



THE GENERAL COURT OF MASSACHUSETTS  
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133-1053

July 19, 2024

Jeffrey Stieb

Senior Bridge Management Specialist

First Coast Guard District

408 Atlantic Ave

Boston, Massachusetts 02110

Re: New Bedford—Fairhaven MassDOT Project No. 612557  
Bridge Replacement US Rte. 6 over the Acushnet River

Dear Mr. Stieb:

We are writing in our role as the entire state legislative delegation representing the municipalities of New Bedford and Fairhaven through which US Route 6 travels as it crosses the Acushnet River. As detailed in numerous reports, the existing bridge is long past its useful life and requires replacement at the soonest possible time. The state legislature provided substantial funding for design, permitting and early action on the project during the 2021-2022 legislative session based upon the efforts of this delegation.

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation completed, as you are aware, work on a Navigation Impact Report (NIR) as part of its efforts to construct a replacement of the existing (and ancient) swing bridge at its current location. The NIR was completed by MassDOT in February 2024. That report and its conclusions were shared with the USCG several months ago. Key to regulatory advancement of the project is a preliminary determination by the Coast Guard as to the necessary **minimum** horizontal and vertical clearances which would be available at the completion of a new bridge. Bridge type (fixed span, vertical lift, or bascule/draw) is not a part of the Coast Guard review at this stage.

Progress on this important project affecting the operation of the Port of New Bedford now depends upon the earliest completion by the US Coast Guard of a Preliminary Navigation Clearance Determination (PNCD).

The navigation report before you contains a strong recommendation on clearance minimums providing a doubling of existing horizontal width of the navigational channel, and a vertical clearance of 138', on par with the highest existing clearances in the Commonwealth found at the

Cape Cod bridges, the Braga Bridge in Fall River and the Fore River Bridge in Quincy for example. The NIR provides in extensive detail the navigational benefits to the users of the Port of New Bedford and recommends as follows:

“Based on this study, the new bridge should increase the horizontal clearance of the navigable channel to 260 feet to meet or exceed the existing horizontal clearance restrictions posed by the Hurricane Barrier and match the majority of the navigable channel. A vertical clearance of 138 feet is requested for the open bridge over the navigable channel. An increase in the channel width at the bridge would make passage easier and faster for recreational and commercial users.”

In our view, it is an understatement to say that time is of the essence. For the reasons identified by MassDOT in its completion of the navigation report, we respectfully join in asking for the prompt issuance of the necessary navigation determination by the Coast Guard.

Thank you for your attention and review of our request.



William M. Straus

10<sup>th</sup> Bristol



Mark C. Montigny

2<sup>nd</sup> Bristol and Plymouth



Christopher Hendricks

11<sup>th</sup> Bristol



Christopher M. Markey

9<sup>th</sup> Bristol



Antonio F. D. Cabral

13<sup>th</sup> Bristol



Paul A. Schmid, III

8<sup>th</sup> Bristol

Cc: US Senator Warren  
US Senator Markey  
US Representative Keating  
Governor Healey  
Lieutenant Governor Driscoll  
Secretary Tibbits-Nutt  
Administrator Gulliver