³ As Mr. Niedzwiecki put it, “our economic livelihood is sort of connected to those two automotive bridges.”¹⁴

The Cape Cod Bridges replacement is key to modernizing Massachusetts’ physical infrastructure to meet the economic, social, and environmental challenges of the 21st century. As local stakeholders who live, work in, and lead communities surrounding these bridges, I seek your input as I press the federal government to live up to its commitments to replace the assets they own. In order to better understand the impacts of the current state of the bridges – and the benefits of replacing them – for your communities, I ask that you provide answers to the following questions no later than August 2, 2023:

1. 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?
 - a. What are the economic impacts to tourism, local workers, businesses, families, and community members?
 - b. 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?
2. What are the benefits of replacing the bridges?
 - a. How will replacing the bridges benefit the economy, tourism, businesses and local industries, and the community at large?
3. What would the future impacts be on your community if the bridges do not get replaced, and they continue to deteriorate?

¹¹ 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>.

¹² Cape Cod Times, “Sagamore, Bourne bridges have brought prosperity, loyalty and now worries to Cape Cod,” Asad Jung, May 27, 2022, <https://www.capecodtimes.com/story/news/2022/05/27/cape-cod-canal-bridges-brought-prosperity-loyalty-worries/9688301002/>.

¹³ Cape Cod Commission, “Regional Organizations Form Canal Bridges Task Force,” December 6, 2022, <https://capecodcommission.org/about-us/newsroom/regional-organizations-form-canal-bridges-task-force/>.

¹⁴ 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>.

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

I remain fully committed to working with federal, state, and local partners until Cape Cod residents get the safe, secure public infrastructure they deserve. Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator