

Washington Bridge Second Virtual Public Meeting

Thursday, October 17, 2024

Questions and Responses

Q: Who is responsible for the environmental controls for the demolition?

A: As part of this project, the contractor is responsible for implementing controls. Those controls range from debris shielding to make sure that no debris is scattered into the neighborhood, and drains and inlets to prevent pollutants from migrating into the waterways. The contractor is also required to provide misting and spraying of concrete as it's being demolished to assure that the dust from that activity is contained and not allowed to migrate off the site.

Q: How are you mitigating dust from the demolition?

A: Soil cutting machines are equipped with dust mitigation systems--generally, any dust that falls on the ground that may be tracked off by vehicles, particularly construction vehicles. Anti-tracking pads are laid down for containing that kind of construction debris and dust at the work site. Drilling equipment is equipped with Hepa vacuum filters to minimize and prevent concrete dust from coming from the demolition activities.

During the last several weeks, RIDOT did get some reports from neighbors that reported dust from the project migrating onto their property. At that time, RIDOT required the contractor to implement additional control measures and additional water cannons to the demolition areas.

Q: How will you monitor the dust in the air?

A: RIDOT has installed a dust monitoring measurement device that will measure dust in the area of the construction to make sure that the air quality is in conformance with the 24 hour average ambient air quality. The device is recommended by the EPA.

Q: How will you monitor vibration during the demolition?

A: Vibration is being monitored during demolition with sensors in and around the neighborhood. All vibration levels have been within the industry standard limits for demolition.

RIDOT conducted pre-construction inspections on many of the structures close to the construction. RIDOT will also perform those same kind of inspections after construction to make sure that the construction activity did not result in any damage to nearby properties.

Q: How will you mitigate the noise caused by the demolition?

A: Noise mitigation is difficult. Knocking down a massive concrete structure takes heavy equipment with high impact in order to break it apart.

The good news is that the worst is over. We have only three more nights of jackhammering-related noise left: Sunday through Tuesday, October 20-22.

After those three nights, all of that heavy equipment hammering will be done during the day for the rest of the project. RIDOT will restrict that heavy hammering during the daytime shifts to between 6 a.m. in the morning and 9 p.m. at night. And, as time goes on, the activities will get further and further away from the houses as they work from the two ends inward to the middle of the waterway.

There will still be construction that will be ongoing, but it will be the regular kind of construction activity with the traditional kind of noise that comes from low impact or no impact type construction activities.

Q: Why did RIDOT do any nighttime jackhammering?

A: The work that we did do overnight was done purposely during the night. Our traffic engineers worked with the traffic engineer in the city to determine that the gridlock that would be created during the day by blocking vital roads would have created a terrible condition not only for people who live in the area, but also for emergency vehicles and other commuters that use that road on a daily basis.

After getting those structures down over Gano Street, the rest of the construction will be either not over roads or over water. In which case, all of those activities can be done during the day without having to worry about the gridlock that would be created from blocking traffic.

Q: Can you relocate anyone living close to the bridge while night time jackhammering is happening?

A: As I said, we're down to the last three days. But relocation or vibration standards are set by, highway guidelines. They would not support or participate in relocation costs for those kinds of activities.

Q: Can RIDOT speak to evidence, reparations of employee actions that led to the bridge closure?

A: Those questions have to do with the litigation. And I know that it's frustrating to hear that as an answer. One question about these kinds of things. But the governor hired a capable litigation team to sort out questions of liability and accountability for the Washington Bridge.

As in all pending legal matters, we will not be commenting on these issues tonight. Any inquiries regarding evidentiary or other kinds of legal matters should be directed to the legal team.

Q: Can you build a temporary bridge over the Seekonk River? Can the Army Corps of Engineers assist?

A: The Army Corps of Engineers takes care of navigable waterways and any obstruction of those by either falling debris or falling bridges and they will become active. With regard to the construction of the new bridge or the demolition of this bridge, the Army Corps of Engineers does not have responsibility for nor do they make it a practice of involving themselves in either demolition or reconstruction of a state-owned bridge unless it in some way is impacting on their navigable waterway. In fact, when the Army Corps of Engineers itself builds or has any of the bridges that they have jurisdiction over, they hire outside consultants to design them and contract private contractors to build for them, very much in the same way that we are conducting this project with consultants and private contractors.

