

March 18, 2019

David Mohler, Chair
Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization
c/o: Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS)
State Transportation Building
10 Park Plaza, Suite 2150
Boston, MA 02116-3968

Dear Chairperson Mohler,

On behalf of the Natick Board of Selectmen (BOS), please accept this letter as the Town of Natick's full support for the following projects being considered for funding before the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO):

Mass DOT Project Number	Funding Source & Year	Project Title	Amount Programmed
605034	TIP – FFY 2019	Reconstruction of Route 27 (North Main Street), from North Avenue to the Wayland Town Line	\$ 12,087,144
605313	LRTP	Bridge Replacement, Route 27 (North Main St.) over Route 9 (Worcester St.) and Interchange Improvements	\$ 25,793,370

The MPO is considering an increase in the programmed amount for Project #605034, the Route 27 North Main Street, project to approximately \$19.3M. The Town of Natick fully recognizes the significance of this request and certainly appreciates the difficult position this puts the MPO in determining how to program highly competitive TIP funds. To help inform this decision, this letter outlines the key factors impacting design, the importance of this project to the region, and the commitment the Town continues to make to ensure this project is successfully completed as planned.

Despite virtually no project scope increase (in fact, a major intersection improvement was removed from the project area since 25% design), the costs for the reconstruction of the Route 27 North Main Street corridor have increased from the most recent 25% design submission. The increase costs are largely due to a few key factors:

1. Greater design clarity, primarily related to the storm water infrastructure required for the project to meet MassDOT Standards. At 25% design, much of the required storm water utility work was conceptual. As the design progressed, costs were refined and updated.
2. Anticipated increased unit pricing due to the continued rise in construction costs; and

3. Corridor factor impacts. In discussions with MassDOT, the concern was raised that the project may be more difficult to construct than a typical roadway improvement project due to the "urban" nature and heavy use of Route 27 North Main Street. As such, MassDOT requested that additional contingency be added to the estimated cost of the project.

By themselves, these factors do not represent significant cost increases. But when combined, the compounding increase to the project budget becomes significant.

This project is vitally important to Natick and the larger MetroWest region. The Route 27 North Main Street project works in tandem with the Route 9/27 bridge replacement project (Project #605313), to comprehensively update and improve this roadway corridor. The projects connect people to and from one of the region's top employment and residential centers. Over the past 5 years alone, private investment along or serviced by Route 27 has sky-rocketed, representing over \$400M of investment, including:

- The recently completed 500,000 square foot, \$260+ million expansion of The MathWorks Lakeside Campus. The new campus will be home to approximately 2,000 new high tech jobs.
- The 60,000 square foot new east coast headquarters for Exponent, with anticipated completion in Fall 2019. The project will triple the size of Exponent's presence on the east coast.
- The comprehensive renovation of the 9/27 Exchange shopping plaza, representing an approximately \$20 million investment.
- Several hundred units of new housing constructed including the 150 unit Modera Natick Center (40R) project.

These investments are in addition to existing employment centers, including the U.S. Army Natick Soldier Systems Center (aka Natick Labs with over 1600 employees), MathWorks Apple Hill Campus (over 2000 employees) and Cognex corporate headquarters (over 600 employees).

Recognizing the importance of this corridor to the region, the Town of Natick has invested heavily in the design and Right of Way work to support this project. To date, the Town has spent or appropriated over \$3.6 million to support this project, including nearly \$1.8M for design and over \$1.6M for Right of Way acquisition (including appraisal and legal costs). In addition to the monetary investment, the Town also secured the services of a project manager for this project (our recently retired Town Engineer), who has worked diligently to ensure the Route 27 design and Right of Way work is completed on time, which with over 200 impacted properties is a significant effort.

This investment is paying off. The 100% design for Route 27 North Main Street is scheduled to be submitted to MassDOT for review by the end of March. Final appraisal reports of all impacted properties are due to the Town within the next week. And the Natick Board of Selectmen is scheduled to secure full Right of Way in early May 2019.

Recognizing the challenge of accommodating the increase cost of this project into the current FFY 2019 TIP, the Town of Natick intends to negotiate temporary easements for 5 year terms, rather than the usual 3 or 4 year terms of a typical project (an added expense to the Town). As such, the Town respectfully requests that, if the Route 27 North Main Street project is not able to be fully funded within the current Federal Fiscal Year, either supplemental funding is allocated in the FFY 2020 TIP or the project be fully funded in FFY 2020.

The Town of Natick is grateful for the hard work and time the MPO puts into reviewing all of the TIP funded projects, and certainly respects the decision of the board with regards to this project.

Thank you again for your support and consideration.

Sincerely,

TOWN OF NATICK
BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Amy K. Mistrot, Chair

Susan G. Salamoff

Michael J. Hickey, Jr.

Richard P. Jennett, Jr.

Jonathan Freedman