Q: Was any consideration is being given to, alternative transportation options like dedicated bus lanes, etc., etc.?

A: The answer to that is yes, although we're not yet in the design stage. RIDOT will be looking at those alternatives and how they would impact not only future traffic, but also how they would impact the cost and the construction of the new bridge. They will all be under consideration particularly during the RFP process. And we'll be looking at long range solutions for those.

Q: Are the existing piers and footings going to be demolished or reused?

A: The existing piers and footings are going to be demolished. During the RFI process, we conferred with ten of the most knowledgeable and most expert bridge builders in this country, if not the world. Their answer, nearly unanimously, was that they would not have the ability to test and determine the viability of those existing footings that are over 60 years old. It is a risk that most contractors would not involve themselves with and further conversations with the FHWA affirmed that. Our experts determined that the most proper way to move forward with this is to completely demolish the existing piers and footings and to build brand new ones for the brand new bridge superstructure.

Q: Can you speak to the aesthetics and design of the new bridge?

A: There are historic features on the existing bridge that will be preserved once the new bridge is constructed. In terms of its construction, the actual design of it will be brought into focus during the RFP process--the procurement process with the various firms that are competing. They will be submitting a design to us when they're competing with each other, so that we can determine which of those designs are the best ones to implement.

Q: What is the purpose of the weigh in motion systems? Do they indicate a problem with the eastbound bridge?

A: The weigh in motion systems are being implemented to monitor vibrations and stresses and strains in the structure as a precautionary measure only. In fact, we have had the bridge inspected three different times and analyzed by two different companies to determine whether or not the existing structure is suitable to use for the duration of the time it will be used as a temporary bypass for traffic during the construction of the new bridge. They all determined that the bridge is in good health. There are no defects that we need to worry about.

This monitoring system is an insurance policy for us and you, the public, that we will be keeping a very close eye on to see if there are any changes. The system is there only to make sure we keep the bridge safe, not because we have detected any defects in it.

Q: Has the concrete being demolished been tested for asbestos?

A: It is a type of concrete that does not contain asbestos. There is no asbestos on the site, nor is there any presence in the concrete that we're demolishing.

Q: Why are you rehiring a company that worked on the first bridge, given the issues that have followed?

A: No companies have been debarred from doing work for DOT on any new bridge or road construction by any regulatory or legal authority.

The only company that has been debarred from RIDOT's construction activities is Barletta Heavy Division, which debarred themselves as part of a voluntary agreement with the Department of Justice. Other than that company, no other companies have been identified and under FHWA funding guidelines. We cannot discriminate on the basis of arbitrary debarment. In fact, every state in the country, every DOT in the country, does business on a regular basis on heavy and highway projects with companies with which they're engaged in claims or who have claims against them.

Q: Why are we involving a company who dumped toxic soil in in a construction project in Rhode Island?

A: We are not doing business with any companies who have involved themselves with dumping toxic soil.

Q: Who are tonight's presenters?

A: (Per Director Alviti) Tonight, I have Pamela Cotter, chief planner Stephen Soderlund, assistant manager of project management, and project manager David Walsh from our neighborhood relations group and other top, project related personnel.

Q: Why weren't participants allowed to ask questions during the first meeting? Why was it held on a Friday night?

A: I think those questions have been answered during various press conferences. The governor saw fit to schedule a second meeting tonight with you all to do precisely all of those things prior to the resumption of noisy activities at the site.

Q: What is the timeline for demolition and has it been affected by the pause?

A: The pause for several weeks will cause that same delay, so instead of completing the demolition of the superstructure that this contractor that we have -- our contract with now was scheduled to finish by the end of this year -- that will now extend for four weeks or five weeks beyond the date that they were originally scheduled to complete it.

However, I've been in this situation before where there have been delays, whether they be imposed or by natural causes, and they always work with the contractor to try to make up that time and still get the project done. And they are working with the contractor as we speak right now to see if there are ways to align the work between now and January, so that we could bring that schedule back a bit, and we'll keep you all posted about that.

Q: When will the superstructure demolition take place?

A: The change order that we issued for the additional work to demolish the piers and the substructures will take from February until December of next year. That does not mean that the construction of the new bridge will be delayed for that period, because the new contractor will be able to start their work at least six months before the demolition is completed. And they'll be able to mobilize their workforce and their equipment, to finalize their designs, to make their permit applications, to secure the environmental permitting and, to possibly begin preparing fabrication of various components. In fact, the removal of the substructure will take place sooner than if it had been made part of the construction project.

Q: As a result, directly next to the construction site, what is being done to mediate the harmful dust as well as the impact of the jarring shaking has had on our whole structures.

A: The answer to that is the vibration is being monitored. We have a number of vibration sensors that we have deployed through the neighborhood to make sure that the vibrations are at or below the regulatory standards. So far, they have been. We also took a survey of the area of buildings in the area to determine their condition prior to the beginning of the demolition project.

At the end of the project, we will be sending the same inspectors out to take a look at those same buildings to make sure that there is no change in each of the buildings that are nearby that may have been impacted by any vibrations. And in those cases, we'll be taking a building by building inventory of that and will be interacting with the owners of those properties to make sure that, either no damage has been done or if there has been damage that it's remediated.

In terms of the dust, we have implemented a dust measuring system that will alert us and the contractor of any instances where dust has migrated off the work site at levels in excess of the regulatory requirement. So, we're monitoring those. We will keep a very close eye. We implemented additional mitigation requirements for the contractor that they have complied with, to make sure that the dust not only is not harmful if it goes over the project limits, but doesn't get over the project limits in the first place.

Q: When do you expect the new bridge to be done and function?

A: The date of the construction of the new bridge is going to be determined along with how much it's going to cost and what it's going to look like. The scope schedule for its construction and the cost are all going to be determined competitively between the companies that are competing for this project, beginning with the release of the request for qualifications from contractors that are interested in bidding on this all the way to June when we make the final selection.

During that period of time, the companies will be submitting their technical proposals, what materials they're using, what they're going to cost, and how long specifically it's going to take to build it. At the end of

that process, we're going to know precisely how much it's going to cost, how long it's going to take to build it, and what the bridge is going to look like.

Q: Has the state been able to quantify or at least estimate the overall economic cost of the bridge closure, including demolition and traffic effects.

A: No. What is most important to us right now is the cost to rebuild the new bridge.

We will be working with several contracting companies who will be competing for the project to determine what that actual cost will be in a contract at the award in June. We'll post all of that information on our website again at Washington-bridge.com.

Q: Who is responsible to ensure that these regulations are followed?

A: The monitoring equipment that's being put in place is equipped to provide data for DOT to review. And, we from time to time will call DEM when we feel the need or if we feel the data indicates that there's an infraction or the company is nearing the limits, we'll bring the DEM in to take a look at the site to take a look at the activity, in order to determine what additional controls we want to put on that.

Q: Will this air and vibration sensor data be posted anywhere publicly during the duration of the work?

A: Yes. We're using the Washington-bridge.com website as a place that people can go and look at that data along with any other data that we have relative to the site.

Q: There's so much cement dust on the linear park bike path. This is known for, that cyclists, including myself, are losing traction and going over that. And on the approach, to the bridge, who's responsible for maintaining, safe access of the bike paths?

A: The bike path is our responsibility. Ultimately, it's the contractor's responsibility to keep that clear of debris and any soil or dust that's on it. We will certainly have our project managers have the contractor address that and make sure that they put in place a routine cleaning of it so that it keeps it in a clean state. The demolition activity is starting in that area and very soon will be moving out of that area. So, there will be no further interruption.

Q: [The next one is more of a statement] asking whether the Friday's meeting was a mistake or wasn't handled well.

A: I'll say it publicly again. Yes. I don't think it was handled well. And that's why we're going to sit here and answer all the questions that occur. We could have been a little more sensitive to the fact that it was a Jewish holiday, and we apologize for those who are offended.

Q: Why didn't you call the Army Corps of Engineers like Baltimore leadership did when the Francis Scott Key Bridge collapsed?

A: I know there's been a lot of comparisons to Baltimore. We've been in direct contact with procurement there and the people who are managing that project, and I have been in contact with the governor as well. I think that there are certain details here that are not particularly correct. The way that they're handling it, they're doing the best they can, as we are, projecting you know, a date that's in 2028 to actually complete. I think that they are not ahead of us, and we're comparing notes. So, if we're doing something that can be helpful to them or they're doing something that can be helpful to us, we are in collaboration and in contact with one another.

I think when you look at the situation in Baltimore, the Army Corps of Engineers were called in primarily because the bridge collapsed into a navigable waterway that was a major port for which the Corps of Engineers has jurisdiction.

So, the removal of that debris from the navigable waterway, in order to open up that channel back to commerce, is the responsibility of the Corps of Engineers. That's why they were called in there. We do not have that similar circumstance here. No debris nor bridge fell into the navigable waterway. So the Corps of Engineers do not get involved in the reconstruction of a new bridge, nor would it be feasible for them to put something like a pontoon bridge or other kind of floating bridge over the Seekonk River, because the several lanes of traffic and the type of traffic that we would have to put over that would not be sustainable on that type of structure. However, the Corps of Engineers pretty much uses the same model, and the same contractor is in the same companies that we hired to design our bridges. So, we're pretty much using the same construction methods and delivery systems that the Corps of Engineers uses for their own bridge.

Q: When will all the demolition be completed? And why is it going to take so long from now to actually start the new construction?

A: The demolition of the superstructure as you know had been delayed for about four weeks. While we planned on completing that on the date of January 29th, our contract to complete that will be moved forward now by the amount of time we paused the project, but no more than that. With regard to the substructure and the piers, that work will begin in February and it will be completed by December.

The contract with the new contractor to design and build the new bridge, the timeline was developed between now and June, when we're going to be interviewing these companies. They're going to be putting their technical proposals together, will be reviewing them. We'll be having discussions with all of them. And then by June we will have a company that we are going to hire to build the project, and they'll start work immediately on that. That timeline we developed again from the RFI for a project of this scope, in order to allow the companies enough time to properly identify what their design is and give us their best price proposal.

Q: So apparently, the demolition contract has been recently amended to include demolishing the existing bridge piers down to the riverbed. I'm just wondering why? Why not leave those old piers in place, keep them six feet above the water line, and then build a new bridge that spans from bank to bank, with no new piers in the riverbed? This would avoid all the environmental complications and cost of disturbing the substantial riverbed sediments. It's only about 1000 ft from bank to bank and easily, easily spandable distance. Has this been considered, and if not, why not?

A: All options have been considered. Again, we had 11 of the most expert companies, ten of them, multinational companies in bridge design and construction. They recommended to us the removal of those piers and those footings down to the mud level. In addition to that, the Seekonk River is a navigable waterway, and we need to remove any obstructions in the path of any vessel.

I will follow up and see if there is any merit to what you're suggesting, and we'll try to get back to you with an honest assessment of your thought.

Q: Is there any construction or repairs, that are scheduled in the near future for the eastbound side of the bridge that may impact, you know, traffic, whether it's day or night?

A: We have had during the last several weeks repairs and maintenance activities happening at nighttime so that we minimize or eliminate any traffic impacts except for the wee hours of the morning when there's little traffic. Usually, it's just lane closures so that what little traffic is going by there can make their way through the work zone without there being any kind of congestion or inconvenience to the public.

Those activities have included bridge joint maintenance which was contracted for long before the Washington Bridge closure. They're part of routine and occasional contracts that we put out for that are going to progress in an easterly direction across the bridge during the next several weeks, and there will be several more bridge joints that are either maintained or repaired. Bridge joints are not a structural part of a

bridge. We do not expect any closures of the bridge for that purpose. We may have lane closures overnight in order to allow crews to repair those bridge joints. And they will be doing that work entirely at night.

Q: I have two questions. The first is about dust. I'm one of the residents who found, demolition dust on my property. And I just want to note that the issue before wasn't about the dust control measures. It was that the contractor wasn't following them. So I want to know what you all are and doing to ensure that they are complying with the dust control measures this time around.

A: What we've done in order to clamp down on this dust control, we've required the contractor to install additional equipment. In fact, two times the amount of equipment that would normally control the dust and use it. And our folks that are out there are monitoring to make sure that the contractor is not only using the original equipment, but, the additional equipment that we made them install to make sure that the dust is contained at the worksite itself.

Q: Why do you consider this kind of noise safe and why haven't you considered relocating people closest to the demolition site, even if it doesn't meet the FHWA standards that would allow for relocation.

A: This is why I delayed the overnight work for a few days so that those individuals that maybe have other options would take advantage of it. I delayed the overnight work, so that we could have this discussion and then provide time frames where if individuals are being impacted or severely impacted, the ability to make other arrangements is possible.

Q: Since we don't seem to be in as much of a rush as we were before, rather than disturbing people the entire night would really be bothersome. Would it make more sense to be shorter periods? Spread over a long period of time so that maybe we did, you know, just 2 or 3 hours earlier in the night?

A: One of the judgments that's being made is the fact that if you did the work during the day, that would create some serious backups there. We're trying to balance.

Q: How long are we planning on using the detour? And if we're going to go into the winter should it be paved so that you can keep it cleared?

A: The demolition in and around Valley Street is going to be completed next week. So, we will not be going through the winter with those operations.

Q: How will the piers, be demolished?

A: There are regulatory controls we need to do water demolition or in water demolition since sediments might be kicked up and might change the environment and affect the existing ecosystems.

We have been in touch with the regulatory agencies that control the fish and wildlife, so that we could proceed with demolition below the waterline in all of the months except for four months out of the year. During those four months, we had to refrain from doing work below the waterline so the contractor will be demolishing the piers down to the waterline during the months that we have no restrictions above the water. For the part that happens below the water, we will do the work there in the eight months that fall on the unrestricted period, in accordance with the Fish and Wildlife regulations. So, all the work will be able to progress both above water and then down below water at the appropriate times.

Q: Is the demolition, on budget?

A: Yes. The delay cost will come in as a change order we expect to have worked out in about another week, and we'll be able to make public that amount.

Q: Please describe the process of drawing up guidelines for the design of the new bridge. Will it be public input in terms of what the design looks like?

A: The request for proposal period and process includes the contractors in the RFP. The RFP will be issued around the December time frame and will take a field of many contractors during the qualification phase. We will select the two most qualified contractors to go into the technical proposal stage at that time. The contractors will be given what we call a base technical concept, which will be a conceptual design of a bridge spanning from one shore to the other. Those contractors will then compete by bringing on their own specialists and their own design consultants to determine how they are going to propose to us to rebuild that bridge, what it's going to look like, what kind of materials are in it. Some preliminary plans will be submitted and details about special construction methods that they might want to use.

All of that will come into focus during the period between December of this year and June of next year, during which time we will be reviewing along with our experts sitting in on these review meetings with us to determine which design is the best. By June, we will have selected the best design at the best price, with the best schedule.

Q: Will the demolition and rebuild of the bridge cause delays in other D.O.T. projects around the state?

A: The short answer is no. The good news is that we secured funding from the federal Mega grant for approximately \$220 million. It has been very helpful and the funds that we have in place to do other projects, including close to \$250 million that we secured for bridges on Route 95, should not be impacted. Right now, we have about 65 other projects that we're doing, and they are 95% or more on time and on budget.

Q: There was an existing construction project prior to the failure of the bridge. What happens with that project?

A: That \$80 million project was terminated.

Q: How are you getting in these timelines when there isn't anyone to build the bridge yet?

A: The timelines that I've given tonight are contracts that are already in place that the contractor is responsible for meeting the cost. The contract for the construction of the new bridge will contain the required timeline that they will build it under. We will have that timeline in June at the end of the competition, when every company competing will provide us with their best schedule to complete the contract.

Q: What is being done to address the looming problems with the aging bridge that is currently in use?

A: Those are two different constructions. They're not the same. The eastbound bridge is only about 20 years old or less than 20 years old. It is of a modern construction, not like the one that we're tearing down. We had it inspected along with a structural assessment done that included an assessment of the additional traffic we're putting on it. All of the companies that reviewed provided us with their recommendations and said that it is adequate and it will be fine to sustain the additional load for whatever duration we need to build a new bridge.

Q: Following coordinating with RIPTA for traffic mitigation during the demolition and reconstruction, what, if any, actions have been taken since those conversations?

A: The conversations have not ended. We're always in discussions with RIPTA to ways that we can mitigate and improve alternate modes of travel. I serve as chairman of the board, and we've been making great strides to add additional capability on drivers and additional bus routes.

Q: Where exactly on these vibration sensors placed in the neighborhood next to the construction site?

A: I don't have a list of locations, nor do we want to widely publish them, because we've already had 1 or 2 of them vandalized already. But we will get in touch with this individual to discuss with them their location and where their location is relative to the nearest sensor.

Q: How will you improve noise mitigation and scheduling in regards to the hydraulic hammering?

A: For the three nights that we have left will be similar in nature and sound. We are monitoring the noise levels in the area to make sure that they are below, at or below the standards that were held to, but for those three nights, there will be that kind of construction. The only way for us to knock down these massive concrete structures is through the use of this kind of equipment. And this is for all the country. These kinds of similar issues are encountered all the time as DOTs have to demolish old infrastructure and place new ones, particularly in urban areas. And, there's just no easy way of doing it. The good news is we only have three more nights left.

Q: Has an independent party been designated to be in charge of oversight, and will the public receive periodic reports?

A: Yes, we are providing monthly reports that are public reports for the entire project. Those reports are published on a monthly basis to our website Washington-Bridge.com.

Q: Are we done during the day for the sake of the families that live there in the area? There are many, psychotherapists in the area that are severely inhibited in the ability to work with our clients when the building is shaking and the noise is very disruptive.

A: There are still some grants for small businesses available

Q: How confident are you that the overnight construction will only be three nights?

A: Well, we're making it that way. We're requiring the contractor to complete that work.

Q: Will the RFP contain financial penalties for not meeting completion, deadlines or incentives for completing prior, to the project and, deadlines?

A: There are incentives and disincentives to the contract. So, there are penalties if they go over their prescribed or contracted time and there are rewards if they finish sooner. The same is true for example, hundreds of contracts that we've put out for construction during the last several years. And the same will be true for the new bridge construction.

Q: Regarding the weight in motion, Why have we not been told about the surveillance portion, the license reading cameras being installed on the bridge? And if they will not be used to catch violators, why are we paying for them?

A: The portion of the devices that capture information that we need in order to determine and discern between two vehicles is necessary in order for that data to be meaningful to us. For example, if we detect that an overweight vehicle is on the bridge, sometimes, the detection devices will sense that as a single vehicle when actually it's two different vehicles. So visual capability is necessary to determine whether or not that was in fact an overweight circumstance or whether it was two vehicles in very close proximity that were picked up together. With regard to using that information, then to penalize, while that is a capability, we are not enabling that capability, nor are we contracting with the company to do that, to issue citations to people that are not following the law.

Q: So while it's in the contract with, with the 2.8, 2.7, \$2.8 million contract, while it's in there as an option, you're saying you're not going to check that box, right?

A: Exactly right. We are not exercising that option to actually create violations.

Q: As the evidence has been collected during the pause, where is it being housed and what agency is in charge of the evidence? Is it you, the DOT you have it stored somewhere? Is it state police or the AG's office? Who's watching the evidence?

A: The litigation team is in complete control of anything having to do with evidence, its use, or its storage. We are not involved in any of that. I don't know where it is. We have to refer all of those questions to them for that. Okay. So you know where it is, but we can't talk about it because of the law.

Q: How can the public have input into guidelines for the design before it's sent to the companies?

A: During the procurement process, we would not be able to have those kinds of public input because there are companies competing against each other with proprietary information. So, there's a competition and we're restricted by the procurement laws from revealing any of that proprietary information to the public. However, prior to the issuance, we have a base technical concept that our consultants develop that is given to these companies as a base technical concept, and it will be public as part of the RFP. We will be able to take comments from the public on design ideas that we can explore with the competing companies.

Q: Any chance of a light rail path from East Providence to Providence?

A: There's already a derelict path there in place. Right now, RIPTA is doing a light rail study. Not in that part of the state, but in another part of the state where they think that a light rail system might be deployed effectively and have the ridership.

Q: Is there anything being done to alleviate the congestion going east? During the evening morning commutes, it seems to have gotten worse over the last two weeks.

A: We're continuing to look at various options that may be available to create more of a bandwidth or more of a throughput of traffic and reduce congestion in the east direction.

That would be something we just can't continue to discuss in a productive way. Governor, you know that. So we got from 0 to 90% correcting it. And that last 10% is always the hardest for engineers to figure out and whether we're going to stay on it and we're going to figure things out.

Q: What are the parameters of the air quality testing?

A: The dust monitoring levels that we're sampling are all in compliance with EPA standards. These requirements dictate that the 24-hour average ambient air quality is 150 micrograms per cubic meter. And that's what we will monitor to make sure that they're within the EPA and our standards.

Q: Why will there only be two bidders for the project that will receive the RFP?

A: We are allowing as many companies who want to compete for the first phase, which is the qualification phase, and we'll narrow down the competition. In that first phase, we'll be looking at the personnel the companies have available that have expertise in this kind of bridge building. The experience of the company has itself, the qualifications of the personnel they intend on using, what kind of resources the company has, what kind of other bridges they have built, and the content of proposals. Using these qualifications, we will pick the two most qualified candidates among the applicants during the RFP process. The companies that we spoke with told us that considerable expense goes into a technical proposal. They literally have to take millions of dollars out of their pockets in order to develop a design. Companies are hesitant to expend that amount of money to enter into a competition where they're one among many other companies to expend that amount of money.

Q: Will the people who responded to the RFI and the RFQ be public at any point in time.

A: We're going to have our folks check with the Department of Administration, particularly their legal and in their purchasing to make sure that we get the right time frame in which that information can be released so

that we don't violate any of the purchasing laws. But we'll get that information. We'll post the answer to that question on our website, and get it back to this individual.

Q: Why don't we have a legal team here?

A: If we did, they wouldn't be able to answer any questions.

Q: How many GARVEE bonds were sold to finance the new bridge? What interest rate and when do they mature?

A: The total GARVEE that was approved by the General Assembly (GARVEE bonds for those who are listening in, are dollars that you can borrow in advance of federal dollars coming into the state) was part of our finance package that we're that we're very pleased that we're making progress on. The GARVEE bonds totaled an amount of \$348 million.

I think the interest rate was favorable. It was in the three 3% range, maybe a little slightly higher than the 3%.

I don't know whether these are 20 year or 30 years, but we'll find out. I think it was favorable conditions, and we didn't buy the whole thing anticipating that the interest rates may be coming down.

We're going to continue to pursue additional grants through this entire project. And the more grants that we get, the more we're going to displace those dollars that we would have to borrow. Our goal is to, of course, keep going until we mitigate entirely the need to use the GARVEE. If it if we need to use it, it's there as a backstop.

Q: Does Rhode Island oversee or choose the construction companies that work on the bridge through the procurement process?

A: We are not allowed by federal regulation to restrict the competitors that compete for these projects. We're not allowed to limit them in any way unless there are sanctions against them by a regulatory or legal authority, and we don't have any companies like that. If the competition is open, it's a level playing field for everyone, and we welcome all bidders.

Q: Is there House and Senate oversight?

A: Yes. We are in direct conversations with the Speaker and the Senate President on a regular basis on this issue. We also have required monthly reports to both the House and the Senate, and the oversight committees received those reports. And so we'll continue to keep them informed.

Q: That the contractor who, originally erected the failed bridge, have they done other work? Are there other bridges with the same design being used in other areas?

A: This is not only a unique bridge in Rhode Island, but our experts have told us that this is a most unique design even in the country. So in Rhode Island, no, we do not have any other bridges that are constructed in the same way that this works.

Q: Can property owners near the bridge access the pre demolition survey of their property?

A: As far as I know there was inspection of the properties to determine the before and after impact and we can provide that information to the homeowners.

Q: Have you worked with major businesses in Rhode Island to encourage work from home options for employees affected by the bridge construction?

A: I believe that we have accommodated that, especially during the first 90 plus days before we went to three lanes. We have ongoing conversations with the businesses, the hospitals, whether it's Fidelity or CVS, and then and I think they are accommodating the workers.

Q: Have you had any follow up with the Secretary of Transportation since his visit?

A: The answer is yes. Through multiple sources, I've had more than one discussion with Secretary Buttigieg on the grants and leading up to the grants. The congressional delegation has talked to the secretary along with Secretary Raimondo, and the White House.

We have gotten tremendous support from the Federal Highway Administration and their administrator. Their administrator and his staff are actually quite present in many of the meetings that we have with our project management staff here in DOT. They participate in the meetings, for example, in the RFI process so that they can hear firsthand some of the feedback we were getting. They also participate during the review process of our RFPs. The national expertise that they bring to the table is very helpful to us in being able to get us information.

In addition they have been a tremendous ally in advocating for us with the Secretary of Transportation to bring that additional funding through grants to Rhode Island. And just in the last six months we've gotten, nearly \$600 million between this project and other projects in competitive grants where we're competing with other states.

Q: Given that we know that MBTA has no LPA of the six proposals that include connecting Florida directly with Providence by rail and no existing tracks, will there be a discussion on bus rapid transit with a dedicated right of way for the new bridge?

A: We'll open up the discussion to see whether it makes sense during the design and evaluate that. We'll certainly make that part of our design and review process.

Q: Are we paying to have three wreckers sitting on the westbound side when we don't have tow trucks or wreckers at construction sites around the state? It seems to be a large amount of money, wasted for the taxpayers.

A: We are removing cars that would have either been there for an accident or could not wait any longer.

The tow trucks have been a very effective strategy. A 5 or 6 minute savings during an accident and getting it cleared from the site is literally thousands of vehicles and minutes that are saved every time there's an accident. We're saving people time by getting them cleared quickly and wreckers have been very effective by being out there and being able to get to the accident, clear off the road and getting the road open back to traffic. It's working because we're clearing these accidents very quickly and getting them off the road faster than we ever have before.

Q: Why in the world have we rebuilt bridge decks all over the state on crumbling footings that, merely have stucco, placed over rotting rebar, and it's already showing through?

A: We have not. We have not built new bridges on footings that were rotting to the point where they were incapable of withstanding the pressures for the duration of the life of the infrastructure that's above it. We have done repairs to structures that have had rotting concrete and we have patched them, which is a standard practice throughout the United States.

It's merely there to protect the concrete from the elements so that in the event that the reinforcing steel becomes uncovered, then recovering it is a proper thing to do in order to preserve it longer and to make the bridge last longer. That is a standard preservation technique. And where you see that happening, it is merely being done as a preservation.

Q: Are there any discussions of tolling to pay for this bridge failure?

A: No.

Q: Are there any additional regulatory approvals that are going to hold us up, especially now that we're doing a complete rebuild?

A: Our project managers and our project consultants have all been engaging with the various regulatory agencies that have anything to do with the demolition in the reconstruction, including, agencies like the CRMC, the federal EPA, the federal Fish and Wildlife authorities, the Coast Guard, and other agencies. We're in close contact with all of them coordinating the process so they know exactly what our schedule is and what permits are coming up. They are providing guidance to us in advance of us submitting our applications. And so far, they have all been cooperating in issuing the various permits that we need on a very timely basis for this project.

They understand as well as you do and I do the importance of this project. And they're all working very cooperatively with us as partners, in order to get us some right information for us to properly apply. And, and meet their regulations. We're really pleased with that process for this project.

Q: Have you thought of banning the companies for a future contract with the state who were involved in inspecting the bridge?

A: Until we have really zeroed in on where the liability stands this is an open process. We have broadened outreach to areas outside of Rhode Island to companies that are outside of the geographic area.